

Informant Who Warned of Bombing Now Fears for Her Life

Government's Lie Detector Tests Showed Her Reports Truthful

Tuesday, February 11, 1997 - McCurtain Daily Gazette

By J.D. Cash

Sipping iced tea between whispers, she suddenly pauses and her eyes narrow when two men choose a table 15 feet away. "Those are the guys I told you about. They've been following me ever since I left Tulsa," she says.

Across the way, the thirtyish pair, dressed in jeans and flannel shirts, place a bag of fries on the table between them and blend with the rush of Turner Turnpike travelers at this McDonald's restaurant.

With a knowing look that belies her age, the petite and immaculately dressed 26-year-old pushes back her shoulder length, sandy blond hair, then turns with a forced smile.

"This is the way it's been since they raided my house in December. I'm constantly under surveillance," she says. Her next movements draw solemn stares from both men when she picks up her purse and reaches inside. After she produces a harmless cellular phone, the men appear relieved and turn their gaze back to the sack of fries, which still remains untouched.

With a muffled giggle, she points inside her purse and whispers: "See those?" In the bottom of the leather bag are two semi-automatic pistols.

"I won't be easy to kill!"

Setting the purse squarely in her lap, she turns her attention to a photograph on the table and studies it carefully. "That's Pete Langan, OK, the bank robber. He was one of the leaders, but when I knew him, his hair was long and stringy...and reddish."

Curiosity now overwhelms one of the men and he approaches, he bends over a nearby water fountain. Oblivious to the stream of water, he fixes his eyes on the picture laying flat on the table. Eternal seconds pass, then his eyes meet hers. Suddenly, he turns back and rejoins his partner.

"He knows I've 'made' him," she offers in a smooth voice. "They'll probably be leaving soon."

As if scripted, minutes later the two men do head for the door, leaving behind the bag of fries — cold and untouched.

Somewhat relieved, but proud of her uncanny senses which have kept her alive to this point, the former Miss Teenage America semi-finalist puts the cell phone back on top of the two pistols and zips her purse shut.

"Sometimes I think this is all just a game to them," she says.

Dangerous Liaisons

Such is the life today of one Carol E. Howe.

Her resume reflects numerous accomplishments such as opera debutante, beauty queen, actress and award-winning hunter/jumper horse competitor. She was an honors high school and college student. Not listed on that published resume is her stint as neo-Nazi infiltrator, working under contract for the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (BATF), when plans to bomb federal buildings and overthrow the U.S. government were openly discussed in front of her by some of America's most notorious figures in the extreme right-wing. Nor are the numerous lie detector tests she took to prove her truthfulness while working for BATF mentioned as part of her background.

On the run now, Howe has become the prey in a high-stakes game of wits and intrigue.

Suddenly the 5-foot, 98-pound blond is among the most sought-out women in America and is dodging the national media, who desperately want to interview her.

One of Howe's greatest concerns, though, is about those who might want to kill her before a nation can hear her story. Her cover now "blown" and the Justice Department confirming that she was a paid informant, Howe has so far eluded everyone and done so with the ease of a seasoned undercover agent.

Beginning with a Christmas Eve call from this newspaper, Howe's incredible recollections are now making their way around the globe.

Until just days ago, details of Howe's work for the BATF, and her firsthand knowledge of the Oklahoma City bombing conspiracy, remained buried from public view by an agency whose very existence now be threatened by the evidence she once provided it.

During a series of clandestine interviews, Howe told the McCurtain Daily Gazette that the BATF knew as far back as the fall of 1994 that the Murrah Federal Building and two other Oklahoma federal buildings had been targeted for destruction by residents of and frequent visitors to an eastern Oklahoma religious cult know as Elohim City.

Howe's "handler" was Special Agent

Angela Finley of the Tulsa office of the BATF. And, during the interviews, she described in great detail her work for that agent whom she simply calls, "Angie." Among her more than 70 reports to Finley were warnings that two Elohim City subjects were casing three Oklahoma federal buildings — and preparing for a subsequent bombing.

She now believes that on April 19, 1995, those same subjects — with the aid of others — bombed the Murrah Federal Building, the worst act of terrorism in U.S. history.

Today, Howe wonders what went wrong. With all the information she gave the agency, why didn't the BATF stop the bombing? It is a haunting question shared now by many Americans, including those who are now for the first time hearing in the national media serious allegations of what Howe says is the indisputable truth — that the government had "detailed prior knowledge" of the plot to bomb the building, but somehow failed to stop it.

True Confessions

In early December, this newspaper received a tip that How had been a regular visitor to Elohim City during the months before the bombing of the Oklahoma City federal building.

The newspaper also learned that while at Elohim City, she had developed associations with several persons who were involved in a string of bank robberies and some involved in the bombing, according to witnesses who spoke with the FBI. Before the newspaper's first interview with Howe on Dec. 13, the FBI raided the Tulsa residence she shared with a boyfriend. !

Her boyfriend, James Dodson Veifhaus Jr. was subsequently indicted by a Tulsa grand jury and now faces charges that he willfully made a bomb threat and was in possession of an unregistered destructive device.

After the Dec. 24 phone call, Howe began a series of interviews with this newspaper concerning how she came to be involved with members of a radical underground group known as the Aryan Republican Army.

Over time, she finally admitted her role as paid informant for the BATF and the information she had passed to that agency before and after the bombing on the Oklahoma City federal building.

Early in the interviews, Howe described her dealings with the mysterious German tourist and Elohim City security adviser, Andreas Karl Strassmeir.

"I kinda had a relationship with him for a while," said Howe. "He was real quiet and reserved...and when he did speak, you could hardly understand him because of his accent.

"We talked about relationships once, and he said he wasn't interested in settling down with a woman. All he wanted to do was blow up federal buildings! It was also at that same meeting that he shoved his hand down my dress and I thought, well, he was doing something else, but now that I think about it, I think he was feeling for a wire (recording device)."

Howe said Strassmeir's best Mends at Elohim City were Pete Ward, Kevin McCarthy, and Mike Brescia, and that a close Tulsa Mend was Dennis Mahon. "Dennis brought me out to Elohim City in the summer of 1994 and introduced me around. After that, I started hanging around with the people there and in December, I moved into a travel

trailer he kept out there. But when it got too cold, I moved in with one of the families. I stayed for about five weeks that time."

Howe said it was during this December, 1994, period that Timothy McVeigh and Mike Fortier visited.

"Sometime before Christmas a lot of guys showed up at EC (Elohim City). One that I recall was Tim (McVeigh), who I only knew...a guy who used the name Fontaine, a person I now recognize as Mike Fortier."

Referring to McVeigh, she said, "I never even spoke to him. He was considered a 'good soldier*' by the members of the ARA, but not a leader; he was just someone you sent out on jobs, because he was reliable. "I never knew much about Fontaine (Fortier). His name was mentioned a lot by the guys when they would be talking in other parts of Andy's house — you know, making plans they didn't want me to hear the details of."

By the third interview with this newspaper, Howe decided to reveal how her government informant role developed within the radical white separatist movement.

"I was contacted by Dennis Mahon after I ordered some literature from this group called the White Aryan Resistance," she said. "He wanted to have a closer relationship than I did, and later he threatened me when I tried to get away from his group. I went down and obtained a protective order from the Tulsa County Court.

"Shortly after I got the court order, I was contacted by Special Agent Angela Finley from the Tulsa BATF and she wanted to know if I wanted to get even. Angie said she would pay me to set up Dennis...I went along with it."

After signing a contract Finley provided, Howe was put on the payroll at \$120 per week, beginning in mid-1994. Part of her goal was to film Mahon arming hand grenades.

As part of the plan, Howe and Finley went shopping and bought a trunk. Next, they had a tiny surveillance camera mounted inside, with a small hole drilled for the lens, and placed it in Howe's residence.

Howe said that she and Finley had bought legal, practice grenades from an army surplus store.

"I got Dennis talked into making them real and he did so on camera. Later, we went out to Elohim City and blew them up.

"Angie got the film, then told me to have Dennis introduce me to the people at Elohim City and get information of Strassmeir and the other radicals." That was how she met Strassmeir and the others, she said.

"I started going to as many of their meetings as I could and met a lot of people who were very secretive. But sometime in November there was a meeting and Strassmeir and Mahon said it was time to quit talking and go to war.

"I reported all this to Angie."

Howe said Finley then wanted her to try to get Strassmeir on film handling grenades, so in the fall of 1994, she invited him to dinner.

"He brought in Pete Langan and Kevin McCarthy, the bank robbers.' In no time I had them painting the grenades in front of the surveillance camera and I later gave the film to Angie."

But Howe grew increasingly disenchanted with her work.

"In March of 1995, I got fed up with the whole thing because of my negative feelings about Rev. (Robert) Millar and some of the other people at Elohim City," she said. "Angie hadn't made any arrests, either, and that was frustrating, so I quit going out there...until after the building got blown up!"

Cat On A Hot Tin Roof

Howe's recollection of the precise time of her next contact with the BATF is unclear, but she believes agent Finley contacted her within 24 hours following the bombing of the Murrah building. Howe said Finley told her to find Mahon, because he was a subject of the bombing investigation. Next, Finley took her to a secret command post near the Murrah building Howe said. There, in the basement of the Oklahoma Publishing Company building at Fourth and Broadway, she was debriefed by BATF and FBI agents, of and on, for the next three days

According to a BATF document dated April 21, 1995, Howe told Special Agents Blanchard and Finley that the sketches of the suspects who rented the truck used in the bombing appeared to be Elohim City roommates of Andreas Strassmeir and close associates of Dennis Mahon.

Reflected in that report, Howe told the agents: "John Doe No. 1 is either Pete or Tony (Ward) and no one in the world looks more like the sketch of John Doe No. 2 than Michael Brescia." Howe also told agents that "everyone at Elohim City was reading The Turner Diaries and Mein Kampf"

Howe's investigative interviews also indicate that she told authorities: "Reverend Millar was working the people up into a frenzy about a Holy War that he said would come by the anniversary of Waco (April 19)." Further, she said, Millar warned that "they had to strike first or they would end up like David Koresh and his followers."

Howe also reminded agents after the bombing about what she had told Finley before, that people at Elohim City had been casing the IRS building in Tulsa and the federal buildings in Oklahoma City and Tulsa for several months.

In the April 21 post-bombing interview, Howe told agents Finley and Blanchard that she did not recognize the name "Timothy McVeigh."

Bolstering Howe's claims about the information she allegedly gave BATF are documents recently discovered that the government was supposed to turn over to the McVeigh defense team as part of the pre-trial discovery process, but which had not been.

The Gazette has learned that Howe's detailed information concerning the bombing conspiracy at Elohim City is contained in monthly reports the Tulsa office of the BATF had accumulated prior to the bombing of the federal building. Contained within those reports is clear and concise intelligence data spelling out Mahon's and Strassmeir's alleged statements about their plans to bomb federal installations and activities involving, among other things, the physical surveillance of the Murrah Federal Building during the months preceding the April 19, 1995 bombing.

Her reports reflect that Strassmeir and Mahon made three trips to Oklahoma City to inspect the federal building, in November and December of 1994 and in February 1995.

Furthermore, and potentially lethal to any attempt to discredit her, Howe was routinely polygraphed by the government during the time she was making her monthly reports to the BATF. The government's own documents indicating she passed, "showing no deception on her part in any polygraph examination."

The government seemed to place an even higher value on the reliability of Howe's information after the Oklahoma City bombing. "While they had me in a motel room in Oklahoma City...they started in about how I needed to go back to Elohim City and get some more information about who was there and some weapons' bunkers at EC. I told them they were crazy — I'd get killed!"

But government documents indicate she finally did agree to return to Elohim City, this time at a far higher rate of pay — ' \$400 per day.

"It was a few days after the bombing," Howe recalled for the Gazette. "I went back and there was a lot of talk about being raided...There were a lot of new faces, too — guys who were heavily armed and who were talking about a stand-off with the feds."

Howe said she was supposed to check on who was there and especially to see who or what might be in some small buildings on the back of the property. "I spent about four days at EC, then returned and was debriefed about the situation." And, she added, "Strassmeir was missing from the compound!"

Dances With Wolves

Based upon information received 14 months ago, the Gazette began looking into Andreas Strassmeir and his associations with far-right extremists in this country. A story one year ago detailed the nature of his associations and his connections to bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh, by virtue of a single phone McVeigh's call card records indicate was made to Elohim City.

A story here last July quoted a high level, anonymous source in the intelligence division of the FBI who described Strassmeir as an "intelligence asset" of the BATF.

Other stories published about that time quoted witnesses in Kansas and Oklahoma who claimed Strassmeir and Brescia were associates of McVeigh's and had been for at least two years.

But could there really be two BATF informants at Elohim City at the same time — How and Strassmeir?

A former government undercover agent who played a key role in one of this nation's most publicized sting operations said it wouldn't be unusual.

"It is typical, for agencies such as the CIA, FBI and the ATF to place multiple 'moles' inside a place like Elohim City and play one resource off the other, without either one knowing the identity of the other," the former agent said.

"The reasons are obvious. First, there is no way a law enforcement agency is going to risk exposing the life of one of their assets should the other 'resource' succumb to torture or decide to double-cross the agency. And, of course, the monitoring of information can best be verified if neither resource knows who the other is. That's the only way this game works, and it's the only way it succeeds."

The Justice Department has consistently told the press, and Judge Richard Matsch, that Andreas Strassmeir is not now and never has been a suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing. Nor was he interviewed in the aftermath of the attack.

As recently as last month, responding to requests by McVeigh's defense attorneys seeking information on Strassmeir, Beth Wilkerson, a key member of the Denver prosecution team, told Judge Match that the government had no evidence linking Strassmeir with the Oklahoma City bombing. Therefore, she contended, the government had not withheld anything from the defense concerning Strassmeir or any other possible suspects.

However, the Gazette has learned that at least some members of the FBI did indeed consider Strassmeir a suspect immediately after the bombing.

High level sources told the Gazette that a cable dated April 18, 1995 was sent to the Secretary of State in Washington, D.C. from the U.S. embassy in Bonn, Germany, responding to a request the previous day from Special Agent Hudspeth concerning information on Strassmeir.

That April 28 cable provided detailed intelligence to the FBI, collected from various German law enforcement data bases, concerning Strassmeir's travels and history.

Strassmeir is referred to in that "priority cable" as a "suspect" in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation, and the Bonn embassy provided photographs of him, plus a list

of addresses where he had lived during the previous decade along with assurances that his military records would be dispatched as soon as they were obtained.

Also, the Gazette has learned, on March 18, 1996, a special intelligence bulletin was issued by the Diplomatic Security Division, Counter Terrorism Unit, of the Department of State concerning Strassmeir's previous alleged criminal activities while in the United States. The cable states that Strassmeir overstayed his visa in 1991 and was known to have been the militia training officer for a white separatist group called WAR. Quoting from the cable, "He (Strassmeir) has been the subject of several investigations for purchasing weapons, and making the weapons fire on full automatic. Strassmeir should not be allowed to return to the U.S."

Strassmeir's North Carolina attorney, Kirk Lyons, says his client was never a suspect in the Oklahoma City bombing and left the United States in January 1996 only because he feared being brought in the Oklahoma City bombing investigation due to statements the McVeigh defense team was making in the press.

The attorney says Strassmeir only met McVeigh once, at a Tulsa gun show in the spring of 1993. As to why McVeigh called Elohim City two weeks before the bombing and left a message for Strassmeir, saying he would be visiting soon, Lyons says the whole thing is a mystery.

According to NBC News and a prominent London newspaper, Strassmeir has either left Berlin or is avoiding the media since the Howe revelations emerged. Prior to that, the former German military officer had been living in his parents' fashionable Berlin home and freely giving media interviews. Strassmeir's father recently retired as Secretary of State to Berlin, and he is still considered a close confidante of German Chancellor Helmut Kohl.

A few days ago, Strassmeir's former roommate at Elohim City, Michael Brescia, was indicated and arrested for his alleged role in robbing a bank in Madison, Wis. The government says that Brescia joined with other members of the Aryan Republican Army in pulling off the Aug. 30, 1995 heist.

Dennis Mahon of Tulsa says he considers Carol Howe's truthfulness to be unreliable, and he charges that she has abused drugs in the past. Mahon claims it was Howe who promoted most of the illegal and violent acts discussed at Elohim City. "They want to drag me into this thing," he says, "and I barely remember ever even meeting Tim McVeigh. It was Strassmeir who was meeting with McVeigh, not me."