

## **SEARCH FOR JOHN DOE 2 CONFOUNDS OFFICIALS - AUTHORITIES FOLLOW MANY TRAILS BUT HAVEN'T NAILED DOWN MYSTERY SUSPECT(S)**

March 7, 1997 | St. Louis Post-Dispatch (MO)

Author: Kevin Flynn and Lou Kilzer

Scripps Howard News Service | Page: 3A | Section: NEWS

HE LURKS AROUND the dark corners of the Oklahoma City bombing case, an intruder whose long shadow clouds the body of evidence with unanswered questions.

Who is John Doe 2?

Or, who are John Doe 2?

The person who eluded the most intense criminal dragnet in American history may actually be an amalgam of mystery men who moved in and out of defendant Timothy McVeigh's orbit during late 1994 and early 1995.

That's when the government says McVeigh and Terry Nichols planned and executed the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995, in which 168 people lost their lives.

McVeigh's trial begins March 31 in Denver.

Who are the men McVeigh and Nichols were seen with at what the government contends are key moments in which the conspiracy was blossoming into the awful fruit it bore in downtown Oklahoma City?

Here are some clues:

\* A possible John Doe 2 first turns up in witness accounts in the sandy-brown hill country around Fort Riley, Kan., in the searing hot summer of 1992.

\* Later, he is found in the company of the person, possibly Nichols, who in fall 1994 bought ammonium nitrate fertilizer that the government believes made up the Oklahoma City bomb's main charge.

\* He is standing next to McVeigh at a methamphetamine dealer's home in Kingman, Ariz., in February 1995, when a friend of McVeigh's tries to confront the person he believes set off a bomb near his house.

\* A woman who lost her leg while being dug out of the Murrah building rubble said she saw the man hop out of a Ryder truck that had been parked outside her garden-level office window, just before the explosion.

\* A man who says he sold McVeigh a soft drink and cigarettes at a deli at the Regency Towers apartments a block from the Murrah building says a passenger was waiting in the cab of the Ryder truck parked outside minutes before the explosion.

\* A man emerging from the post office next door also saw the truck, with three men near it.

\* A pressman north of the Murrah building claims that he saw McVeigh fleeing in a car, with someone in the passenger seat next to him.

John Doe 2 was born the day after the bombing, when witnesses at a Ryder rental shop in Junction City, Kan., described the second man they thought had come in when the bomb truck was rented. The renter, who used the phony name "Robert Kling," was John Doe 1. McVeigh's resemblance to that drawing led to his arrest in this case.

The biggest misfortune for investigators in the John Doe 2 manhunt is that the famous sketch of the brooding suspect actually may be based on an error.

#### Key Sketch Repudiated

A key witness recently repudiated the description that he gave to an FBI sketch artist after the bombing.

That witness, a mechanic at the Ryder shop named Tom Kessinger, now says he inadvertently had in mind an innocent person who came into the shop a day after the bomb truck was rented.

All of the witnesses at the Ryder agency, when interviewed by FBI agents the day of the bombing, said two men had rented the bomb-truck. One employee, Fernando Ramos, told authorities that the two men drove up in a blue Jeep Cherokee.

The intrigue dates to 1992:

A Herington, Kan., woman and her mother told the FBI that McVeigh hung out with the older teen-agers there that summer.

Connie Smith, the mother, said she also saw McVeigh and Nichols in Herington in the weeks before the bombing, having lunch with other people. She never met McVeigh but says her daughter, Catina Lawson, met him at parties in 1992. "His nickname, I think, was 'My Way' McVeigh. He was very arrogant," Smith recalls of her daughter's stories.

Smith said her daughter's roommate that summer dated a man named Mike with Pennsylvania tags on his car.

Some amateur investigators of the case believe "Mike" is Michael Brescia, 24, a Philadelphia college student indicted last month for conspiracy in a string of Midwestern bank robberies carried out by the self-described Aryan Republican Army. Smith and Lawson say he could be the man who moved in McVeigh's circle.

Brescia, through his attorney, said he had no involvement in the bombing. He resembles the sketch of John Doe 2, but the government points out that's meaningless now that Kessinger has repudiated the sketch.

McVeigh lived in Herington in 1991, but, after mustering out of the Army in December, he returned to western New York by Christmas and appears to have spent all of 1992 there. He worked as a security guard in Buffalo.

If Brescia knew McVeigh, he could provide that link. Brescia lived for a time at Elohim City in Oklahoma with a German citizen named Andreas Strassmeir. Various witnesses, including a stripper in a topless bar in Tulsa, Okla., say they saw Brescia and Strassmeir with McVeigh.

On a security videotape in the topless club's dressing room shot 11 days before the bombing, the stripper can be heard telling a friend about a man in the bar named Tim. "And you're gonna remember me in April 1995," she quotes Tim as saying. "You're gonna remember me for the rest of your life."

Another John Doe candidate appeared with someone who may have been Nichols.

On Sept. 30, 1994, at Mid-Kansas Cooperative in McPherson, Kan., two people bought a ton of ammonium nitrate fertilizer that the government believes went into the bomb.

The salesman has testified that he is 50 percent sure the man who paid using the name Mike Havens was Nichols. However, the salesman also is sure, he testified in Denver two weeks ago, that the second person wasn't McVeigh.

McVeigh's fingerprint allegedly was found on the receipt, although, if true, it could have gotten there later.

John Doe 2 - or 3, or 4 - next shows up with McVeigh in Kingman, Ariz.

Rocky McPeak, who worked at a shelter in Kingman, says he hired McVeigh to do security work there in 1993. McPeak's girlfriend was arrested in December 1994 in Las Vegas on a bad credit charge, McPeak told authorities. A man who named Clark Vollmer helped bail her out.

In February 1995, McPeak says, Vollmer asked him to carry some drugs for him. McPeak refused, even after Vollmer reminded him of the favor he had done by raising bail.

On Feb. 21, an ammonium nitrate-fuel oil bomb exploded under a chair outside McPeak's home, blowing out five windows. McPeak went to Vollmer's house to confront him. He says he found McVeigh with another man McPeak didn't recognize.

### Flurry Of Sightings

In the last week before the bombing, several people in Herington and nearby Junction City, Kan., say, they saw a man with McVeigh.

A Texaco clerk said the mystery man came in and bought a pack of Marlboros and Big Red chewing gum. A liquor store owner said the mystery man came into his shop.

A convenience store clerk in Herington and one of her regular customers said McVeigh came in two days before the bombing with another man - not Nichols. The stranger fiddled with a refrigerator door while McVeigh bought a pack of Camels. She spoke to the stranger, but he didn't answer.

The next morning, the day before the bombing, a restaurant owner in Herington says she served breakfast to McVeigh, Nichols and a third man. A Ryder truck was parked outside.

In Oklahoma City, banker Kyle Hunt of Tulsa, Okla., exited the freeway on his way to a meeting when he came upon a Ryder truck followed by a large, light-colored sedan.

He told the FBI that he is certain the car's driver was McVeigh and that there were two other men in the car. At least one person had to have been in the truck, for a total of four people

Caption:

GRAPHIC, PHOTO(1) Graphic Illustration - FBI sketch of John Doe 2, issued May 1, 1995.

(2) Photo from AP - Emergency workers scan the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building for survivors shortly after the April 19, 1995, explosion. The blast killed 168 people

Memo: FOCUS ON: OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBING INVESTIGATION