

# McVeigh Identified as Renter of Truck; 'I Was Looking Right at Him,' Shop Owner Testifies in Bombing Trial



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The owner of a Ryder truck rental outlet in Junction City, Kan., today identified Timothy J. McVeigh as the man who rented the yellow truck that exploded April 19, 1995, outside the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing 168 people.

"That man over there -- blue shirt," said Eldon Elliott as he pointed to McVeigh across the federal courtroom. "He was four feet from me. . . . I was looking right at him. . . . That's the way I look at everyone. I look right square at their face when I talk to them."

McVeigh, sitting at the defense table across the room, registered no reaction. Elliott, owner of Elliott's Body Shop, told jurors that McVeigh first entered his shop on Saturday, April 15, to reserve the truck for the coming Monday. He said McVeigh presented him with a South Dakota driver's license in the name of Robert Kling. Last week, Lori Fortier, a friend of McVeigh's, testified that she helped McVeigh laminate a bogus license in the same name. Elliott said that rather than just leave the required \$80 deposit, McVeigh paid him \$280.32 in cash to reserve the "one-way" rental to Omaha, Neb. He next saw McVeigh on April 17 at 4:19 p.m., when McVeigh came into the store again to actually rent the truck. Under intense cross-examination from McVeigh's attorney, Stephen Jones, Elliott acknowledged that he was not asked by authorities to make a photo identification of McVeigh until 48 days after the blast. Elliott also said he did not get a good look at a second man who was in his shop on April 17, and who was long believed to be the elusive "John Doe No. 2," who was being sought as an accomplice. The Justice Department last fall withdrew the warrant for John Doe No. 2's arrest, saying it had been a case of mistaken identity.

Jones also sought to get Elliott to admit that he changed his original recollection of McVeigh's height as about 5 feet 10 inches as the trial of McVeigh drew closer. But Elliott said he told the FBI in their second meeting on the day after the bombing that the man who rented the Ryder truck appeared to be 5 feet 10 or 5 feet 11, but had been leaning on a counter at the time. McVeigh was officially measured as 6 feet 1 1/2 inches earlier this year. Elliott's testimony came at the end of long string of witnesses and evidence introduced today as the government methodically built a time line for McVeigh's actions in the days before the Oklahoma City bombing. McVeigh and co-defendant Terry L. Nichols have pleaded not guilty to the bombing. Nichols will be tried separately. Jurors today also saw a videotape of McVeigh walking out of a McDonald's restaurant in Junction City, 20 minutes before the truck was rented, a little more than a mile away from Elliott's. The video showed McVeigh leaving the restaurant on April 17 at 3:57 p.m. with an apple pie box. Jones pointed out that McVeigh was not wearing the military fatigues that Elliott had initially told authorities Robert Kling wore when he rented the truck. Terry Nichols's wife, Marife, testified today that her husband received a phone call on April 16, three days before the explosion, and abruptly left their house in Marion, Kan., in the middle of Easter dinner. The government has alleged that phone records prove McVeigh called Nichols from a few blocks away, and that the two caravanned to Oklahoma City to drop off McVeigh's 1977 Mercury Marquis, to be used as a getaway car on April 19. Terry Nichols's wife testified under a government promise that her testimony could not be used against her husband. She also told the court that on the evening of April 17, Nichols made a call from a pay phone at the airport. A government summary of calls made on a calling card allegedly purchased by McVeigh shows that call going to the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, where a clerk has testified McVeigh was staying in Room 25. The owner of a Chinese restaurant in Junction City told jurors that she received a delivery order for moo goo gai pan on April 15 for a guest at the Dreamland. The order was placed, she said, by a man name "Kling," the same name used to rent the truck. Under cross-examination, Yuhua Bai conceded that she had no way of knowing who, in fact, ordered the food and who received it. The government did not call the former delivery man for the Hunan Palace whose description of the customer in Room 25 does not match McVeigh's, according to sources close to the cases. In one of the few lighter moments of the trial, Stephen Jones asked Bai the ingredients in moo goo gai pan, mangling the pronunciation. "Obviously you don't eat Chinese food -- why don't you ask him?" Bai shot back, pointing to McVeigh. The courtroom erupted in laughter.