

McVeigh, 2nd man lingered after blast, witness tells court

Dallas Morning News

DENVER — A woman who survived the Oklahoma City bombing testified Friday that she saw Timothy McVeigh with another man near the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on the morning of the blast.

Terry Nichols, who is on trial as McVeigh's accomplice, was at home with his family in Herington, Kan., that morning. But the government says he conspired in the terrorist attack that killed 168 people by helping to plan and build the bomb.

Nichols' defense contends that the mystery man popularly known as John Doe 2 — rather than Nichols — is McVeigh's true accomplice in the April 19, 1995, bombing.

Another defense witness testified Friday that he saw someone resembling McVeigh with a second man near the Murrah Building an hour before the bombing.

Moving swiftly through its witness list, the defense in its first week called 55 people to the stand. Nichols' lawyers could wrap up their case next week.

The woman who was in the Murrah Building, Germaine Johnston, said she encountered the two men in an alley about two blocks from the bomb site after making her way outside. Her best guess, she said, was that she saw them around 9:30 a.m., almost half an hour after the blast.

"Did you read in the media that

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he (McVeigh) was arrested 70 miles away at 10:20 a.m.?" prosecutor Patrick Ryan asked her — implying that the bomber could hardly have gotten so far if he were still in downtown Oklahoma at 9:30.

"Yes," Johnston said.

"You were in shock" from the bombing? the prosecutor asked.

"Yes, I was in shock," she replied.

Johnston, who works for the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, said the men were beside an old yellow Mercury similar to McVeigh's getaway car. She said she recognized neither as John Doe 2, the dark-skinned suspect whose sketch she later saw on television.

The FBI, after releasing the sketch shortly after the bombing, eventually concluded that the man dubbed John Doe 2 was an innocent bystander, not a party to the crime.

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