

Mcveigh In Spokane Before Bombing?

Innkeeper Links Kehoe, Mcveigh In Months Before Oklahoma City Blast

Bill Morlin The Spokesman-Review

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A man resembling Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh stayed at a north Spokane motel with Chevie Kehoe a few months before the 1995 bombing, a former motel manager claims.

"I believe it was Tim McVeigh because he looks like the man I saw there with Bud Kehoe," the former manager of The Shadows Motel & RV Park said.

The former manager also said Chevie "Bud" Kehoe showed up in his living quarters at The Shadows on April 19, 1995, about 45 minutes before the Oklahoma City bomb went off and wanted to watch CNN.

When a news bulletin reported the explosion, Kehoe was ecstatic and said "it was about time," the manager said.

"Days before that, he had mentioned to me that there's going to be something happening on the 19th and it's going to wake people up," the manager said.

The former motel manager is a key prosecution witness against Kehoe and two other men indicted in Arkansas last month for racketeering, including four murders.

Kehoe, a 24-year-old white separatist, also awaits trial in Ohio for attempting to kill two police officers in February 1997.

The manager asked not to be publicly identified for fear of losing his job. He said he already lost one job when his employer learned of his connection to Kehoe.

But he agreed to be re-interviewed by FBI and ATF agents after making his claims in two interviews with The Spokesman-Review. He told the same story this week to federal agents, who have described him as a credible witness and informant.

The FBI developed a timeline on McVeigh's whereabouts in the months before the bombing, but authorities said there are voids in the log.

"We have no confirmed information that Mr. McVeigh has ever been in Eastern Washington or North Idaho," said Burdena Pasenelli, special agent in charge of the FBI Seattle regional office.

"We have no reason to believe what (the former Shadows manager) is saying is credible," Pasenelli said, "but we're interested in what he has to say."

She wouldn't say what the FBI would do with the information.

Kehoe's attorney in Dayton, Ohio, said the manager's story sounds "very, very strange."

"I don't know anything about it," Earl H. Moore said Thursday evening. "I haven't discussed any of this with Chevie Kehoe."

McVeigh awaits execution after being convicted last June of the bombing, which killed 168 people. Co-conspirator

Terry Nichols was convicted this month of conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter.

Kehoe and other members of the Kehoe family lived in Stevens County and frequently stayed at The Shadows, 9025 N. Division, between September 1994 and August 1996.

Sometime in late 1994 or early 1995, the manager said Kehoe approached him and asked if he could give a free room to a friend.

There were vacancies that night, the former manager said, so he provided the room and didn't ask the man to sign the motel registry.

"I was introduced to a gentleman named Tim," the manager said, "and I now believe he was Timothy McVeigh."

He described the man as tall and slender with a military-style haircut. He was wearing an M65 Army camouflage jacket.

Tim asked for a nonsmoking room, and the former manager said he assigned him Room 10. Tim was with another man about the same age, but the manager could only offer a limited description.

The manager said he doesn't recall if Tim had a vehicle or was brought to the motel by Kehoe.

After McVeigh's arrest, the manager said he asked Kehoe if McVeigh was the Tim who had stayed at The Shadows. "Bud was like, 'No that was Tim so-and-so, a different guy.'"

"But I saw his picture on TV and I think he's the guy who was at The Shadows," the manager said. "I'm 75 percent certain it was him, McVeigh, but I could be wrong."

During Kehoe's stay, The Shadows became a hangout for several white separatists and neo-Nazi skinheads, authorities say.

Kehoe frequently left Spokane on road trips, visiting gun shows and Elohim City, a white separatist compound in eastern Oklahoma.

McVeigh made a phone call to Elohim City a few days before the bombing.

The former Shadows manager said Kehoe didn't discuss many of his trips, but he did talk about visiting Randy Weaver's cabin in North Idaho.

The Washington Post, quoting an unidentified friend of McVeigh, reported in July 1995 that McVeigh had visited Ruby Ridge and the site of the former Branch Davidian compound in Waco, Texas.

The Post story didn't say when McVeigh visited North Idaho or if someone took him to the remote mountaintop cabin where Weaver's wife, son and a deputy marshal were killed in 1992.

Federal agents first interviewed the manager in October 1996 when they learned that an arsenal of stolen firearms and survivalist supplies were stored at the motel.

Agents said he didn't mention seeing McVeigh; the former manager said he did mention it in passing.

The guns were stolen in a burglary and subsequent robbery of an Arkansas gun dealer, William Mueller. He, his wife and his 8-year-old stepdaughter were abducted, bound and suffocated during the robbery.

The Spokane motel manager's testimony before a grand jury in Little Rock, Ark., led to a federal racketeering indictment last month against Kehoe, Danny Lee and convicted murderer Faron Lovelace.

Dan Stripling, the federal prosecutor handling that prosecution, said he and other investigators had no idea their witness knows about a possible link between McVeigh and Kehoe.

“We asked him very specific questions about the Mueller homicide and Kehoe’s possession of Mueller’s guns and other property,” Stripling said. “This is a surprise - and very interesting.”

At the Spokane motel, Kehoe spent time building machine guns, homemade blasting caps and small bombs, the former manager said.

Kehoe had do-it-yourself guerrilla warfare books, and used fertilizer, mothballs and powder from .22 shells in cooking his bomb concoction on the stove, the manager said.

“I’d hear these gunshots going off and I’d go downstairs and it was Bud with a set of batteries,” the manager recalled. “He was setting off these blasting caps that he’d put inside phone books.”

“He described it to me as a smaller version of a larger bomb,” the manager said.

Law enforcement sources said they identified and interviewed another man in 1996 who said he had gone to The Shadows to buy detonators for a truck bomb from a man he identified as “Cyclops.”

That is the nickname for Kehoe’s friend, Danny Lee, a neo-Nazi skinhead who lost an eye in a Spokane bar fight.

, DataTimes ILLUSTRATION: 2 Color photos

MEMO: This sidebar appeared with the story:

A SHADOWY TALE OF RACE AND BOMBS

A former manager of Spokane’s The Shadows Motel and RV Park says he believes convicted bomber Timothy McVeigh stayed briefly at the North Side motel with Chevie Kehoe just months before the Oklahoma City federal building exploded.

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