

Conspirators

Jon Ronson | The Guardian | Saturday 5 May 2001

Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma City bomber, is a conspiracy theorist. He believes that a shadowy elite of bankers and industrialists and politicians are plotting in secret to take over the world, disarm gun enthusiasts and implement a sinister New World Order - a world government that will destroy anyone who disobeys. McVeigh considered the Murrah building in Oklahoma City to be the local headquarters of the New World Order.

Sure, McVeigh was fully aware that innocent secretaries and receptionists would be killed as a result of the massive truck bomb he detonated on April 19, 1995. But he was a keen Star Wars fan and he compared those innocents to the "space-age clerical workers inside the Death Star. Those people weren't storm troopers. But they were vital to the operations of the Evil Empire. And when Luke Skywalker blew up the Death Star, the movie audiences cheered. The bad guys were beaten. That was all that really mattered."

It is, therefore, churlish of McVeigh to scornfully dismiss - as crazy paranoid nuts - the legions of conspiracy theorists who believe that the truth of the Oklahoma City bombing has yet to be officially recognised. McVeigh is seething about this inside his death row cell. He is due to be executed on May 16. He feels the conspiracy theories are tainting his impending martyrdom. "You can't handle the truth," he has said. "And the truth is that it is pretty scary that one guy can do this all alone."

The conspiracy theories centre on a bizarre white separatist encampment on the Oklahoma/Arkansas border called Elohim City and two of its regular visitors: a flamboyant neo-Nazi called Dennis Mahon and an extraordinary German called Andy Strassmeir. McVeigh says the Elohim City conspiracy theories are nonsense, a red herring. But I didn't know what to think. They seemed pretty convincing to me. Perhaps I am becoming a conspiracy nut. Whatever, I wanted to meet the alleged co-conspirators. It would, at least, be interesting to ask them how it felt to be widely considered, by conspiracy theorists, to be the hidden hands behind the Oklahoma City bombing.

It was a Monday morning in early April. Dennis Mahon was jumpy and on the run in Arizona. "It drives you crazy," he said. "Thousands think I was involved. I've started to believe it myself. Maybe I was there. Maybe they brainwashed me and I forgot about it. Maybe I can get hypnotised and remember it. Everybody said I was there. Everybody said I drove the truck. They saw me."

This is true. In the immediate aftermath of the bombing, many passers-by claimed to have seen McVeigh in Oklahoma City with unknown others. One witness drew a sketch of a John Doe who looked remarkably like how Dennis Mahon might look in dark glasses and a pencil moustache.

"Maybe there's somebody out there who looks like me," said Dennis. "I'm just about ready to turn myself in and tell them, 'Okay motherfuckers, I did it'. But I didn't." Then Dennis showed me his scar - the result, he said, of a stress-related intestinal infection.

But for all of this Dennis Mahon seemed secretly thrilled to be a central player in the alternative history of the Oklahoma bombing. Columbia Pictures is even considering making a movie of the story I am about to tell. "It'll be a hell of a good movie," he said. "I hope Tom Berenger plays me. But one guy said Danny DeVito's going to play me. That'll devastate me. I'll leave the country."

Dennis peered through the curtains of our secret rendezvous location: Room 315 of the Hampton Inn near Phoenix airport. "The Feds are on my tail!" he stammered. "The bastard sons of the FBI followed me here. See that white car?"

"Why are they following you?" I asked.

"Well, Tim McVeigh did all his training over there," he said, pointing west to Kingman, Arizona. "And he's going to be executed. And they're afraid there might be retaliation for that. And there very well might be. There very, very, very well might be."

Dennis Mahon is a veteran neo-Nazi. He was famous before the Oklahoma bombing conspiracy theories. When you see him in old Ku Klux Klan recruitment videos from the 80s, he looks striking and quick-witted. Now he is jowly, the spitting image of the actor John Goodman.

"Yeah, I'm an old guy now," says Dennis. "I'm an old comrade. I've seen changes. More lone wolfism. One man one act. These stupid Klan guys want to be circus clowns. And the Klan's targets are just little negroes. And then they get drunk in a pub and talk about it. You've got to raise your sights a little bit. If you're going to get 10 years for calling somebody a nigger, or throwing a rock through a synagogue window, you might as well go and do a McVeigh. And I think the kids are learning that."

Dennis Mahon glanced out of the window at the white car. "I don't believe they can hear us because . . ." He paused. "Did you get the room at the last minute?"

"Yes," I said.

"Well, I think we're okay," he said.

Dennis sat on the bed. "I'd never heard of a Tim McVeigh," he said. "I'd heard of a Tim Tuttle. Tim Tuttle was a real good patriot. Tim Tuttle was a highly decorated army guy from the Gulf War and he was travelling through the area and people wanted me to meet him."

"Did you meet Tim Tuttle?" I asked.

"Yes," said Dennis. "I met Tim Tuttle, but I didn't know he was alias Tim McVeigh. I met him at gun shows. He sold military stuff, knives, gun parts, camouflage uniforms. I remember he had real short hair and real intense eyes and the real long narrow nose like yours." Dennis scrutinised, and misinterpreted, my Jewish nose.

"It's a good nose," said Dennis. "Don't get me wrong. Better than mine. Mine's been broke. And we talked about Waco. And I said, 'What comes around goes around. If they keep doing this terrorism on our people, terrorism's going to happen to them.' "

"That's what you said?"

"That's what I said to him. He said, 'Probably. Probably so.' "

"Carol Howe testified that she was at your house when Tim Tuttle telephoned you shortly before the Oklahoma bomb," I said.

"Yeah, well," said Dennis, sharply. "That was another Tim. Okay? Another Tim. His name was Tim Buttle."

We talked about Carol Howe - about the strange love affair at the heart of the conspiracy theories. Carol was a Tulsa society girl and a champion horse rider. She attended private schools and won some local beauty contests. Her father Bob was an oil executive. Her mother Aubyn was a charity hostess. But Carol got in with a druggy crowd and she ended up jumping off a roof and breaking her feet. While she was convalescing from her injuries, she began to idly telephone the local "Dial-A-Racist" hotline and listen to the recorded messages: "The international corporations and Jews and banks control America, and they're out to enslave and destroy the white race." She fell in love with the voice as she lay in her sick bed. The voice belonged to Dennis Mahon. She sought him out.

"I met her in a restaurant in Tulsa," said Dennis, "and she comes on crutches. Here's a beautiful young woman who's really in bad shape - you know, physically - hobbling round on crutches trying to fight for her race. And my heart went

out to her. She was strikingly beautiful and highly intelligent. Super high IQ. I think she had an IQ of 130. Way up there. She was a lot smarter than I was. She was a very rich girl, a debutante. I saw her house. Six bedrooms. Five car garage. Very wealthy."

Within minutes of meeting Carol, Dennis had formulated some big plans for her. "I was going to get her on Oprah. Most of our women are not very intelligent. All they can say is 'nigger this' and 'nigger that'. She could have been our Aryan spokeswoman."

"Did you fall in love with her?" I asked.

"I tried not to, I really did," said Dennis. "I tried to keep it on a professional level. But it was very hard. She was 23 years old. And she had a big swastika tattoo on her arm. I got a bit weak. I did fawn over her. And, yes, I had an intimate relationship with her. I finally said, 'Let's just forget about this whole thing and get married and have children.'"

"Would you have given up neo-Nazism for her?"

"Oh yes," said Dennis. "In order to raise a family you have to make pretty good money. But no. She was like a Patty Hearst. She wanted to get into the guns and the explosives." So Dennis made Carol some bombs.

"We let them off out in the woods," said Dennis. "And she was . . ." He broke off. His face flushed red. "She couldn't make love to me fast enough after that. She loved the bombs."

"She testified that you raped her," I said, "and that's why you split up."

"Well, she's a lying little snitch," said Dennis. "What really happened was that I finally got so tired. I knew that eventually she was going to make a bomb and hurt herself real bad and I'd be drawn into it. And I would have gone to jail."

Dennis said it was an amicable split. (Carol testified that he threatened to kill her.) Dennis said he wanted to see her happy. He wanted to introduce her to eligible boys. So he took her to a place called Elohim City. "It's a white separatist community," said Dennis. "They're fundamentalists, but it's really nice. Lots of good single men out there."

Elohim City is, for conspiracy theorists, the linchpin of the story. I have been told many times - by conspiracy-minded relatives of bombing victims, by local journalists and Oklahoma City councillors - that Elohim City is a terrorist training camp. It was certainly the hideout of the Aryan Republican Army, who committed a two-year spree of bank robberies using explosives. And it was home, for a year and a half, to a man called Andy Strassmeir.

"He was this tall, tough-looking guy," said Dennis. "A deep German accent. They called him Andy the German. I learned that his visa had run out and he was head of security out at Elohim City. I got to be pretty good friends with him. He told me he was very highly trained. Like our Green Berets. Or your SAS. He really knew his stuff. And he had trained a lot of good people at Elohim City. One time he had almost 30 young men, and women too, drilling them in full soldier drill. And they did just as good as any highly trained army unit in this country."

"That makes Elohim City sound like a training camp," I said.

"Well," he said, "after Waco they were very fearful they could be next."

So Dennis took Carol to Elohim City to meet boys. But there was something that he didn't know. After Dennis had threatened to kill Carol, she reported him to the police. Then the local Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms - the ATF, the same government agency that raided Waco - approached Carol and asked her to become an undercover informant, and spy for them on Dennis and Elohim City. She agreed.

In the months leading up to the Oklahoma bombing, Carol filed a series of reports to the ATF. In one, she reported that

Andy Strassmeir had declared, "It's time to go to war," and, "It's time to start bombing federal buildings." In another, she reported that Strassmeir had travelled to Oklahoma City to case the Murrah building as a potential target. In a third, she reported that Elohim City's patriarch, Reverend Robert Millar, preached a Holy War against the Federal Government, and suggested that April 19 might be a good day to start that war.

Immediately after the bombing, Carol Howe identified Timothy McVeigh as someone she saw walking through the Elohim City forests with Andy Strassmeir. She also testified that she overheard Dennis Mahon take a telephone call from "Tim Tuttle" - the alias McVeigh used. "Carol had a lot of boyfriends at Elohim City," said Dennis. "But she'd scare them off. You know. 'Hey! Let's make a bomb!' That kind of talk tends to scare guys away." Dennis paused. "Especially when they may actually be planning something."

"I'm sorry?" I said.

This was an extraordinary thing for Dennis to say. Dennis remains to this day a close friend of the people at Elohim City. Until now, he has always denied that the community had anything to do with the Oklahoma City bombing. Was he now implying that they may have actually been involved?

"Before that bomb went off in Oklahoma City," said Dennis, "they got rid of her. They told Carol to go back home. They said, 'We need to be by ourselves for a while.'"

"Who said that to her?" I asked.

"Her last boyfriend broke up with her and said, 'Maybe you ought to go to Tulsa. Stay away for a while.' She was away from Elohim City for almost two months before the bomb went off. Which is probably a good thing."

Dennis is a conspiracy theorist, but he said he doesn't believe the conspiracy theory that he was involved in the Oklahoma City bombing. "I think Andy Strassmeir was," he said. "Or at least he knew about it. I've been trying to contact him for years. I've always defended him. And now he won't return my phone calls. And I've been banned from Germany. Why is that? So I'm taking all the heat and he's run off to Germany."

Dennis said that if Andy Strassmeir wasn't involved, perhaps a crack team of Iraqi Republican Guards were, acting under the orders of Saddam Hussein. "There's quite a few Iraqis in Oklahoma," he said. "Those guys are highly trained in improvised munitions and explosives. Whereas Tim was not. Certainly one of them could have trained Tim. There are 600 Iraqi Republican Guards in the Oklahoma City area."

The conspiracy theories were getting crazier. I wanted to get back to the facts. And this is a fact: on the morning of April 19, 1995 - just as Timothy McVeigh's yellow Ryder truck packed with three 55-gallon drums of liquid nitromethane pulled up outside the Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City - a death row prisoner in Arkansas called Richard Wayne Snell asked his guard if he could watch the TV news. The guard agreed. Snell was to be executed within hours. Getting to watch CNN was just about his final request. Snell had murdered a black state trooper called Louis Bryant and a pawn shop owner called William Stumpp, whom Snell had mistakenly believed to be Jewish.

Snell had also plotted, in 1983, to blow up the Murrah Federal building in Oklahoma City. He only abandoned the plan when the rocket-launcher he'd been practising with exploded in his hands. He took this as a sign that God didn't want him to go ahead with the plan. Snell's co-conspirator in the 1983 plot was a neo-Nazi called James Ellison, who lived at Elohim City and was, in fact, married to Reverend Millar's granddaughter.

Within the more hard-core factions of the American militia movement, Snell was a hero and a martyr: a respected preacher and political prisoner. His supporters were outraged that the Arkansas governor had chosen April 19 for the execution date. They considered it a deliberate kick in the teeth.

April 19 is holy day for anti-government activists and conspiracy theorists. On April 19, 1993, Federal agents ended

the siege at Waco. David Koresh's Branch Davidian church went up in flames. On April 19, 1993, 400 British government troops attempted to disarm the citizens of Lexington, Massachusetts. A hundred colonists shot back, the first shots of the American Revolution, the "shots heard around the world". (When I visit American militias and patriots and neo-Nazis, they often ask me what I, a Brit, thinks of the Lexington uprising. I explain that I'm not au fait with the ins and outs. They are scandalised that our syllabus doesn't teach this pivotal moment in British history.) So executing Snell on April 19 was perceived to be an insult levelled at the American militia movement.

The guard on death watch duty agreed to Snell's request. He turned on CNN, just as news was breaking of the bombing of the Murrah building. Snell had already warned his prison guards that his death would be avenged. And now, the penitentiary's death watch log noted, Richard Wayne Snell watched the breaking news and he "smiled and chuckled and nodded". Shortly afterwards, he was executed by lethal injection. His good friend and spiritual advisor, the Reverend Robert Millar, transported his body to its final resting place: Elohim City.

After all I'd heard about Elohim City, I felt a little intimidated as I drove up into the Ozark mountains towards the community. I turned left at the covered bridge, the very spot where Timothy McVeigh had received a speeding ticket on October 12, 1993. McVeigh has always denied visiting Elohim City, but I couldn't imagine where else he could have been heading, out here in the middle of the dusty nothingness.

In fact, only one official record links McVeigh to Elohim City: a telephone call he made on April 5, 1995, a fortnight before the bombing. He had bought a telephone calling card from the back pages of the Spotlight, the right-wing newspaper dedicated to seeking out and exposing the Bilderberg Group, the internationalist think tank believed by conspiracy theorists, McVeigh included, to be the shadowy elite that secretly rules the world. McVeigh used the phone card to make enquiries about where he might order a Ryder truck. Then he phoned Elohim City and asked to speak to "Andy". But Andy Strassmeir wasn't there. So McVeigh put the phone down again.

My instructions were to pull up at Elohim City's entrance, stay in the car, and honk my horn until somebody came to fetch me. I did this. I honked and honked, intrusively breaking the silence. I wondered why I had to sit there and honk. Were people doing things that they didn't want a journalist to know about? Had they been told to stop doing whatever it was when the honking journalist arrived? So I felt intimidated as I sat there honking. And then the children of Elohim City suddenly appeared from nowhere and performed, for my benefit, an impressive and well rehearsed rendition of Riverdance. I clapped when it was over.

Then Elohim City's resident chiropractor, Dr Buzz, offered me a cranial massage.

"No thanks," I said.

Elohim City looked like something out of the Brothers Grimm. Brightly coloured elf type houses scattered the forest. The whole place would have resembled some new-age retreat, something like the Findhorn Foundation, if it wasn't for the fact that everyone was carrying semi-automatic rifles.

Then I was invited into the meeting hall to sit in on a travelling soap salesman's presentation. He wanted to sell Elohim City soap powder and water-refining tablets. The women of the community and Reverend Millar, who looks like Santa Claus, fired questions at the salesman.

"We don't want chlorine," said Reverend Millar. "Chlorine causes cancer."

"This isn't a game," said the salesman. "This is serious. Cleanliness is serious."

"Health is important," said Reverend Millar.

Reverend Millar is a conspiracy theorist, but he doesn't believe the conspiracy theory that he and his community were behind the Oklahoma City bombing. He thinks the bomb was planted by the government itself, a New World Order plot to turn the world against survivalists and implement gun-control legislation, much like Hitler's burning of the

Reichstag.

"I think," he told me, "it was an operation by the Zionists who have infiltrated our government agencies to disparage people like us. To give us a black eye."

Carol Howe, he added, was "a poor little rich girl. We fed her and housed her. I didn't know that \$400 of my tax money was going to her with each visit. She was here several times. And then she went back and told things that were so far from the truth. She said we had prepared a bomb or discussed that sort of thing. Something very violent. And, as you can see, that's hardly typical of us here."

"Could you show me your cemetery?" I asked.

"Sure," he said.

He took me down to a field at the bottom of a hill.

"How many people are buried here?" I asked him.

"All the dead ones," he said. "Ha ha! I'm sorry. Half-a-dozen." We looked at the headstones.

"This is my beloved wife," said Reverend Millar. "We had been married 55 years and nine months. She was my sweetheart from college days. And here's Richard Wayne Snell. I guess this is the one you're interested in."

Snell's headstone read, "Rev Richard Wayne Snell. Patriot. May 21st 1930 - April 19th 1995".

"It was a lethal injection," said Reverend Millar. "I was there. He said, 'I am ready to go.' He died in full confidence of his hereafter. The idea that he was all excited about a bombing in Oklahoma City never passed between us."

"Why is he buried at Elohim City?" I asked.

"He requested it," said Reverend Millar, a little sharply. "He asked me to be his spiritual adviser. I visited him regularly in the years between the trial and the execution."

"April 19," I said.

"Very significant," he said. "I had talked to the lieutenant governor of Arkansas and I suggested that it was a poor day to choose. I thought it would contribute to civic unrest." He paused, and softly added, "The government can be more interested in demonstrating their control than they are in the interests of the nation that they represent."

As we walked away from the cemetery, Reverend Millar happened to notice the Kansas licence plate of my hire car. "Ah," laughed Reverend Millar. "Just like the Ryder truck! You rented this in Kansas!"

There was a silence.

"I'm sorry?" I said.

Reverend Millar is a man who claims to know nothing about the Oklahoma City bombing, who says he needs to be reminded even of what date the explosion occurred. And now he was bringing up the most esoteric fact about McVeigh's plot - that the Ryder truck used for the bombing had been rented in Kansas. Was this a little playful clue, on his part, that there was more to Elohim City than meets the eye?

Reverend Millar giggled.

"Just kidding," he said.

There is a tiny strip club in Tulsa called Lady Godiva. It was once a salad bar, but the salads didn't take off so Floyd

Ratcliffe bought the place up, painted it black, advertised for topless dancers, and now between 75 and 150 men attend each night. I sat in the back office with Floyd and his former wife Julie. "My official title," said Julie to my notepad, "is vice-president of Lady Godiva." She laughed. Then she stopped laughing and said, "I'm not bullshitting you. Really."

Behind us, a CCTV monitor screen flashed between the big bouncer doing neck exercises at the door, the bar, the stage, and the dressing room where the strippers went to change and apply make-up. A second CCTV monitor focused just on the dressing room.

"Do the women know they're being taped naked backstage?" I asked Floyd. "Why do you tape them?"

"A lot of the girls," explained Floyd, "are good girls. But it keeps down thievery. It keeps down drugs."

On the night of April 8, 1995, two strippers from Arkansas got into a fight in Lady Godiva's dressing room - a fight that was taped by Floyd's CCTV camera. "As it turns out," explained Floyd, "one of the girls was nervous and had taken some pills before she got here, which made her hyper and made her clash with everybody."

"We usually erase the tapes after two weeks," added Julie. "The reason why we kept this particular tape is because the cat fight was really quite humorous. So we kept it for entertainment."

Some weeks after the cat fight occurred, the two warring strippers applied for jobs at an erotic bar in Arkansas. Their prospective employer had heard of the taped cat fight and so he asked Floyd to send him the cassette. "He was trying to figure out whose fault the cat fight was," explained Floyd. "Was it one of the girls' fault? Was it Lady Godiva's fault?" So Floyd sent the tape to the club owner in Arkansas.

"So," said Floyd, "he's looking at the tape to try and find out what went wrong, and I think, being a little bit nosy, he wanted to see the rest of the tape. And as he's watching the rest of the tape, he suddenly realises that he's seeing something quite extraordinary."

This was true. There is a moment on the CCTV tape dated April 8, 1995, that could be seen to be incredible. Here is a transcript of that moment:

Stripper 1 (leaning into the mirror, adjusting her costume): "You know those three guys I'm sitting out there with? Well one of them says he's looking for a girl to fool around with tonight. Are you interested?"

Stripper 2: "Well, okay, I'll figure out a way to scam them."

The conversation becomes unintelligible for a while. The strippers talk about the three guys out front.

Stripper 1: (unintelligible) "... and one of them said, 'I'm a very smart man.' 'You are?' 'Yes, I am. And on April 19, 1995, you'll remember me for the rest of your life!' 'Oh really?' 'Yes, you will.' "

Stripper 1 laughs and starts to walk out of the dressing room. Then she turns back to the other and says, "Weirdo!"

"They were odd comments," said Julie. "It just seemed odd. The girls thought, maybe they're going to come out with some big invention on April 19."

"But unfortunately," said Floyd, "it turned out to be such a devastating event that they were in fact talking about." When the club owner in Arkansas realised the significance of the tape, he sent it back to Floyd and Julie. They telephoned the FBI. "Several days later," said Floyd, "a couple of agents came to the club, confiscated the tape, talked to the girls involved, and showed them pictures. The girls did identify three guys."

"McVeigh," said Julie. "They identified McVeigh and Nichols and the other gentlemen. Um. Slosmayer..."

"Strassmeir?" I asked.

"Strassmeir," said Julie. "Right. Excuse me. They all did identify that gentleman."

"And of course," I said, "everyone's heard of McVeigh and Nichols. But not of Strassmeir."

"True," said Julie. "But the girls did identify Strassmeir in the line-ups."

"It seems like the more we find out," said Floyd, "the less we want to know. I don't know if it's a cover up. I don't know if they're trying to protect Strassmeir. There are just a lot of things I don't know. There are a lot of things that we will never know."

There was a silence.

"It's a bad deal," said Floyd. Julie nodded. "It's a bad deal all around. They were here. It's nothing to be proud of. If not here, someplace else."

"They wanted to see girls," I said.

"Sure," said Floyd. "Sure. It's a semi-nude sexual-oriented type business, so we're quite popular in this part of the country."

"What did the FBI agents say?" I asked.

"At the time, they said, 'We'll put it on the back burner and let it sit.' " Floyd paused. "Well, that's where it's been. This is five years later. And it's still on the back burner."

Something else was noticed at Lady Godiva on the night of April 8. After one of the cat-fight strippers had been thrown out of the club by Floyd, she needed to urinate. Floyd wouldn't let her back in, so she urinated in the car park. She urinated right next to a yellow Ryder truck.

In the immediate aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing, President Clinton promised that no stone would be left unturned. Two thousand Federal agents were assigned to the case, 20,000 individuals were interviewed. But the people at Elohim City were never questioned. Andy Strassmeir was never questioned. Surely they could at least have questioned him.

It turns out that Andy Strassmeir's father is Gunther Strassmeir, Helmut Kohl's Secretary of State, a man known as the "architect of German reunification". Andy Strassmeir received military intelligence training at the Bundeswehr Academy in Hanover. In the light of this new knowledge, Reverend Millar now believes that Carol Howe was not the only undercover federal informant working at Elohim City.

"Strassmeir," he said, "didn't contribute to community harmony. We had a little lady here. She was 80 years old. She'd feed him. She liked Andy. She cared for him. But when she wanted some painting done, he wanted to get paid by the hour. He acted like he was without financial resources. But whenever he went to buy something, he had the credit cards to buy the best." Reverend Millar paused. "We do know," he added, "that Andy contacted an anti-terrorist agency here in the United States when he first landed." Andy Strassmeir is now back in Germany, living with his parents.

In the light of Carol Howe's undercover reports to the ATF, the American government considered launching a raid on Elohim City in the months before the Oklahoma City bombing. But they abandoned the plan. I asked FBI special agent Bob Ricks why they changed their minds. (Incidentally, Ricks was one of the special agents in charge of the siege at Waco. McVeigh had originally considered killing Ricks - or a Waco and Ruby Ridge sniper called Lon Horiuchi - instead of blowing up the Murrah building. But he decided that the Murrah would make more of an impact.) "Why did we abandon the raid on Elohim City?" said Ricks. "We didn't want another Waco."

There is a terrible irony to that decision. The American government's paranoid fear, and the reason why they originally

raided Waco, was that they believed David Koresh might launch a terrorist attack on mainstream America. If you believe the Oklahoma conspiracy theories - if you believe that this story is more than just a series of coincidences - you are left with a startling conclusion. Had the raid on Elohim City not been abandoned, the Oklahoma City bombing might never have happened.

The conspiracy theories inevitably reach a chilling conclusion: something that the theorists are disinclined to state publicly, fearful that the general public might consider them paranoid lunatics. They ask themselves why every member of the ATF based at the Murrah building survived the bombing. The ATF office was one of McVeigh's chief targets. Most of the Bureau's employees didn't turn up for work that morning. The conspiracy theorists put two and two together. Perhaps Strassmeir had tipped them off about the bombing in advance, and they incompetently failed to stop it happening. Perhaps they planned a sting operation, but it somehow went awry. Perhaps they have been covering this fact up ever since.

Timothy McVeigh says he was 1,000 miles away from Lady Godiva on April 8. He says he was at the Imperial Motel in Kingman, Arizona. He says the conspiracy theorists are crazy, and he only ever met Andy Strassmeir once, at a gun show. He says he never visited Elohim City. He admits he telephoned the community on April 5, and asked to speak to Andy, but only because he thought that Elohim City might have been a suitable hideout for him after the bombing.

One wonders why, if this story is true, McVeigh is protecting Strassmeir - an undercover informant. Does he fear reprisals against his family if he spills the beans? Is he embarrassed that he was suckered by a federal employee? Does he want to be considered a lone wolf, a martyr?

McVeigh's aim, in blowing up the Murrah building, was to strike at the heart of the New World Order. And now conspiracy theorists are beginning to believe that the New World Order itself might have played a role in the conspiracy. McVeigh is seething about this in his death row cell. He will consequently be executed, on May 16, an unsatisfied man.