

# Witnesses Testify to Seeing McVeigh



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Moments before a bomb destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building, Rodney Johnson turned the steering wheel of his catering truck to avoid two men hurrying from the building. One was Timothy McVeigh.

Johnson identified McVeigh during questioning Thursday at the state murder trial of bombing conspirator Terry Nichols. His testimony is part of a defense strategy to suggest that McVeigh received substantial help from other conspirators.

Johnson told jurors that he almost ran over McVeigh and the other man just before the April 19, 1995, blast that killed 168 people.

"They were clearly together," Johnson said. "I thought they would stop. They didn't. They continued at a very rapid, quick pace."

The second man, Johnson said, did not resemble a sketch of John Doe No. 2. That man was seen at the Junction City, Kan., body shop where McVeigh leased the Ryder truck that delivered the bomb.

Johnson also said he saw a yellow truck parked in front of the building, which prosecutors pointed out he did not mention in his original statement to the FBI.

"At that time I didn't know it had anything to do with it," Johnson told prosecutor Suzanne Lister. "At that time I thought it was Middle Eastern terrorists."

Germaine Johnston, a former federal housing official, testified she came face-to-face with McVeigh and a second man soon after she fled the ravaged Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. They were standing next to a yellow Mercury.

"He (McVeigh) just came up to me and said, 'What happened?' I said, 'There was an explosion in the federal building.' He said, 'A lot of people killed?' I said 'I don't know' and walked on."

Johnston said the other man was shorter and stockier than McVeigh and did not exactly match an FBI sketch of John Doe No. 2.

She said she saw the men 20 to 30 minutes after the bombing. McVeigh was arrested about 75 miles north of Oklahoma City about 90 minutes after the bombing, prosecutors say.

Nichols, 49, is charged with 161 state counts of first-degree murder for the deaths of 160 bombing victims and one victim's fetus. He is accused of helping McVeigh gather bomb components and build the 4,000-pound explosive. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty.

Nichols is already serving a life prison sentence on federal conspiracy and involuntary manslaughter convictions for the deaths of eight federal law enforcement officers.