



Witnesses place McVeigh at bomb site

■ Nichols' trial:

Testimony attempts to expose a much wider conspiracy.

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Moments before a bomb destroyed the Oklahoma City federal building, Rodney Johnson turned the steering wheel of his catering truck to avoid two men who hurried away from the building.

Johnson told jurors at bombing conspirator Terry Nichols' state murder trial that one of the figures was Timothy McVeigh.

Johnson was questioned Thursday by Nichols' attorneys as part of a defense strategy to suggest that the bombing conspiracy was wider than prosecutors allege and that McVeigh received substantial help from other co-conspirators.

Testimony in the trial is scheduled to resume today.

Johnson told Nichols' jury he almost ran over the two men 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 first man was McVeigh, but Johnson said the second man did not resemble a sketch of John Doe No. 2, the man seen with McVeigh at the Junction City, Kan., body shop where McVeigh leased the Ryder truck that delivered the bomb.

He also said he saw a yellow truck parked in front of the building. But on cross examination, Johnson said he did not mention the truck 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, former branch chief for the Department of Housing and Urban Development, testified she came face-to-face with McVeigh and an unidentified second man minutes after the

bomb destroyed the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, killing 35 HUD workers.

Johnston, of Edmond, said she was at her desk talking with a co-worker on the seventh floor when the bomb went off, showering her and her desk with ceiling tiles and other debris.

"When I looked up I could see the sky," she said, describing how floors above her fell down around her. "I was just stunned."

Johnston said she had made her way out of the building to an alley that led to a building where her husband worked when she came upon two men standing next to a yellow Mercury.

"One of them was Timothy McVeigh," she said. "He 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 second person was shorter and stockier than McVeigh and did not exactly match an FBI sketch of John Doe No. 2.

Trial at a Glance

McALESTER, Okla. (AP) — Developments Thursday in the Oklahoma City bombing trial:

MCVEIGH SPOTTED: Former Department of Housing and Urban Development employee Germaine Johnston testified at bombing conspirator Terry Nichols' murder trial that she came face to face with two men, including Timothy McVeigh, minutes after the Oklahoma City bombing.

TURNER DIARIES: Army Sgt. 1st Class Albert Warnement of Bloomington, Ill., said McVeigh gave him a copy of "The Turner Diaries," a racist novel that begins with a truck bombing of FBI headquarters as part of a war against the government.

WHAT'S NEXT: Jennifer McVeigh, Timothy McVeigh's sister, is scheduled to testify Friday.