

# Man in iconic OKC bombing photo breaks silence

Anastasiya Bolton, KUSA 1:14 p.m. MDT April 29, 2015

**Luke Franey woke up after the Oklahoma City bombing and quickly realized he was trapped nine stories up with no safe way down.**

(Photo: J Pat Carter)

DENVER – Luke Franey doesn't like to talk about the Oklahoma City bombing too often because it brings him back to that place.

"You're seeing the things. You're smelling the smells. You're hearing the things you heard back then," Franey said.

Twenty years ago, Franey was a field agent at the ATF, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives. His office was inside the Alfred P. Murrah building. Franey was at work April 19, 1995 when the bomb went off.

"Everybody was a little shocked at that event," Franey said. "Just thought that was a line that would never be crossed."

Today, Franey is the Special Agent in Charge in Denver, soon moving to Washington D.C. headquarters for a promotion.

He agreed to relive the events of that day with 9NEWS in honor of the 20th anniversary of the bombing. He shared where he was, what it was like and how he's chosen to live his life since.

## That fateful day

On April 19, 1995, Franey came to his office inside the Murrah building early. His team was working on a case late the night before, and that's why so many of his colleagues weren't at work yet. Franey was there to start typing up the criminal complaint on their case.

He was on the phone when the bomb exploded.

"I remember hearing the explosion."

"I remember hearing the explosion. I remember all the girls in the DEA scream, all the secretaries," Franey said. "It's kind of the last thing I remember, the positive pressure wave ripping through our office and then waking up a little while later on the floor, back in the hallway, 10 feet from my desk. It's just mayhem. [I heard] people screaming. [The office was] filled with smoke. Everything [was] just in shambles."

Franey wasn't hurt. He said he woke up, counted fingers and toes and started to assess what was left around him.

"I kind of had a hard time figuring out what was going on, I kind of didn't know," Franey said. "At that point, I didn't know it was a bombing. I just knew that something blew up."

Fairly quickly, he realized he was trapped nine stories up with no safe way down.

## Recording history



He found a handheld radio and tossed one on the ground. It fell apart, but agents on the ground put it back together and Franey was able to communicate.

He also found a tape recorder and started recording what he was seeing, for evidence.

Luck Franey picked up that tape recorder and started recording what he saw. 9NEWS.com. /04/23/15.

"All the rescuers [were] running away from the building."

"I ended up hearing a loud crowd surge from outside the back where the plaza is," Franey said. "I remember running up to that window and looking out, and I [could] see all the ATF and DEA folks running away from building. All the rescuers [were] running away from the building."

Through his handheld radio, his friend told him they found another bomb.

"They think it's going to go off, try to find something sturdy to hang on to," Franey recalled. "Then, your body basically goes into the fight-or-flight syndrome. If one bomb did this, what are two bombs going to do? That's where I made the [calculation] of 'Hey, I'd rather die trying to get out of here than sit through another one.'"

### **He escapes the building**

He used that narrow window ledge to move along the building - nine stories up - to get to the stairs, and he ran.

"The stairway and the rails are just covered in blood from the people that have either gotten themselves out or rescuers have pulled out."

"I get about half way down. I'm slipping and sliding. I can't figure out what's going on," Franey said. "I kind of stop and look: the stairway and the rails are just covered in blood from the people that have either gotten themselves out or rescuers have pulled out. That was kind of shocking."

There was no second bomb. Now on the ground, Franey could actually see what he'd survived.

"That was quite the shock," he said. "My knees kind of buckled a little bit. You realize that's the building you come to work in every day, I'd worked there since 1988, you just see it. At that time you weren't used to seeing things like this.'

Franey got checked out quickly and went right back to work.

Bureau of Arms, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) agent Luke Franey (L) hugs Oklahoma city ATF Bureau manager Valerie Rauden (R) in front of the remains of the Alfred P. Murrah building in downtown Oklahoma City (Photo: AFP, AFP/Getty Images)

"When you're busy, you tend to focus on the task at hand," he said.

And made himself a promise.

"I was not going to let this event define who I was as a person," he said.

There is a box in his office with mementos from the bombing. He says he keeps it mostly for his kids, maybe someday they'd want to see and keep them.

But through the years, Franey said he's been determined to keep moving forward.

"That's what I've tried to use it as, is kind of like a motivational tool. Be a better person. Be a better agent. Be a better husband. Be a better dad. Be a better law enforcement officer, try to prevent these events from happening," he said.