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AP Photo/Ben Margol, Popo

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Aviation Machinist's Mate Senior Chief Nicholas Mellos of Ypsilanti, Mich., a crew member from the American spy plane, waves an American flag upon disembarking a C-17 plane from Guam, Thursday, April 12, 2001, at Hickam Field in Honolulu. Story on page 60.



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courtesy Nelson Rand

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AP/WideWorld

# OKC'S UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

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Will the Truth Die with Timothy McVeigh?

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BY ROGER CHARLES

**T**im McVeigh claims to have “told all” in the recent book, *American Terrorist*. This poorly disguised grab for neo-Nazi martyrdom by McVeigh only reinforces the specious claims of former President Bill Clinton and his co-conspirator, then-Attorney General Janet Reno, that all those legally culpa-

ble for killing 168 Americans — McVeigh, Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier — had been brought before the bar of justice.

The casual observer might justifiably conclude that with both the now-admitted chief perpetrator and the chief law enforcement officers in the U.S. Government claiming that the

crime of the century has been fully explained, it is time to close the books on the largest mass murder in American history.

Such a conclusion would be just what McVeigh, Clinton and Reno, for entirely different reasons, wanted the soporific American public to think.

And, this conclusion would be dead wrong.

While the readers of *SOF* have seen a number of articles devoted to the Oklahoma City bombing (known officially as the OKBOMB case), there are several major unresolved issues dealing with this act of domestic terrorism, which have not been examined in light of more recent information.

The following discussion is not intended to provide definitive answers. Rather, it is intended to illustrate to *SOF* readers that the full truth about the Oklahoma City bombing remains untold. For instance, why has the U.S. Government avoided all discussion about the *second* yellow truck? And what role did a vehicle-tracking device play in the failure of federal law enforcement to prevent a bombing of which they had been pre-warned?

### The Second Yellow Truck

The bomb that destroyed the northern façade of the Murrah Federal Building was so powerful that it propelled most of the rear axle of a 1993 Ford truck for nearly an entire city block. This blast debris contained a partial vehicle identification number (VIN) that allowed the FBI to learn within a few hours that the rear axle had been part of a Ford truck rented only two days before from a Ryder franchise, Elliott's Body Shop, in Junction City, Kansas.

The next day, Thursday, 20 April, FBI agents began a massive canvassing of businesses in Junction City. One team visited the Dreamland Motel about noon and presented a sketch to the motel owner, Lea McGown.

The agents got some very good news, and some not-so-good news.

First, they determined that the occupant of Room 25 had been seen with a Ryder rental truck, that he had signed his room registration, Tim McVeigh, and had listed an address in Decker, Michigan as his residence. This was a major break in the case and led directly to the arrests the next day, Friday, 21 April, of Tim McVeigh and Terry Nichols.

But Lea McGown also shocked the senior agents supervising the field investigators when they learned she had also spotted McVeigh with a yellow truck at her motel on Sunday, 16 April.

McGown never budged on this critical testimony, in spite of intense pressure from FBI agents to change her statements.

At least three other witnesses supported McGown's recollections about McVeigh and a yellow truck at the Dreamland Motel on Easter Sunday. Their recall was as unshakable as her memories. And all these sources tied their observations to Easter activities on that special Sunday.

These witnesses threatened to cause major problems to the U.S. government's neatly wrapped case. The Reno Justice Department claimed that McVeigh took possession of the Ryder rental truck at 4:19 p.m. (local) on Monday, 17 April, at

structed the IED at Geary Lake, a state recreational area 12 miles south of Junction City.

The FBI and local law enforcement put a road block on U.S. Route 77 which runs north-to-south along some high ground just a few hundred yards east of the spot on the shore of Geary Lake where prosecutors claimed McVeigh and Nichols built the bomb.

Local traffic had had a clear view of the bomb-building site, and the traffic survey worked. Nearly two dozen drivers told law enforcement officers that, yes, they had seen a yellow truck parked at the specified site. But, once again the feds got bad news along with the good.

Contrary to investigator's expectations, these witnesses had seen the yellow truck parked at the Geary Lake spot during the week *before* the Oklahoma City bombing, i.e., the week of 10-14 April.

This was not what the investigators wanted to hear and the FBI reports of interviews (known as "302"s) of these witnesses show that the interviewing agents made an intense effort to question the witnesses' memory. Several witnesses easily confirmed the dates of their observations by tying their sightings of a yellow truck during the week of 10-14 April to specific events on their personal calendars. Various witnesses remembered such date-certain events as picking a sick child up early from school and attending a funeral.

One witness was an Army NCO who had retired on 9 April, and had gone fishing on the mornings of 10, 12 and 13 April. He had seen the large yellow truck parked at the Geary Lake site on each of his morning fishing jaunts, and he damn sure knew the date of his last day of active duty in the U.S. Army.

There was no shaking the confidence of these witnesses that they had seen at the shore of Geary Lake a large yellow truck similar to the Ryder truck that carried the bomb. And, they had seen this truck several days *before* the Ryder rental truck with VIN PVA26077 was driven out of the parking area at Elliott's Body Shop.

Confronted with these I-am-positive-about-my-sighting statements, federal prosecutors dropped any mention of the "second yellow truck."

### Keeping It Neat

To admit that there was such a vehicle raised unwanted questions about

## Why has the U.S. Government avoided all discussion about the second yellow truck?

Elliott's Body Shop.

How could several very credible witnesses have seen McVeigh with a yellow truck on Sunday, more than 24 hours before he picked up the Ryder truck with partial VIN PVA26077? What happened to the truck McVeigh drove into the Dreamland parking area on Easter Sunday?

There is no doubt that the VIN-marked partial axle that landed on 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue in Oklahoma City seconds after the 9:02 a.m. blast came from the Ryder rental truck picked up from Elliott's Body Shop. Government-released photographs of the axle show the VIN, proving that the Ryder rental truck picked up on Monday afternoon had carried the massive improvised explosive device (IED).

Unhappiness can be getting what you wish for — or, for FBI investigators, finding the witness you seek.

After McVeigh and Nichols were arrested on Friday, 21 April, Reno and Freeh sought to locate witnesses who would confirm the government's claim that McVeigh and Nichols con-

who else was involved in the OKBOMB case.

According to prosecutors, McVeigh left Kingman, Arizona, on 12 April and did not arrive in the Herington, Kansas area until Friday, 14 April. So who was with the second yellow truck and who turned it over to McVeigh on Easter Sunday?

The bigger question is, what possible role did this vehicle play in the OKBOMB case?

While there was some media attention on this issue, it never received the sustained focus from the national media that it deserved. Two media investigations that did delve into the question of the two yellow trucks were conducted by a regional U.S. newspaper and a foreign newspaper reporter.

The *Denver Post* mounted a six-month investigation that produced four credible witnesses who had seen a second yellow truck parked at the Geary Lake site in the week before the bombing. Confirming the credibility of the sightings at the Dreamland Motel, the *Denver paper* determined at the end of its inquiry that two yellow trucks had been involved in the OKBOMB case. It

opined that the additional truck, "could hold the key to unlocking one of the most enduring mysteries in the case — how many people were involved in the bombing?"

British journalist Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, then the Washington Bureau Chief for *The London Sunday Telegraph*, did what few American journalists did — he traveled the highways and byways of Kansas, Oklahoma, Arkansas, and wherever the OKBOMB story led him. (See his incredibly prescient book, *The Secret Life of Bill Clinton: The Unreported Stories*, especially Section One, "The Oklahoma Bombing.")

In Junction City, he had no trouble finding a number of very credible witnesses who saw a large yellow truck, specifically a Ryder rental truck, at the Dreamland Motel on either Saturday or Sunday, before the 1993 Ford left Elliott's Body Shop.

He also located witnesses who had seen the large yellow truck at Geary Lake, during the week of 10-14 April.

The totality of evidence is simply overwhelming — two large yellow trucks were connected to the bombing, through association with Tim McVeigh and

through conspicuous sightings at the site the U.S. Government claimed had been used for constructing the bomb.

### Ninja-Glad Men With Hoops

Oklahoma accountant Glenn Wilburn lost two grandchildren when McVeigh's bomb destroyed the day-care center in the Murrah Federal Building. Several early *SOF* articles about the OKBOMB case referred to Glenn and his wife Kathy and their efforts to force the government to deal with hard evidence of a wider conspiracy, and its Siamese twin — prior government knowledge of threats against federal buildings in Oklahoma City.

When I first began work on the OKBOMB story in the summer of 1996 for ABC news magazine *20/20*, Glenn Wilburn was one of the Oklahoma City residents widely known and respected in media circles as a credible source of independent information on the case.

On 7 and 8 August, *20/20* producer Don Thrasher and I sat in the Wilburn kitchen in north Oklahoma City for the first of many long briefings. Those first two evenings we spent several hours each night as Glenn and Kathy briefed us on the results of their inquiry. For over a year the Wilburns had worked closely with a wide range of journalists and reporters, swapping information and leads. The Wilburn kitchen table had seated an incredible number of national media figures from both print and television.

The Wilburns had also hosted a wide range of investigators working the OKBOMB case, including John D. ("J. D.") Cash (a freelance investigator and journalist who broke many of the key stories), and Richard Reyna (the most experienced investigator working for the McVeigh defense team). Cash and the Wilburns had formed an especially close relationship and Cash actually worked out of the Wilburn home when staying in Oklahoma City.

On the evening of 7 August, Glenn related one of the more unusual stories of the entire OKBOMB case.

Glenn told of two separate sightings of SWAT-dressed personnel with "hoops." (As a former intelligence officer in the Marine Corps I immediately thought that the hoops must have been direction-finding devices used to triangulate the location from which an electronic emitter was active.)

One observer had called a friend who was a local television news reporter to relay some intriguing information. This source had seen "black-



*SOF* investigative journalists James L. Pate and Richard L. Sherrow found this part of the Ryder truck's transaxle blocks away from the blast and marked it for federal investigators.

clad" men with hoops on a street downtown in Oklahoma City within a few blocks of the Murrah Federal Building during the pre-dawn hours prior to the 9:02 a.m. explosion.

It would take some time before other investigators were able to obtain additional information.

The source had first spotted the ninja-hoopsters from his second floor office where he had been working the graveyard shift. Upon leaving the building and retrieving his car for the drive home, this source encountered a blocked street and was redirected. As he looked down the blocked street he saw men holding hoops and moving slowing down the street.

Although several investigators attempted to contact this source and clarify his sightings, the man refused to discuss the incident further. His initial comments did not provide some of the essential information, such as how many people were involved, who was blocking the street, etc.

These rather sketchy observations and the refusal of the source to expand upon his initial comments did not generate much enthusiasm for more intensive investigation.

But, Charles Key, then an Oklahoman state legislator, developed information that a husband and wife (both local attorneys) had also seen the ninja-hoopsters on a downtown city street. This couple's observations tracked with the initial source and they also reported that they too had been redirected away from the street with the strange activity.

This couple also declined direct interview but did pass word that they were prepared to come forward if there were signs that the federal government wanted to conduct a serious inquiry into the OKBOMB case. (There has been no such sign to date.)

The second set of observers mentioned by Glenn consisted of a husband and wife who had been travelling on Interstate 44 (on the west side of Oklahoma City) near the state fairgrounds at around 4:00 to 4:30 on the morning of the bombing. These observers reported that "a white car with yellow stripes" and a flashing emergency light had blocked I-44. As the sources were allowed to slowly pass the white car, they had spotted "men with hoops" raised over their heads on the shoulder and in the median of the highway while other ninja-clad men

searched the grassy areas.

Certainly the reports were intriguing but with none of the principals willing to go on the record, or for that matter, willing to talk to investigators, these sightings remained too sketchy to tie them directly to the OKBOMB case.

The situation remained static until 28 April 1998 when the *Washington Post* carried its front-page, lead story under the headline, "U.S. LACKING IN TERRORISM DEFENSES." The sub-lead was "Study Cites a Need To Share Intelligence." *Post* reporter Roberto Suro wrote in his lead paragraph:

*Three years after the Oklahoma City bombing, a major interagency study has found widespread deficiencies in the federal government's ability to combat terrorism, from a lack of intelligence-shar-*

They had spotted "men with hoops" raised over their heads on the shoulder and in the median of the highway while other ninja-clad men searched the grassy areas.

*ing on domestic plotters to the need for smaller tracking devices that will escape detection when placed on people and cars. (Emphasis added.)*

Later in the article Suro states that the FBI's number-one hardware need for combating domestic terrorism is a "reduction in size of tracking devices, currently difficult to install covertly due to large size."

This article does not explicitly prove that the FBI used a vehicle (or person) tracking device on one of the two yellow trucks involved in the Oklahoma City bombing. But, a reasonable person can rightly infer that this major government study examined in detail federal law enforcement's failure to prevent the most deadly act of domestic terrorism in our nation's history.

And the item highest on the FBI's list of critically needed equipment to fight domestic terrorism is a smaller, more easily hidden tracking device!

#### Andy "The German" Reveals Inside Information

But it was Evans-Pritchard's interview questions with the former lieutenant of Germany's *Panzer Grenadiers*, Andreas Carl Strassmeir, which added

the glue to bind the disparate pieces together.

In the late spring of 1996, Evans-Pritchard had several conversations with this former head of military training and security at the Christian Identity compound in eastern Oklahoma, Elohim City. By this time, over a year after the bombing, Strassmeir was sitting tight in his family's home in Berlin.

As related in his book and in personal conversations to me, Evans-Pritchard had elicited several incriminating admissions from Strassmeir, including two that directly relate to the issues of the yellow trucks and the vehicle-tracking device.

First, Strassmeir stated on the record that there were two yellow trucks involved in the conspiracy. And, secondly, he stated that the truck carrying the bomb had also "had a transmitter, so they could track it with a radio receiving device. I don't know how they could have lost contact."

While Strassmeir's claims need to be taken with the proverbial grain of salt, there is compelling evidence that he had access to prior knowledge regarding the bombing.

As far as I have been able to determine, this *SOF* article is the first time any publication has written about the observations of the ninja-clad hoopsters. Until Evans-Pritchard published his book, no one had written about the vehicle-tracking device being on the bomb truck.

So, where did Strassmeir, in Germany in 1996, get information about a vehicle-tracking device that correlates with both the sightings in Oklahoma City, and the FBI's most-critical hardware shortfall?

Coincidence is hardly a reasonable explanation.

Is it then too much of a stretch to connect the three sightings of ninja-hoopsters with their direction-finding gear to the following scenario? Surely less of a stretch than the one that purports to have solved the crime:

- One, a tracking device had been placed on the yellow truck that federal law enforcement was monitoring.
- Two, the bombers had accounted for this risk in their planning and had taken the appropriate counter-

*Continued on page 87*

measures.

• Three, the tracking device planted on the vehicle had been discovered as part of basic counter-measures used by the bombers. (A Radio Shack scanner modified to pick up the right frequency range would have easily detected the presence of an emitting tracking device, and the subsequent search of the vehicle would have discovered the item which the FBI has acknowledged as being "difficult to install covertly due to large size.")

Glenn Wilburn posited a theory in August 1996 that federal law enforcement had been following a decoy yellow truck the morning of the bombing while the Ryder truck with the bomb snuck undetected into Oklahoma City.

While that view must remain characterized as "theory" at this point, the succeeding five years have only added to the evidence that reinforces Glenn's view. Conversely, these same five years have produced not a shred of credible evidence that weakens his theory.

**Buck Rogers To The Rescue**

On 19 May 2000, the *Washington Post* carried a story in its Metro section titled, "Satellite System Has Star Role In Bank Robbery Investigation." The sub-lead read, "Grand Jury in Alexandria Indicts Suspect Tracked by FBI."

The story described how the FBI used its most technologically advanced vehicle-tracking device to trace the alleged perpetrator's movements. The Global Positioning System (GPS) allowed the FBI to track the suspects' movements and overlaid the location of his van onto a computer-generated map.

Quoting "a member of the [District of Columbia] police's electronic surveillance unit," the article stated:

"We had an older system that was a beeper, but we had to wait for the car to stop somewhere and then go find it. Now if the car is in North Dakota, we can sit here in our office and track it."

Five years after the Oklahoma City bombing, the FBI had resolved the most pressing hardware deficiency in its fight against domestic terrorism.

*A former Marine officer and co-producer of 20/20, Roger Charles has been a frequent contributor to SOF on the OKC bombing.* ✕

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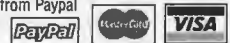
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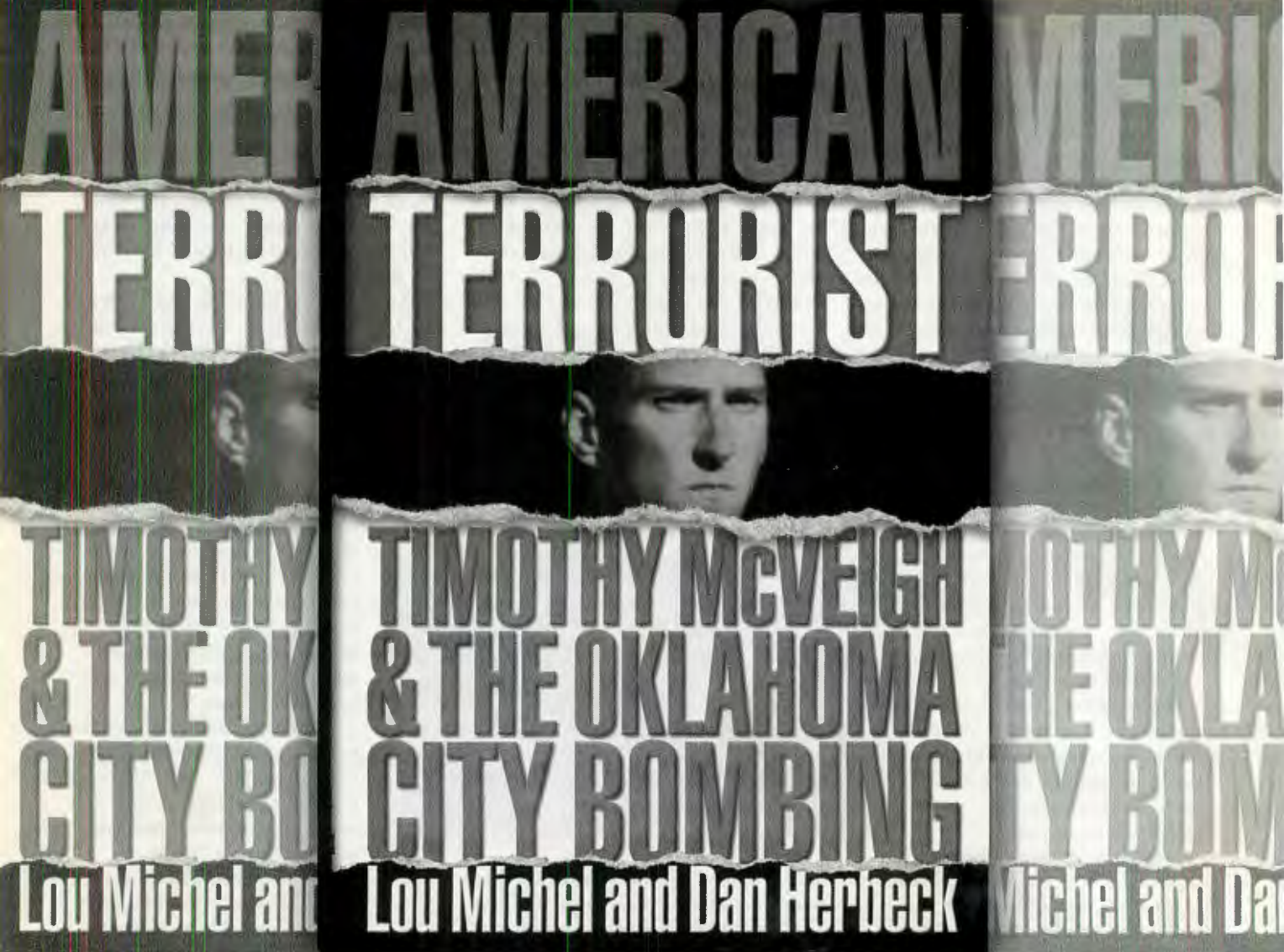
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# LAST WORDS — LAST LIES

*American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & The Oklahoma City Bombing*

REVIEWED BY J. D. CASH

PHOTO COURTESY REGANBOOKS/HARPERCOLLINS

AS the nation's focus turned to Terre Haute, Indiana for the execution of Timothy McVeigh, a new book made the stands, just in time to cash in on the "Roman Holiday" surrounding the execution of this nation's most despised death-row inmate.

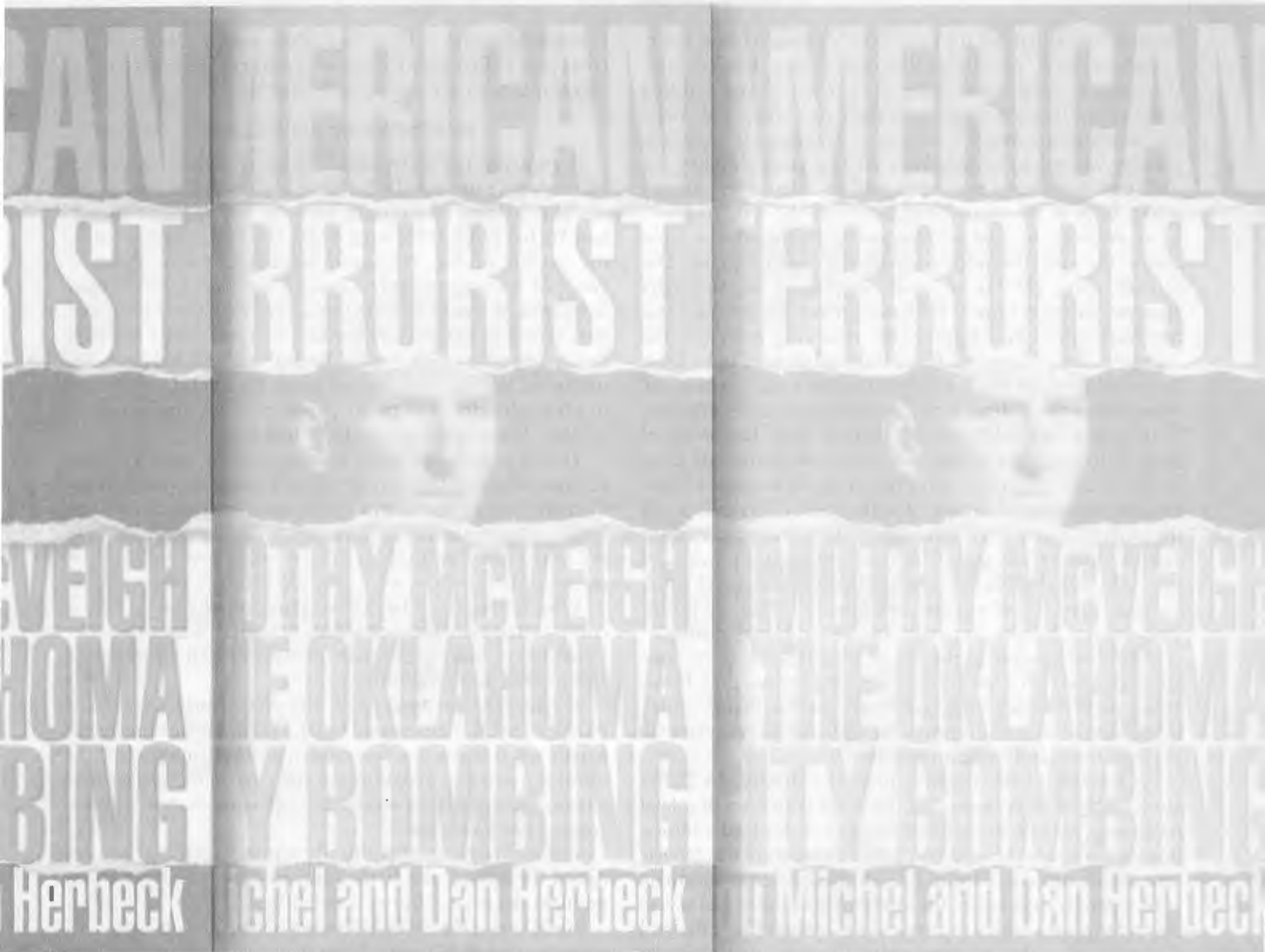
*American Terrorist: Timothy McVeigh & The Oklahoma City Bombing* entered the marketplace in a tornado of glitzy publicity and heavy hype. Promising to be the final word on the 19 April 1995 truck bombing of the A. P. Murrah Federal Building, the Madison Avenue-types pumped the networks for unprecedented airtime to promote Lou Michel's and Dan Herbeck's 426-page work.

Published by ReganBooks, in conjunction with

HarperCollins, this was to be a no-holes-barred tell-all — straight from the lips of Timothy McVeigh. The marketing department said it would put to rest all the conspiracy theories generated by the mass murder. This was to be *the* book on the Oklahoma City bombing.

By now you've probably read or heard excerpts of the story. McVeigh takes center-stage, declaring himself the mastermind of the crime. Convicted co-conspirator, Terry Nichols, we are told, only helped his ex-Army buddy stash his car in OKC, and mix the bomb in Kansas, because McVeigh threatened to kill him. Mike Fortier is almost totally let off the hook for his involvement. And John Doe #2? Oh, well, he never really existed. The authors would have us believe the man was a fig-





ment of scores of witnesses' imaginations.

So, can *American Terrorist* deliver the corroborating evidence to back all this up?

Before we launch into an analysis, it might help to put some important elements in perspective. First, I've investigated and reported on this case for six long years. Clearly, I am damned ready for anyone to name names. Certainly the victims' relatives are too. But as I waited for a copy of this book, I remained skeptical any of us would get our wish. After all, the book's primary source is McVeigh. And, oh, how well I know that boy's track record.

On 13 February 1996, I interviewed Mr. McVeigh at El-Reno Federal Prison, just outside Oklahoma City. I came away impressed by only one thing: Mr. McVeigh was no leader. I found him to be immature and easily manipulated. His hot buttons were fringe right-wing ideology and fantasies involving women. Push those buttons and Sergeant Mac was your boy. The perfect "patsy."

### The Merry "Crankster"

Conversations over the years with witnesses, family members, friends and members of his trial team have reinforced those impressions. And there were other important reasons to carefully question McVeigh's statements: LSD and crystal-meth. His sister, Jennifer, confirmed her brother's

involvement with both.

During his first weeks in jail, McVeigh exhibited all the symptoms of a "crankster" coming down from the destructive effects of the powerful stimulant. Neighbors of Michael Fortier also confirmed the pair had been on a drug-induced "roller coaster" the last months before the bombing.

Aware of this and other factors, lawyers for the prisoner came to believe their client was delusional; that McVeigh was living out a fantasy — a fantasy eerily similar to the storyline in the fictional book, *The Turner Diaries*. Also disturbing, McVeigh was captivated by Revolutionary War hero, Patrick Henry. Some wondered if McVeigh might actually believe he was the reincarnation of the patriot.

From the beginning it was up to court-appointed attorney, Stephen Jones, to challenge his client with the facts his team of defense investigators were coming up with. Jones wanted to elicit the truth from McVeigh about every element of the crime he might be familiar with.

For his money, Jones suspected Mr. McVeigh was part of a group intent on the overthrow of the federal government. Nothing his investigators came to him with proved otherwise. If this were so, evidence that he was a *minor* player was McVeigh's only real hope of escaping the death penalty. The federal death penalty statute allows evidence of a wider conspiracy to be introduced as a mitigating factor for a jury to

consider. It could mean the difference between life and death.

Shortly after accepting the case, Jones leveled with McVeigh, "Son, no one is going to believe that you and that other rube, Terry Nichols, pulled-off this thing." McVeigh chafed under the brutal assessment. Timothy McVeigh desperately wanted to be *somebody*. At this point, if being the "fall guy" for a mass murder would get him in the history books, so be it. He stonewalled Jones and the rest.

As evidence of a wider conspiracy developed, the more hostile the visits between lawyers and client became. The defense team grew ever more suspicious as McVeigh's accounts changed as new evidence proved his previous stories impossible. But despite this mounting evidence, the client remained adamant, "If the team didn't want to be fired; they would let him run the show." He didn't want to hear any more of this "conspiracy crap!" Screaming matches ensued.

It is true that McVeigh decided to wash his hands of Stephen Jones on the eve of the Denver federal trial. He came to the bizarre conclusion after one more in a string of false confessions managed to make it to the media. This time it was the *Dallas Morning News* reporting that McVeigh had told the defense team he was guilty. Insiders could not walk out and say, "Oh, yeah, but the bastard has lied about so much other stuff, we don't know whether he's nuts or telling the truth." This was not the time to parade all this out for the media.

Published so close to the day of the trial's start, any hope McVeigh could get a fair hearing went out the window. It was at this point, I believe, the seeds were planted that eventually produced *American Terrorist*. McVeigh would get even with his legal team, and some other folks.

As a result of the negative pretrial publicity the *Dallas Morning News* story generated, McVeigh curled up in a fetal position in his cell and refused to speak to his lead attorney. Hoping to mollify the situation, other members of the defense team would drop in to try to smooth things over. It was to no avail. Literally days before the multi-million dollar trial was to begin, McVeigh decided to contact U.S. District Judge Richard P. Matsch and left a message asking the jurist to arrange for him to have a new lawyer. Matsch refused to return the call. McVeigh would "dance with the gal that brung 'im."

Later, a member of the defense told me that every morning when the marshals brought in the *Star*, everyone at the table studied McVeigh for any hint of what he might do. Many expected "the client" to ask the judge to change his plea to *guilty* and then go off on a tirade about Jones, the government, Waco, Ruby Ridge, etc. "None of us could sleep nights," the attorney admitted. "He was the client from hell."

The rest is history. The trial turned out to be a nonevent for anyone looking for answers.

Years later, watching the case wind through the appeals process, I held out hope McVeigh would drop the *Silent Brotherhood* routine and tell it all. His pals were not going to bust him out of Super Max. That stuff only happens in *The Turner Diaries*. So, when the news broke that McVeigh had been feeding a couple of reporters at the *Buffalo News* a story about the bombing, I wondered: Would he really give it all up? Most doubted he would. And most turned out to be right.

The authors of *American Terrorist* jumped on the story, just as the world got its first glimpse of those chiseled features of Tim McVeigh being led from the Noble County jail, in Oklahoma. Lou Michel scrambled to Bill McVeigh's residence in Pendleton, a suburb of Buffalo, New York. Upon his arrival, the reporter realized the father of the alleged killer was already in the grips of the FBI. Bill McVeigh wouldn't be giving any interviews for awhile. Michel and the rest of the

newshounds were held at bay while agents ransacked the home and grilled the shocked autoworker. The reporter was diligent, though. He would wait them out.

### Persistence Overcomes Resistance

Eventually, the determined reporter would catch Bill McVeigh after the initial tidal wave of cops and snoops receded. After gaining an audience with the grief-stricken parent, Lou Michel and Bill McVeigh began their relationship out in the garden of the Pendleton residence, where the pair swapped growing tips. Over time, a bond between the men developed. It would be from this entrée that, years later, and after scores of letters were penned, Timothy James McVeigh finally agreed to speak "on the record" with Michel about his role in the killings. The authors admit the final straw that led to McVeigh's decision to go public was the publishing of Stephen Jones' book, *Others Unknown*.

Timothy McVeigh was determined to trump Jones' account, which left the world with the impression he was little more than a "patsy" in a wider conspiracy of major players. Now, more than ever, the convicted killer needed a book published about his exploits. Michel and fellow *Buffalo News* reporter, Dan Herbert, were only too happy to oblige.

What followed is a book that spins Timothy McVeigh as a crafty ladies man and gun-toting defender of the American Constitution, who goes toe-to-toe with an evil empire. He's also pitched as a great philosopher:

*People need to understand, the New World Order is a metaphor, not just a paranoid belief. When you look around it's happening. It means one superpower, which is going to lead the world to a new age. People on the other end of the gun see it as one superpower forcing others. You will agree with us or we're going to bomb your ass.*

And McVeigh can be politically astute. Regarding the murder of 19 babies, the book addresses the public relations problem the dead children created:

*Had I known there was a day-care center, it might have given me pause to switch targets. That's a lot collateral damage.*

And he can borrow a slick phrase:

*One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter.*

The writers begin McVeigh's "image makeover" with a survey of his childhood. From an orderly account emerges a picture of a somewhat typical young man, who endures adolescence in a home fraught with marital discord. Eventually, McVeigh's parents will split and the family is torn apart by divorce. His two sisters will go with their mother; Tim, though, will stay with his father — a no-nonsense blue-collar worker, who prefers bowling with his pals to campouts with his only son.

Bullied by classmates, ignored by girls, Sigmund Freud would fly into cartwheels after learning Timmy turns to guns for his pleasure. Over time, this firearms fetish will be followed by the stockpiling of water and other survivalist gear. Here, apparently, is the stuff of which mass-murderers are made.

Following McVeigh's graduation from high school, he will make a fateful decision. After only a short stint in college, McVeigh decides he knows more than his teachers and drops out. He will try the Army. In the Army, they have lots of big guns, the writers point out. At Fort Benning, Timmy will stay in his barracks, studying books about those big guns, while the rest of the recruits are out chasing women.

Is the psychobabble seeping in yet?

Also at Benning, two characters emerge who will cast dark shadows across McVeigh's remaining days on earth. Enter the freewheeling, dope-smoking, acid-dropping Mike Fortier and

his polar opposite, Terry Nichols, a tax-protester and serial loser with a fanatic dislike for all things government.

Eventually, the military careers of Fortier and Nichols fall by the wayside. Fortier takes a medical "early out" for a sore back. Terry Nichols goes home with a family hardship discharge.

### Top Gun

On the Bradley IFV, McVeigh will set records for marksmanship. His ability to handle the fighting vehicle's 25-mm cannon astonishes his superiors. During one live-fire competition, he will score a near-perfect, 998 out of 1,000 points. McVeigh earns the Top Gun trophy. A star was born. In a two-year period, Timothy McVeigh will soar from private to sergeant. His future seemed blessed. All McVeigh needs now is a war to prove just how good, or bad, he really is. The stars were aligned. And Saddam gives him his dream-shot.

Operation Desert Storm was a made-to-order combat environment for the Bradley and a man like Tim McVeigh. He excels in the 100-hour campaign, earning a Bronze Star. But there was more to come. At last, he will get a shot at that most coveted legion — the U. S. Army Special Forces. But at this cruel juncture, fate deals McVeigh a bad hand. Only 48 hours into the rigorous training, he calls it quits. "Sore feet," he claims.

Discharged and back in economically depressed upstate New York, Citizen McVeigh finds himself living with his aloof father and party-animal sister, Jennifer, who has moved back home and taken over his old room. Bunking on the sofa is not what the war hero expected.

From here the book correctly records McVeigh experimenting with serious drugs and joining the Ku Klux Klan. Next, hoping to further escape the reality of a security guard job that can't provide the "playboy lifestyle" that McVeigh yearns for, he turns to a sports bookie for more adventure. He quickly finds it. McVeigh gambles away every dime he can muster, and more. Heavily in debt, he packs up and hits the road.

Today, we know McVeigh's life will dramatically impact a nation, only a couple of years after leaving New York. Once on the road, he will write his sister about a "network of friends" that he describes as "ex-military-types." He will also write about robbing banks and about a coming revolution in which he will play a part. This is the big story. However, the authors are unable to get McVeigh to discuss this in a substantive way. Instead, we get a disjointed story that ignores the evidence and defies common sense.

McVeigh is portrayed as a "lone wolf," enraged by the government's actions at Waco and Ruby Ridge. Bouncing coast-to-coast, we get a picture of a malcontent searching endlessly for evidence of government-sponsored concentration camps, UN troops and UFO landing sites. But no names are mentioned other than Mike Fortier and Terry Nichols.

### Follow The Money?

If one accepts Michel and Herbeck's account, our vagabond survives off the sale of bumper stickers and copies of *The Turner Diaries*. The most obvious question is avoided: How? How does someone with nothing on the asset side of his balance sheet but a trashed car, survive on the road for over two years with no evidence of income beyond a couple of minimum wage jobs that last only a few weeks?

As an example of McVeigh's frantic travels, just take a look at a 100-day period, beginning in January 1993. Admittedly broke and heavily in debt, McVeigh quits his job and travels from upstate New York to Florida. Next he will go to New

Orleans for Mardi Gras. After soaking that up, Mr. McVeigh will head to Waco, Texas, to see, first-hand, what all the trouble is there. After a brief stay, he's off to Kingman, Arizona, where he provides a sitrep to his pal, Mike Fortier. Next stop, "The Tulsa Gun and Knife Show." Here, McVeigh will meet with the infamous Andreas "The German" Strassmeir. After that experience, he's off to Hot Springs, Arkansas, for a few days with a couple he met at the Tulsa show. From Arkansas, our vagabond heads back to Florida. After a quick turnaround, Mr. McVeigh's right back in Hot Springs. Tires sizzling, McVeigh will then launch for Decker, Michigan, and a visit with the Nichols clan for a few days. After catching up with those folks, he's on the road back to Kingman, where he rents a residence to serve as his temporary base camp.

You do the math. In just one hundred days since quitting his security job in New York, McVeigh has put over 10,000 miles on his car. This pattern repeats itself for the following two-year period, leading up to the bombing of the federal building. By any reasonable estimate, this lifestyle would cost over \$50,000.00 — regardless of the evidence that Timothy McVeigh sometimes stayed at friends' homes. Compare those expense dollars with an estimate of McVeigh's income for this same 27-month period and you would find he made less than \$5,000.00 from a couple of part-time jobs — jobs that lasted only a few weeks. It would take a world-class salesman to make up the difference selling copies of *The Turner Diaries*.

We already know that in the aftermath of the bombing, McVeigh's sister admitted to the FBI she got involved laundering some \$100 bills from a bank robbery her brother had been involved in. Nichols' ex-wife admitted to the FBI that she, too, suspected something illegal was going on after she discovered her chronically unemployed ex-husband had salted away \$60,000 in cash and silver in her home and a storage locker, that also contained wigs, masks and a make-up kit.

You would think this evidence might pique the authors' imaginations, especially when at one point in *American Terrorist* they relate an account of Tim McVeigh giving his father \$4,000 in \$100 bills. But here, once again, we are left in wonderland. Michel and Herbeck never offer an explanation for these \$100 bills that keep raining down on McVeigh.

Another serious omission to taint the credibility of this book is the authors' lack of research into McVeigh's links to Elohim City and the group of bank robbers that frequented the sprawling Christian Identity compound. *American Terrorist* ignores overwhelming evidence contained in BATF reports detailing work by undercover informant, Carol Howe, outlining a bombing conspiracy involving persons at Elohim City.

Also passed over are his well-established connections to the compound, such as a traffic ticket McVeigh was given a few minutes from the compound in the fall of 1993 — only months after his sudden departure from New York. This is also the very time McVeigh begins writing letters to sister, Jennifer, extolling the virtues of bank robbers. And most astonishing, there is no mention in the book that, on the day the grand jury says the plot to bomb the Murrah Building was hatched, McVeigh was registered in a motel room a short drive from Elohim City.

And then there is the incredible fact that the patriot synod of Elohim City, twice-convicted murderer Richard Wayne Snell, is executed by the state of Arkansas, exactly 12 hours after the bomb explodes at the Oklahoma City

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