

Daily is relentless in pursuit of bombing story

BY STANLEY SCHWARTZ

IDA BEL, OK.—National interest may have waned in the years since the tragic bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City that claimed 168 lives, though one community daily refuses to let the story fade away.

In fact, it is one reporter at the small daily who refuses to let the story go. And for him there's good reason. Information he's uncovered points to other co-conspirators in the bombing: people

the reporter said government authorities should have prosecuted. For reporter J.D. Cash, the

loss of a good friend in the horrific explosion that brought down the front of the federal building was the impetus for changing his career from an attorney to an investigative journalist.

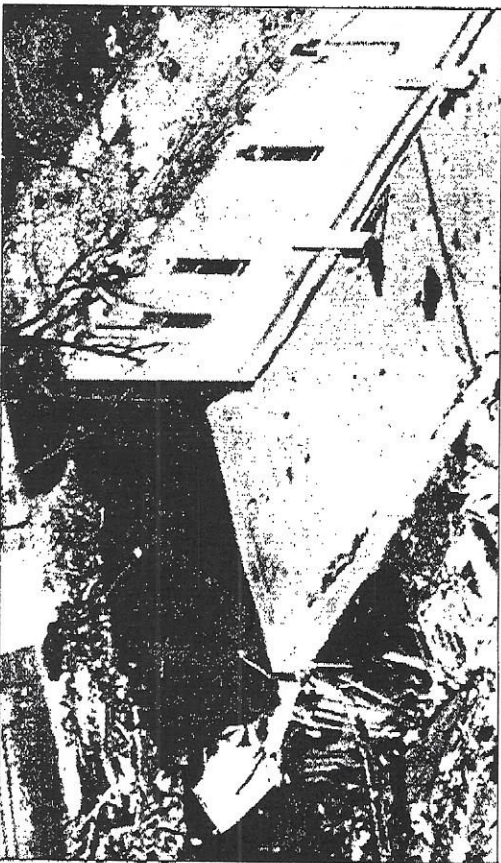
Since the bombing in April of 1995, The McClain Daily Gazette has published more than 100 stories with information Cash uncovered through interviews, inside sources and a host

of FOI requests.

Publisher Bruce Willingham said he was amazed at Cash's relentless pursuit of the story.

"Every time we'd ask questions, it created more questions than answers," he said. When Cash first approached him with previously unpublished information, Willingham was intrigued. He put two of his own reporters on it, checking all of Cash's sources and documents. FBI agents interviewed Cash

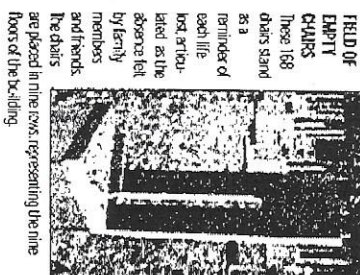
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AP/WIDEWORLD

AERIAL VIEW—The federal County Republican office suffered heavy damage from one of a series of devastating terrorist attacks that took place in May.

MINI *reconstruction of the building*



are placed in the room, representing the nine floors of the building.

HIPAA in the newsroom; is it workable?

WASHINGTON, DC—The Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act has moved into the newsroom and reporters are trying to decide whether it plans to create trouble. Or possibly they will learn to live with it.

Typical among the complaints in mid-April after the (HIPAA) took effect was this from Caroline Trovbridge, editor and publisher of the Tonganoxie (KS) Mirror.

"We had an injury accident in which an elderly gentleman hit a bridge abutment, was flown by air ambulance to an area hospital, where he died. They would not release his name to us. I called and yelled and screamed, but they would not release it."

BOMBING: Reporter wanted more information on who was behind the blast

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as recently as last year, Willingham said, because of information uncovered by the reporter.

Cash had discovered a security tape from a Tulsa, OK, strip club that indicated Timothy McVeigh, the convicted bomber executed in 2001, had more than one accomplice. Terry Nichols, the second man arrested in connection with the bombing, is currently being tried on 160 counts of murder. If convicted he could face the death penalty.

Other media have taken notice of the five-day, \$400-circulation daily's dogged pursuit of this story. A Canadian broadcast magazine did a segment on the paper and the information it uncovered. The New Yorker did an article as well. And the Associated Press presented a series of articles based on information from Cash's sources.

"It was a heart-breaking tragedy," Cash said. "The senselessness of the act made it even more devastating." He spoke about his friend Clarence Wilson, an attorney, who had been killed on that fateful day in

April. A woman who had been a year behind Cash in law school and who worked for Wilson also perished in the blast.

Cash said he wanted more information on what had happened. No one was talking. He looked at the transcript from the state highway patrol police radio transmissions from that day.

"They were told not to give interviews of any kind," Cash said. "The fire department too." He was curious as to why the media was being kept from the crime scene and why Oklahoma City Police investigators were being kept out as well, only state and federal investigators were being allowed in.

Cash filed hundreds of FOI requests. "Every now and then someone would mess up and send me something," he said. He looked at depositions taken by McVeigh's defense team and internal FBI memos.

That led to the startling discovery that McVeigh's sister, Jennifer, may have had prior knowledge about the bombing.

This, said Willingham, may have been one of the reasons McVeigh suddenly

stopped fighting his death sentence.

In a note to readers, the daily said: "Quotes and activities attributed in this series to Timothy McVeigh, his sister Jennifer and/or their lawyers were derived from internal legal memoranda prepared by their lawyers and/or affidavits produced by the FBI ... all from sources developed by Cash."

In an article on Jennifer McVeigh from a 2000 issue, Cash wrote: "But unlike those other revelers cruising the Florida beaches that spring, Ms. McVeigh harbored a dark secret that could profoundly affect a nation. She believed that her brother was part of a revolutionary movement that was about to strike—lighting a fuse that would start a second American revolution."

Willingham could not say for sure whether the story's revelations had a direct correlation to McVeigh abandoning his death sentence appeal, but "this decision came shortly after he learned the story was going to break," he explained.

Another article in the McCurtain paper showed the hand-drawn bomb diagram Timothy McVeigh made for his attorney

Cash said his evidence showed a much stronger connection between McVeigh

and the white-supremacist group, the Aryan Republican Army, based at a farm in Oklahoma. He said this group robbed banks all over the Midwest to finance its operations.

Even after sharing his information with authorities, Cash said, no additional arrests were made.

"They either don't have enough information to bring murder charges, or they have an informant inside that they're protecting," Cash said.

After eight years of following this story, Cash is venturing into other areas. He's covering the outdoor beat for the daily as a break from the heavy topic of his bombing series.

Willingham said he never paid Cash—who won a Society of Professional Journalists award for investigative reporting—for any of the articles about the bombing. But as his outdoor writer, Cash is now a full-time reporter for the paper.

SARAH JAY

MO daily settles editorial cartoon lawsuit

BY CORY DE VERA

COLUMBIA, MO.—The Columbia Daily Tribune has agreed in an out-of-court settlement to remove a cartoon spoofing a local school board candidate's stance on corporal punishment from its electronic archives. The settlement includes a payment for Henry Lane's legal expenses and an apology on the Tribune's editorial page that Lane approved.

"I'm told by my attorneys we can't talk about the details," said Lane, who had

"I'm necessarily into that stuff." He is depicted wearing women's underwear, long gloves and high heels, and he is holding a whip. The whip seems to come from a box labeled "Election success record."

Waters said the company would have incurred substantially higher expense fighting Lane's allegations in court.

The settlement document specifically says that neither Darkrow nor the Tribune believes the cartoon was unlawful or defamatory, and that the settlement money is for the purpose of buying peace.

FUNERAL: Families had to be kept separate

FROM PAGE 1

This unusual event came about because of a tragic murder-suicide within a Polish-Catholic family in the community. Harrah News Today Publisher Darwin Maxey said local funeral home director Cass Smith wanted to keep the deceased and their families separate.

An event like this involves strong emotions and he wanted to make the ceremonies as satisfying as they could be for both families," Maxey said. The funeral

and Maxey said his receptionist laughed at first, thinking it was a joke. He was able to convince her so she could be ready in case anyone called to verify the viewing's location.

The office's area is 1,600-square feet, and allowed enough room for all the visitors. Harrah is a small community where people are closely tied. Maxey said about 850 people signed the guest book.

The paper's staff seemed unfazed by the fact that their office overnight became a newspaper morgue. Some furniture had