Into The Mind of Terror

THROUGHOUT HIS CAPTURE AND CONVICTION, OKLAHOMA CITY BOMBER TIMOTHY MCVEIGH MAINTAINED A STONY SILENCE. WHAT DROVE HIM TO COMMIT AN ACT OF SUCH UNSPEAKABLE CRUELTY? NOW TWO REPORTERS UNMASK THE MAN WHOSE FACE BECAME SYNONYMOUS WITH EVIL.

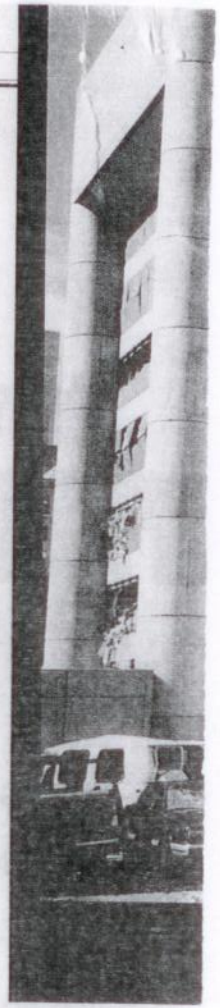
By Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck

From "American Terrorist"

ILLUSTRATED BY ANDREA VENTURA

WHEN A BOMB BLEW UP the federal building in Oklahoma City, the whole world wanted to know: who was Timothy McVeigh and why would anyone do such a thing?

Veteran newsmen Lou Michel and Dan Herbeck, of the Buffalo News, started digging for answers—and ended up in their own backyards. Tim McVeigh had grown up in his father's house in Pendleton, N.Y., about 20 minutes away from where Lou Michel lived. Capitalizing on local contacts as well as their best investigative instincts, Michel and Herbeck were able to get to McVeigh's father, and then to Timothy McVeigh himself—who, from his death-row cell, divulged what was going through his murderous mind that fateful day.



No Mercy

DAWN, April 19, 1995. He awoke with the sun on this Wednesday, yawning and stretching in the cab of the Ryder truck. He'd slept like a baby in the rental, two feet in front of a 7000-pound bomb.

The padded seat in the big yellow truck had been like a fine hotel bed compared with many of the places he'd slept in recent years. Back in the Army, he'd learned how to sleep without being comfortable.

He had also learned how crucial rest was when you were preparing for action, and there would be plenty of action today. Timothy McVeigh was going to teach the government a lesson. He intended to strike back for Waco, for Ruby Ridge, for high taxes, for gun laws and a host of other grievances he'd been amassing for years.

He reached below the seat and pulled out an envelope made of thick brown plastic. He peeled open the wrapping, pulled out a food packet and tore it open. This was breakfast, a spaghetti MRE, or meal-ready-to-eat. High in calories and carbohydrates, it was specially formulated for soldiers on the move. Energy food. He would need every ounce of it to steel himself for what was to come.

After finishing his meal, McVeigh got out and thoroughly examined his truck, checking the tires, making sure that the rear and side doors to the cargo box were securely locked.

All this came naturally to him. He was a detail man—meticulous and tireless. He was not, those who knew him would agree, an overtly violent or nasty person. Yet here he was, four days shy of his 27th birthday, preparing to use a truck bomb to destroy an office building filled with people he had never met—a mission he considered an act of war.

McVeigh checked the .45-caliber Glock semiautomatic handgun that he carried close to his heart, in a leather holster across his chest. It could fire 16 bullets without reloading, and he was prepared to use it to kill anyone who interfered with his task.

He was dressed in faded black jeans and Army boots, with a windbreaker over his favorite T-shirt, worn as a token of his defiance. On the front was a drawing of Abraham Lincoln. Underneath was the Latin refrain that John Wilkes Booth screamed after he assassinated Lin-

After the Bombing– Set by a native son, the blast that tore off the front of the Alfred P. Murrah Building shook a country's faith in itself.

coln—*Sic semper tyrannis* ("Thus ever to tyrants").

On the back of the shirt was a picture of a tree dripping blood, bearing a quotation from Thomas Jefferson: "The tree of liberty must be refreshed from time to time with the blood of patriots and tyrants."

A lot of blood will be shed today, McVeigh thought. *Innocent people will suffer. But there is no other way.*

He found the truck to be in good running order. He'd checked all the fluid levels the night before, when he stopped for gas in southern Kansas, topping off the tank with $40 worth of unleaded.

Timothy J. McVeigh turned the key in the ignition, threw the Ryder truck into gear and headed for Oklahoma City.

Calculations

AS HE DROVE down the highway, McVeigh carefully obeyed the speed limit. With 7000 pounds of explosives behind him, he could hardly afford a traffic accident. But he had another tactical reason for taking his time. He had planned the bombing for 9 a.m. He did not want to get there too early—before the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City filled up with people. He wanted his body count.

At least two of the agencies he most despised—the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF), and the Drug Enforcement Administration—had offices in the Murrah Building, as did the Secret Service. The other agencies housed there—the Social Security Administration, and the departments of Housing and Urban Development and Agriculture—were all part of a government McVeigh regarded as evil and out of control.

To justify what he was about to do, he summoned up a favorite movie from childhood: *Star Wars.* McVeigh likened himself to Luke Skywalker, the heroic Jedi knight whose attack on the Death Star is the climax of the film. McVeigh dismissed the killing of secretaries, receptionists and other personnel with the same cold-blooded calculation. They were all part of an evil empire.

McVeigh had carefully scouted every aspect of his plan. On a previous trip to Oklahoma City, he had worked out the exact route he would take, looking for speed traps, highway construction, possible road hazards and, especially, underpasses too low for the Ryder truck.

About 8:50 a.m. McVeigh entered Oklahoma City, a proud community of 460,000 people. The weather was warm and sunny, the sky a brilliant blue. Most people were just settling in to what promised to be an ordinary workday.

McVeigh wore no expression as he sat at the wheel of the truck. He drove on, scanning his surroundings and reviewing every contingency he might face in the moments ahead.

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Expecting to be either captured or killed after the bombing, he had filled a plain white envelope with articles explaining his antigovernment ideology.

No matter how things turned out, he counted on police getting hold of the documents and leaking them to the news media.

At a stoplight he took a moment to cram a pair of green foam earplugs into his ears. As the rental vehicle rumbled up Northwest 5th Street, nobody in downtown Oklahoma City thought anything of it. Ryder trucks drove through the city all the time. That was one reason McVeigh had picked it.

Both fuses burning and his fingers tight on the steering wheel, McVeigh willed the red light to change.

He was surprised at how little traffic there was. Keeping his eyes peeled for onlookers, McVeigh pulled to the side of the road, just long enough to take out a lighter and ignite the five-minute fuse to his bomb.

Soon the truck cab filled with the acrid smell of burning gunpowder. As McVeigh continued along Northwest 5th Street, he rolled down both windows to let out some of the smoke.

A block from the target, he stopped for a traffic light. Now he lit a second, shorter fuse—the one he had measured at approximately two minutes. For 30 seconds, McVeigh sat watching the red light. With both fuses burning and his fingers tight on the steering wheel, he glared up at the light, willing it to change.

When it finally turned green, McVeigh made sure to ease away from the intersection. No stomping on the gas pedal. No frantic movements.

Approaching the building, he spotted the location he had chosen for the bomb—a drop-off point, several car lengths long, cut into the sidewalk on the north side of the structure.

No other vehicle was there when he arrived. McVeigh breathed a sigh of relief. If the drop-off spot had been filled, he had planned to drive onto the sidewalk and crash his truck into the building. That would not be necessary now.

As calmly as any ordinary deliveryman, McVeigh parked his vehicle. He was right below the tinted windows of the America's Kids day-care center on the second floor.

He looked over his creation one last time. The fuses were burning. The vehicle was exactly where he wanted it, its back close to the building. He grabbed the envelope full of antigovernment articles, locked the truck and walked away.

McVeigh counted off the seconds

to himself as he headed north into an alley. He was about 150 yards from ground zero when he broke into a jog.

That bomb should have blown by now, he thought. For an instant he wondered if something might have gone wrong. Then he heard the roar. And felt it.

Devastating Blast

WHEN THE Murrah Building exploded, it lifted Tim McVeigh an inch off the ground. Even muffled by earplugs, the sound was deafening. The blast rocked hundreds of buildings in the downtown area.

Looking up, McVeigh could see the buildings near him wobbling from side to side, plate glass showering down into the street. He felt the concussion buffeting his cheeks. A live power line snapped and whipped toward McVeigh. Some falling bricks struck him in the leg, but he was able to hop out of the way of the power line. Smoke and dust billowed high into the air. Fires erupted.

Just like at Waco, thought McVeigh. *Reap what you sow.*

He reached his getaway car. The yellow Mercury was still parked in a lot several blocks from the blast site. He had placed a "Do Not Tow" sign in the windshield. It was still there. No one, it seemed, had messed with it.

But when McVeigh got behind the wheel, the car didn't start. He tried several times; the engine would not turn over.

He stomped the gas pedal to the floor. Finally the engine coughed to life. Tires squealed as he peeled out of the parking lot. *I do not want to get caught in Oklahoma City,* he thought.

The automatic transmission was slipping badly as McVeigh headed north toward Kansas. By 9:10 a.m., eight minutes after the bombing, he was heading out of the city, driving carefully under the speed limit.

An observer watching the scene from a helicopter would have seen many Oklahomans rushing toward the crippled federal office building. They would have seen drivers abandoning cars and running to the blast scene. They would have seen the flashing emergency lights on police cars, firetrucks and ambulances, all heading toward the rising dust and smoke.

McVeigh's bomb killed 167 people, including 19 children age five and younger; 163 of the victims had been inside the building. A 168th victim died while assisting in rescue efforts. Over half of the dead worked for the federal government. The others did not. Many of the dead would not be positively identified for several days.

In the chaos, few would have noticed an old yellow sedan heading slowly away from the blast site. Once on the highway, McVeigh watched for helicopters and police cars. Though he wasn't exactly eager to

Image of a Nation's Grief–Firefighter Chris Fields cradles the body of one-year-old Baylee Almon, killed by the blast. "Collateral damage" was what McVeigh called the horrific civilian death toll.

get caught, there was a part of him that was curious to see how things would play out if he did.

He'd put his future in the hands of fate by leaving the Arizona license plate off his car. Ultimately, he figured, some officer would pull him over for the missing plate, but he hoped it would happen in another state. He was counting on the Oklahoma cops being too busy with the bombing to bother with anything else.

McVeigh rolled on through the countryside along Interstate 35. Sixty miles north of Oklahoma City, he saw a highway patrol car by the roadside. A state trooper stood outside the vehicle, looking over a minivan. *Probably a speeding arrest,* McVeigh

PHOTO: © CHARLES H. PORTER 4TH/CORBIS SYGMA

thought, although he wondered why the troopers would bother with speeders at a time like this.

About 20 minutes later McVeigh saw what looked like the same state trooper in his rearview mirror. The cop was in the passing lane, roaring up alongside McVeigh.

The car was almost past him when McVeigh noticed the front end dip slightly. The police cruiser slowed down and fell alongside McVeigh's Mercury. The trooper at the wheel was Charles J. Hanger, a 19-year police veteran.

For Hanger, the morning had already been hectic. Shortly after the bombing, he and other troopers had been directed to hurry to the command post in Oklahoma City. But the order was soon canceled. They already had enough help at the post.

Hanger was indeed the trooper McVeigh had seen by the roadside. He wasn't stopping speeders, though; he'd been helping two women get assistance for their disabled minivan. Then, as Hanger headed back north, he saw McVeigh's car without the license plate.

As he drove wheel-to-wheel with the Mercury, Hanger glanced over and nodded. McVeigh nodded back. The trooper then fell behind him and turned on his emergency flasher, directing him to pull over.

McVeigh complied, easing the right tires of his car onto the grass. It was decision time. He considered pulling out his Glock and killing the trooper. It had a Black Talon bullet, known for expanding with lethal effect on contact, ready in the chamber.

If I want him, I can take him, McVeigh thought.

Minor Misdemeanors

AS HANGER stepped out of his car, McVeigh emerged from his as well. He sized up the trooper. If he drew on him, he figured the element of surprise—plus his expertise as a former Army marksman—would put the officer at a severe disadvantage.

Then McVeigh thought again: *No, not a state trooper. Stand down.* If Hanger had been a federal agent, McVeigh would have probably started shooting. But he had a grudging respect for local and state cops and their right to do their jobs. He would not draw his gun on this officer of the law.

For his part, Hanger wondered what McVeigh was up to as he watched the younger man step out. Most people just sat in their cars, nervously waiting for the trooper to approach. Hanger stood behind his

open car door, watching McVeigh's hands closely as he came forward.

Cautiously, the trooper began walking toward the other man. He looked at the Mercury. "You don't have a license plate," Hanger said.

McVeigh glanced at the rear bumper of his car. "Huh. No," he said.

The trooper kept a wary eye on him. "Do you have insurance?"

"No, I just bought the car."

"You have a registration? Do you have a bill of sale?"

"Not yet, but I have a license."

McVeigh pulled out his wallet. As he took out his driver's license, Hanger noticed a bulge under McVeigh's windbreaker. "What's that?" he asked.

"You carry a gun around, one wrong move could get you shot," the trooper said. "Possible," McVeigh answered.

"I have a gun," McVeigh replied calmly.

Hanger felt for the Glock. Then he pulled out his own gun and pointed it at McVeigh. "Move your hands away, slowly," he instructed. "Get both hands up in the air."

The trooper pointed his gun at McVeigh's head and reached around to remove the Glock from its shoulder holster.

"My gun is loaded," he warned the officer.

"So is mine," Hanger said, and he directed him to put his hands on the trunk of the car and spread his legs.

McVeigh told the officer he would find a clip of ammunition and a knife attached to his belt. Hanger removed them and the Glock, and tossed them onto the shoulder. He then cuffed McVeigh's hands and asked why he was carrying a weapon.

It was his legal right to carry it, he insisted.

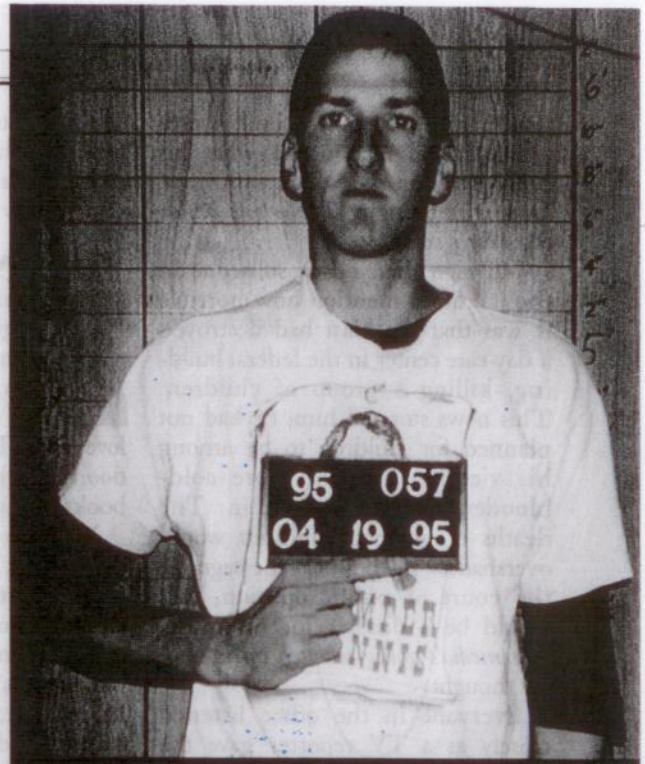
"You know, when you carry a gun around like that, one wrong move could get you shot," the trooper told him.

"Possible," McVeigh said.

Hanger marched his handcuffed prisoner to the police cruiser. He then asked the dispatcher to run a computer check on McVeigh. The report came back quickly: no arrest warrants, no criminal record. Timothy McVeigh had never been arrested in his life.

Hanger also gave the dispatcher the Glock's serial number to check. The gun was not stolen.

With McVeigh's permission, the trooper then searched the Mercury but noted nothing unusual except for a sealed white envelope in the front seat. Soon they were heading toward the Noble County jail in Perry, Okla. At about 11 a.m. they pulled into the parking lot.



Defiant Stare– In this mug shot, taken at the Noble County jail, McVeigh wears his *Sic Semper Tyrannis* T-shirt.

McVeigh took off his jacket, and Hanger got his first look at the odd T-shirt that his prisoner was wearing. The trooper had never seen one like this, with its picture of Lincoln on the front and illustration of a tree on the back. But he didn't really read the slogans.

Marsha Moritz, the jailer, booked McVeigh on four misdemeanor charges: transporting a loaded firearm in a motor vehicle, unlawfully carrying a weapon, failing to display a current license plate, and failing to maintain proof of insurance.

The booking process went routinely until Moritz told McVeigh she needed to know his next of kin, in case he got sick or something happened to him in jail. After an awkward silence, he gave the name of James Nichols. McVeigh's driver's license listed the Nichols farm in Michigan as his home address.

Moritz took the prisoner's mug shot. In his thick-soled combat boots, McVeigh was well over six-foot-two. He seemed surprisingly loose for a man being arrested. As Moritz prepared to fingerprint him, he was asked to wipe the perspiration off his hands, as prisoners tend to sweat from nervousness.

"No problem," McVeigh said. "My hands are dry."

The two chatted briefly, McVeigh even kidding around with Moritz a little.

But the light mood didn't last long.

A TV set was in the office, and the ongoing broadcast about the bombing cast a pall over everyone in the jail. McVeigh, pretending to be paying little attention, was

watching and listening to every word.

His initial reaction to what his bomb had done was disappointment. *Damn,* he thought. *The whole building didn't come down.*

McVeigh then heard someone in the jail office mention how horrible it was that the blast had destroyed a day-care center in the federal building, killing a group of children. This news stopped him; he had not planned for children to be among his victims. Then a more cold-blooded reaction kicked in. The deaths of innocent children would overshadow his political message. In the court of public opinion, this would be a disaster for his cause. *The media's going to latch on to that,* he thought.

Everyone in the office listened closely as a TV reporter gave the first sketchy descriptions of a possible suspect: white male, somewhere between five-foot-nine and six-foot-one. A deputy looked over and eyeballed McVeigh. "Gee, you're a recent arrival," he said.

"That ain't me," said McVeigh, laughing off the suggestion.

Rescuers were still pulling bodies out of the building. Everyone—both jailers and prisoners alike—watched in stunned disbelief. *How did this happen? Who would do such a thing?* they wondered.

McVeigh concentrated, maintaining his poker face. More than anyone, he knew that the answers were elusive. As a psychiatrist would later suggest, the path he had traveled to this point stretched back through his unsettled life: the breakup of his parents, his Gulf War experiences, the tragedy at Waco.

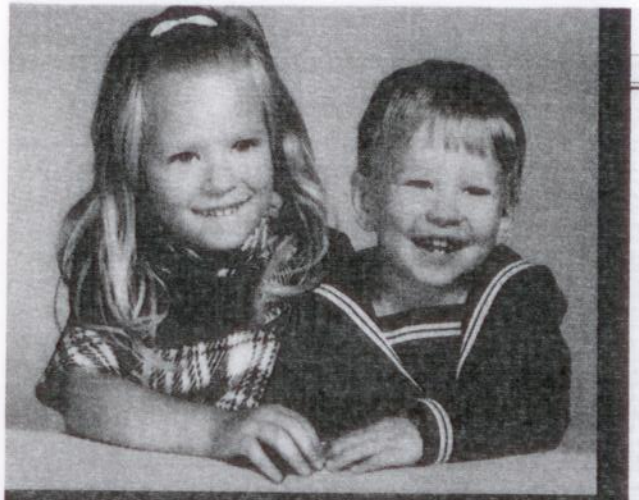
An Unsatisfactory Reality

IN MANY WAYS Timothy McVeigh was like millions of young, middle-class American men. He had grown up the son of a factory worker, in love with TV, movies and the outdoors. He liked football and comic books about superheroes.

McVeigh was raised in western New York. His mother, Mickey, was a travel agent who loved the excitement of visiting new places. She was boisterous, and enjoyed swapping stories and jokes with friends. In contrast, McVeigh's father, Bill, was shy and quiet, a homebody. He was a caring parent and a good provider, and put in long hours at the factory.

Small and scrawny for his age, Timothy McVeigh was ten when, in the spring of 1978, his Little League team was having a practice. Tim took the field under the watchful eyes of his father. But the boy's size made him an easy target. Another kid walked up to him and grabbed his baseball cap. The two wound up in a tugging match, until the other boy walloped Tim.

Stunned, the youngster ran to his father's car, hid in the back seat and cried. He was scared and embarrassed: the men of the McVeigh family were not supposed to shed



Different Paths– Patty McVeigh would grow up to save lives as a nurse. Her brother, Tim, would choose the opposite course.

tears. Now here he was, bawling his eyes out.

Indeed, Timothy McVeigh felt like a failure in the eyes of his father. He lacked the aggressive jock mentality, the muscle coordination and the size to be a star athlete; he would come to be known as Noodle McVeigh.

By adolescence, size and coordination caught up with Tim. But his humiliation at the hands of the bully on the baseball field was something he remembered forever. Over time, he developed a seething hatred of bullies—of any person or institution that he perceived to be picking on the weak.

Bill McVeigh, for his part, wished that maintaining the happy family life he cherished was as simple as playing baseball. But his marriage of 13 years was unraveling. The truth was, Mickey McVeigh was bored with Bill. Working long hours, he was hardly ever around. And at times, despite his congenial nature, he had a nasty temper. He could explode in anger about something as minor as misplacing his car keys.

The fundamental differences between him and his wife finally became too much. In December 1979 the couple separated, letting the children decide where they wanted to live.

Their two daughters, Patty and Jennifer, wanted to stay together with their mother. But Tim cast his lot with his father. "I don't want Dad to be alone," he said.

The real problem, Tim McVeigh said later, was that he never really felt close to his parents. With both of them working full time, he never had an adult to talk with when he came home from school.

Even when Tim's mother returned to try to work out her differences with Bill, it didn't bring the boy any closer to his family. The only person he would actually and unabashedly say he loved was his paternal grandfather, Ed McVeigh.

Tim was devoted to the graying and bespectacled older man, and his feelings were met with unconditional love. Their relationship revolved

PHOTO: COURTESY BILL MCVEIGH/LOU MICHEL

around a common interest: guns. On regular outings the two would walk beside the Erie Canal to a ravine where they practiced target shooting with a .22-caliber rifle. There Grandpa McVeigh would offer bits of wisdom.

"When you're carrying a gun on the road, the ammunition is always in your back pocket," Ed would say. "When you're shooting, make sure you have a backstop and consider the possibility of a bullet ricocheting."

Again and again Tim saw things in his grandpa that he wished he could see in his dad. The words *I love you* never rolled easily off shy Bill McVeigh's tongue. So long as he provided the necessities—a good home, food and a few extras—Bill felt his actions bespoke love.

Blessed with a high IQ, Tim stayed out of trouble in school. He became a devotee of action heroes and filled his bedroom with boxes of superhero comics. These fantasy adventures were a welcome distraction from the furious words he heard more and more often coming from his parents' bedroom. Some nights he lay in bed frightened; at times his parents seemed so angry he feared they might kill each other.

Looking increasingly to escape, Tim took refuge in imaginary games. One neighbor, Liz McDermott, recalled that when the youngster came over, he'd transform the house into a battleground filled with G.I. Joe action figures. Tim also engineered elaborate games of flashlight tag. He would draw down the shades and turn off the lights, then he'd move through the house trying to catch the others with the flashlight beam. "We'd fall on the floor and freeze for a while," his younger sister, Jennifer, recalled.

But his superhero imaginings were only temporary, and Tim would always find himself once more facing an unsatisfactory reality.

Something Missing

When the McVeighs' marriage ended for good in 1986, Tim was a senior in high school. It was during this year that he found Sarah, his first real girlfriend. A senior at nearby Sweet Home High School, she thought he was "loud and goofy" sometimes, like a lot of boys she knew, but he could also be nice and thoughtful. By this time Tim had acquired an old Ford Thunderbird and he drove it very fast, which both scared and thrilled Sarah.

Like Tim, she had endured the divorce of her parents. She felt that his experience had left him feeling "lost," and she sensed the anger he harbored toward his mother. Often, Sarah noticed, he was the only person at his house. It was almost like Tim was raising himself.

For six months they became very close, going steady, attending the senior prom together. But not long after his graduation, Tim abruptly broke off the relationship. "I'm not

ready to get serious," he explained.

After high school he briefly attended a business school, aided by a small scholarship, but soon quit, opting to work instead. For self-education he read gun magazines and ordered books from back-page ads. One title that captivated him was *To Ride, Shoot Straight, and Speak the Truth* by Jeff Cooper, an expert on self-defense and firearms. A sort of training manual, the book's broader messages resonated in Tim's fertile young mind. He liked the idea of going through life in a combat mindset, aware of his surroundings at all times.

The Turner Diaries was another book that hit a nerve. The 1978 novel by white supremacist William L. Pierce told the story of Earl Turner, a gun enthusiast who reacts to tighter firearms laws by making a truck bomb and destroying FBI headquarters in Washington.

The possibility that Congress and federal agents might take guns away from law-abiding citizens seemed a very real threat to Tim. He decided to start collecting his own firearms. To finance his appetite, he became an armed security guard.

At work his friends called him "The Kid," as in "Billy the Kid." Once, as a joke, he showed up at work dressed like a gunslinger, a bandoleer filled with shotgun shells strapped across his chest. But it was more than just image that earned McVeigh his outlaw nickname. He could outshoot just about everyone; hours of practice had given him a deadeye aim.

Tim enjoyed his guns and newfound independence, but he still felt something was missing from his life. When a family friend suggested he enlist in the military, he listened carefully. By May 1988 he had made up his mind.

"When are you going?" asked Bill McVeigh, who was accustomed to his son's independent ways.

"Tomorrow," Tim replied.

Killing Zone

His first stop was Fort Benning, Ga., where he arrived for three months of training. McVeigh threw himself into Army life. He enjoyed it all—the 5 a.m. wake-ups, the crass jokes, even the uniform inspections. Mostly he loved anything to do with firearms.

William David Dilly, his roommate for over a year, saw potential in McVeigh, who had struck him as frail and meek when he first got there. Dilly noticed the attention McVeigh paid to detail, and his desire to perform his duties better than anyone else. McVeigh reveled in things that other recruits seemed to hate—long marches in the scorching sun, crawling on his belly under the barbed wire. What Tim really loved was pulling night guard duty, when he could be alone with nature, gazing in silence at a sky so rich and black that he could see the outlines of the Milky Way.

No Ties– McVeigh in 1986 with his grandfather. After Ed died, Tim no longer cared how his actions would impact his family.

At Fort Benning, McVeigh also formed a powerful bond with Terry Lynn Nichols, a Michigan native who at 33 was the oldest recruit in the company. An intense, oddly compelling man, Nichols had had a number of jobs before the Army, and made it clear he deeply disliked the government.

With his spectacles and slight build, he looked no more imposing than Woody Allen in an Army uniform. But he had a commanding presence and carried himself with an air of maturity that made McVeigh and others look up to him.

"Two days into training, Tim and Terry were like brothers," Dilly said. "They were drawn to each other. It was almost like Tim idolized Terry."

One sweltering afternoon, the recruits were out on a long march when they stopped for a rest. McVeigh and another soldier, a powerfully built man who weighed around 250 pounds, got into a quarrel. The recruit gave McVeigh a shove and brought up his fists.

McVeigh didn't call for his drill sergeant. He called for his friend. "Nichols came running over, got right into the middle of it and broke it up," another soldier recalled. "He was not a wimp."

After Fort Benning, McVeigh headed off to Fort Riley, Kan., for more training with the First Infantry Division. Joining him were Nichols and another soldier, Michael J. Fortier, an Arizona native who shared many of McVeigh's political views.

At Fort Riley, McVeigh was devoted—fanatically, some would say—to becoming the best soldier on the

PHOTO: COURTESY BILL MCVEIGH/LOU MICHEL

entire base. He even went to the expense of keeping a separate uniform, specially starched and dry-cleaned, and buying an extra pair of boots and additional gear just so he could have them in immaculate condition for inspections.

His fellow soldiers noticed he kept dozens of books and magazines on firearms stacked next to his bunk. Though not particularly talkative, whenever the subject of gun rights came up, McVeigh's blue eyes would flash in anger. He would then launch into intense speeches about guns, the Declaration of Independence, and Revolutionary War patriots—men who stood for liberty and freedom from government oppression, no matter what the cost.

Determined to be the top gunner in his unit, McVeigh trained hard on Bradley fighting vehicles. Eventually, he nailed a perfect score of 1000—the best in his battalion.

His sterling record resulted in his receiving orders to try out for the Army's elite Special Forces, better known as the Green Berets. But before he could report, Iraq's dictator, Saddam Hussein, invaded Kuwait, and McVeigh's company was told to prepare for combat duty in the Persian Gulf.

The young soldier did not like to see the United States meddling in the affairs of smaller nations. At the same time, Saddam appeared to be the kind of leader he hated most—a bully, brutally attacking a smaller and weaker neighbor. Someone had to stand up to him, McVeigh figured.

He arrived in Saudi Arabia in January 1991, part of a huge Allied force. On February 24 a huge explosion in the pre-dawn hours told McVeigh that he was about to get his chance to fight.

On the second day of the ground war, his crew spotted a dug-in enemy machine-gun nest more than a mile away. McVeigh's platoon leader ordered him to fire.

An Iraqi popped his head up for a second. McVeigh fired. Everything above the soldier's shoulders disappeared.

Pressing his forehead against the viewfinder, Sergeant McVeigh zeroed in on the target, adjusting his shot to allow for the movement of the Bradley. An Iraqi soldier popped his head up for a second. McVeigh fired, and everything above the soldier's shoulders disappeared.

The same shot, a 25-mm. high-explosive round, killed another Iraqi soldier standing a few feet away.

"Did you see that?" a fellow gunner exclaimed. "Great shot!"

Yet the would-be Rambo was emotionally torn about what he had

done. This was the first time he had fired at a human being. In a way, it had been a great thrill, putting his skills to the test and succeeding. But later, McVeigh found this first taste of killing made him angry and uncomfortable.

The carnage he saw in the hundred-hour war left him with a feeling of sorrow. Beating the Iraqis was almost too easy. It rankled McVeigh further to be part of a United Nations force that, he feared, was eventually planning to take over the world.

Despite his misgivings, the sergeant was proud of the Allied victory, and in late March 1991 he got some good news. He was ordered back to the United States, to the Special Forces Selection and Assessment Course at Fort Bragg, N.C. At last he had his chance to become a Green Beret. His future was brimming with promise.

Rude Awakening

ON THE FLIGHT to North Carolina, McVeigh sat with a fellow serviceman. Civilian passengers noticed McVeigh's clothes and haircut. "Hey," one man asked, "were you over there?"

"Yes, I was," McVeigh replied, beaming. When the pilot heard a couple of Desert Storm vets were aboard the plane, he made an announcement over the PA honoring the soldiers, "who have just come back from the Gulf War."

What followed was a show of adulation the likes of which Americans usually reserve for their top athletes and movie stars. Passengers got out of their seats and stood in line in the aisle to shake hands with the two soldiers.

Then the plane touched down in Fayetteville, N.C., and the high times were over. There were no slaps on the back from the Green Berets. Since the day he enlisted, McVeigh had been hoping for a chance to join one of these special units. But once he reported to Fort Bragg, he quickly realized he wasn't ready.

The three months he spent in the Persian Gulf had broken him down, physically and emotionally. The commanding officers recognized this difficulty, and they called all the Gulf War veterans together, inviting them to defer their tryouts.

"No way," one of the proud Desert Storm vets yelled out. "We're ready!"

Peer pressure took hold. Asking to delay the tryout might be seen as a sign of weakness, McVeigh thought. He decided to go ahead.

It was a mistake—and a critical one. The grueling 24-day program was designed to push the soldiers much further than anything they had seen in basic training. Just two days into the assessment program, McVeigh surrendered. Though still a couple weeks short of his 23rd birthday, he felt like a tired old man.

"I just can't hack it," McVeigh told the commanding officer. His three years in the military had been one

success after another, but now his star was falling. By late 1991, tired and disillusioned, he decided to leave the Army altogether.

When he returned home to Pendleton, McVeigh still had high expectations for his future. After all, he had gone off to war and come back with a chestful of medals. But it didn't work out that way. Western New York, its economy still struggling, didn't have much to offer. A disappointed McVeigh soon found himself trading in his crisp green Army uniform for the dull shirt and slacks of a security guard.

He made the best of it, but the demanding schedule—80 hours some weeks—took a toll. Becoming angry and sullen, he began to request posts giving him the least possible exposure to the public.

During this time, McVeigh was back staying with his father. Even with just three people living there—Bill, Tim and Jennifer, who had rejoined her father—the little house felt crowded. Tim McVeigh was unable to get enough rest, and he grew increasingly irritable. A disheartening realization finally hit him: *I don't fit in here anymore.*

Downward Spin

LESS THAN THREE months after returning from the Army, McVeigh hurried out of his father's house one snowy day in a state of panic, dressed only in sweat pants. He had to get away, but where? He climbed into his car and drove over to his grandfather's home. Tears streaming down his face, McVeigh knocked on the door.

"Timmy, what are you doing?" said Ed McVeigh, ushering him inside. He saw the tears. His grandson was having a breakdown. "Tim," Ed said. "What's wrong?"

"Grandpa ... I can't tell you," McVeigh answered.

"Do I need to call someone?" asked Ed.

"No. Just leave me alone. I'll get through it."

Ed suggested his grandson come in and lie down for a while. As Tim lay there, he was overcome by dark thoughts. He even considered killing himself, but stopped because he knew how much it would hurt his grandfather. Finally, his anxiety subsiding, he fell into a deep sleep.

Later Tim would come to believe he had suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder brought on by the Gulf War. Whatever the cause of his depression, he began reading more antigovernment books and sharing them with his inquisitive younger sister. Some of the literature struck Jennifer as bizarre, but she looked up to her older brother and was flattered he would share his political views with her.

In the summer of 1992 McVeigh pointed to the events of Ruby Ridge, Idaho, as proof that his theories were correct. On August 21 federal agents got into a shootout at the cabin of Randy Weaver, a white separatist

Dead Shot– Sergeant McVeigh, dispatched to the Persian Gulf in 1991, felt that beating the Iraqis was almost too easy.

accused of selling illegal shotguns to a government informant. By the time Weaver was finally arrested, his wife and son, and a U.S. marshal had been killed.

Ruby Ridge became a rallying cry for militia and survivalist groups, and reinforced McVeigh's belief that America was becoming a police state. Yet unlike Jennifer, who hung on her brother's every word, Bill McVeigh had little interest in his son's views. The American flag proudly flying from a pole in the center of his front lawn left no question where Bill stood.

He watched in alarm as his son turned into a harsh critic of the government he had once served. Now, whenever Tim saw a newscast detailing some inept government operation, or any example of faltering leadership, he'd shout and throw things at the TV. Bill, who rarely said an unkind word about anyone, did little to reproach his son. "Timmy is strong-willed" was all he could find to say.

Frustrated and restless, Tim McVeigh felt he had to make a change. He told his dad he was leaving New York to search for a place where he could find more personal freedom. Tim spent the next 26 months traveling to some 40 states, mostly from gun show to gun show, selling books and survival items.

During this time something happened that would galvanize him. In February 1993 federal agents raided the home and church of a religious group known as the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Agents from

PHOTO: © CORBIS SYGMA

the ATF arrived to execute a search warrant for illegal weapons. A shootout erupted, taking the lives of four agents and injuring more than a dozen. On the Branch Davidian side, six people died and more were wounded, including David Koresh, their strange and charismatic leader.

The ATF then retreated, and Koresh and his followers remained inside their compound.

Nobody in America followed the standoff closer than McVeigh. Day after day he devoured every article and broadcast account he could find. Finally, he decided he had to go see for himself. He packed up his car with a supply of antigovernment materials and headed for Waco.

When he arrived, he was stopped at a checkpoint about three miles from the compound.

As McVeigh reluctantly turned his car around, he watched as the federal agents gathered in a circle. His mind swung into military mode. *I could take them all out with one hand grenade,* he thought.

McVeigh left Waco after a few days. He attended a gun show in Tulsa, and finally found his way to the farm of Army buddy Terry Nichols, who lived with his mother in Decker, Mich.

With the help of Terry and his brother James, McVeigh hoped to learn how to live self-sufficiently off the land.

On the afternoon of April 19, 1993, as McVeigh was changing the oil in his car, a voice hollered from inside the farmhouse, "Tim! Tim! Get in here! It's on fire!"

McVeigh raced inside. On the TV the Branch Davidian complex was burning. He stood, transfixed, in the parlor with the Nichols brothers, watching the flames and the armored vehicles ramming the walls.

The blaze in Waco, more than any single event, was a turning point in McVeigh's life. He felt it epitomized the arrogance of federal law enforcement agents in dealing with the public—everything that was wrong with intrusive government.

Last, Thin Thread

A MONTH LATER McVeigh traveled to Kingman, Ariz., to visit his old friend Michael Fortier. His hatred for the government had taken on a sharp new edge, and he angrily shared his views with his friend.

McVeigh continued to bounce from one gun show to the next, from one state to the next. He was still seething about Waco when news hit the gun-show circuit in September 1994 that a new assault-weapons ban was becoming law. To McVeigh, his heritage, his income and perhaps his very life were threatened. It was time to take action.

Back in Kingman, McVeigh revealed to Michael Fortier that he was going to blow up a federal building, and he extended an invitation for Fortier to join him.

"No," his friend answered. "I

would never do anything like that, unless there was a tank in my front yard."

Undaunted, on October 4, 1994, McVeigh signed a rental agreement for a storage locker in Kingman. Soon afterward, McVeigh appeared at Fortier's home and told Michael he wanted to show him something. Fortier came outside and found Terry Nichols waiting for them in his pickup. They drove to the storage unit, where McVeigh pulled back a blanket covering a stack of boxes. Fortier saw that the top box contained explosives.

McVeigh checked the boxes carefully, looking for the freshest explosives. "Like shopping for milk," he thought.

McVeigh said the explosives had come from a quarry in Marion, Kan., near where Nichols was now living. He described how, a few nights earlier, he and Nichols had robbed it.

It was drizzling when the two men arrived at the quarry. McVeigh walked around each of the lockers to make sure there weren't any burglar alarms. He drilled out the padlocks, and the door swung open. His flashlight shined on crates of Tovex, a high-explosive gel shaped like 16-inch-long sausages.

McVeigh carefully examined each 55-pound box, checking the dates. He knew the older the material, the less effective it was. He grabbed seven of the fresher boxes. *Like shopping for milk,* he thought.

Then McVeigh and Nichols drove in separate vehicles to Kingman. If Kansas authorities made a big deal of the theft, McVeigh figured, they'd be much better off stashing the explosives a few states away in Arizona.

He had already managed to assemble 4000 pounds of ammonium nitrate, and was now eager to conduct a test of the ingredients he planned to use in his bomb's main charge. He loaded the materials in a truck and invited Fortier to watch the detonation. Fortier refused, commenting, "It looks like a lot of trouble." So McVeigh, on his own, exploded the bomb out in the desert.

Later, alone with Fortier and his wife, Lori, McVeigh told them that he had figured out how to convert a truck into a bomb. He had also chosen a target: the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City. The explosion would occur on the second anniversary of Waco: April 19, 1995.

"What about all the people?" Fortier asked.

"Think about the people as if they were storm troopers in *Star Wars*," McVeigh answered. "They may

A Twisted Mind

THREE YEARS before the Oklahoma City bombing, on Feb. 11, 1992, the Lockport, N.Y., *Union-Sun & Journal* published a letter from Timothy McVeigh. After spouting off about a variety of issues, ranging from government and its leaders to crime, taxes and racism, McVeigh concluded:

> America is in serious decline! We have no proverbial tea to dump, should we instead sink a ship full of Japanese imports? Is a Civil War Imminent? Do we have to shed blood to reform the current system? I hope it doesn't come to that. But it might.

In February 1995, while staying in Arizona, McVeigh wrote this disturbing passage in a letter to a friend:

> Hell, you only live once and I KNOW you know it's better to burn out, then ..... rot away in some nursing home. My philosophy is the same - in only a short 1-2 years, my body will slowly start giving away - first maybe knee pains, or back pains. Might as well do some good while I can be 100% effective! My whole mindset has shifted from intellectual to ... animal, (Rip the bastards heads off.)

be individually innocent, but they are guilty because they work for the evil Empire."

Before settling on Oklahoma City, McVeigh's possible targets included federal buildings in Arkansas, Missouri, Arizona and Texas. He chose the Murrah Building for several reasons. The front of the structure was made of glass, which would shatter from the explosion. The parking lot across the street would minimize collateral damage—deaths and injuries to people in nearby nonfederal buildings. This was something, McVeigh claimed, he was genuinely concerned about.

But another colder calculation influenced his final choice—the photo opportunities. He wanted a site with open space around it, to allow for the best possible news photos and television footage. He wanted to create a stark, horrifying image that would make everyone who saw it stop and take notice.

In late October, McVeigh's plans were disrupted when he got the news that his grandfather, Ed, had died. McVeigh returned home to Pendle-

ton to help his father. In a sense, his grandfather's death freed him. He no longer had to worry about him ever finding out about his grandson's involvement in the bombing. McVeigh knew the crime would have emotionally destroyed Ed, but now that thin thread of restraint was gone.

The rest of the family was a different matter. As long as none of them wound up being thrown in prison, McVeigh could live with the consequences.

He did try to prepare Jennifer for his plan to go afoul of the law, promising in a letter "something big is going to happen in the month of the Bull"—which she understood to mean April.

In another letter to his sister he wrote: "Why am I running? I am trying to keep my path 'cool,' so in case someone is looking to 'shut up someone who knows too much' I will not be easy to find. I have also been establishing a network of friends so when I go completely underground, it will be very difficult for anyone to find me."

Later he warned her to be careful: "private investigators" might be tailing her into bars.

A Frightening Rage

ON FRIDAY, April 14, McVeigh registered at the Dreamland Motel in Junction City, Kan., giving the Nichols farm in Michigan as his address. The next morning he finalized the rental of a 20-foot Ryder truck, using the name Robert D. Kling. On Easter Sunday, McVeigh arranged to meet Terry Nichols at a pizzeria. But Nichols failed to show.

In the last few weeks McVeigh had begun to suspect that his friend's enthusiasm for the bombing was waning. As he waited impatiently, his anger grew.

Infuriated, McVeigh finally called him. When he answered, McVeigh let loose, screaming so loud that Nichols's son, Josh, could hear his voice through the phone ten feet away. McVeigh cursed Nichols, threatening him and his family. "Get in your f------ truck," he screamed. "Now! This is for keeps!"

Finally Nichols gave in, perhaps afraid that McVeigh would make good his threats.

The men arrived in Oklahoma City in the evening. McVeigh parked his yellow Mercury, the getaway car, several blocks from the Murrah Building. He placed a note on the windshield: Not Abandoned. Please Do Not Tow. Will Move by April 23 (Needs Battery & Cable).

The two then drove back to Kansas in Nichols's pickup. The next day McVeigh got the Ryder truck, and the following morning he and Nichols headed for Geary Lake.

Once by the lake, McVeigh later said, the two men went to work in the back of the truck. McVeigh combined nitromethane fluid with ammonium nitrate fertilizer. It was a big job. The thirteen 55-gallon drums

were each large enough to hold several bags of fertilizer and about 100 pounds of liquid fuel.

At about 9 a.m. McVeigh and Nichols saw a man and boy unexpectedly launch a boat onto the lake's choppy waters and start fishing offshore.

McVeigh closed the side door and cracked open the rear roll-up door of the truck, letting in just enough light for them to continue their work. Every few minutes McVeigh peeked outside to make sure the fisherman and his young companion weren't coming over.

Luckily for them, they didn't. McVeigh later admitted he was prepared to murder the fisherman if he got too curious.

The boy was a different story. McVeigh decided he would let him live. He would tie him up and hide him, and by the time the boy was discovered, McVeigh would be far away.

As work continued, the barrels were roughly arranged to form a letter *T*, with the top flush against the front of the cargo bay wall closest to the truck's cab. The 7000 pounds needed to be equally distributed, McVeigh realized, or the truck might flip over.

He then set up the dual ignition system he had designed. There would be a two-minute fuse, as well as a second, five-minute fuse, which would serve as a backup.

The job of mixing the bomb com-

pleted, McVeigh wiped down the inside of the truck's cab for fingerprints. Then he changed into a fresh set of clothes, put on a pair of gloves and climbed back into the cab. More than three hours had passed since he and Nichols had started building the bomb. Now they parted company; it was the last time they would see each other as free, unshackled men.

Leaving Geary Lake, McVeigh drove into Oklahoma and headed south, stopping for the night in a small gravel lot near a roadside motel.

When dawn broke on Wednesday, April 19, McVeigh arose and set his sights southward. Just hours later, he would shower hell on Oklahoma City.

"We Found Him!"

WAKING UP in his cell on the morning of April 21, two days after the bombing, McVeigh wondered why federal agents hadn't come for him yet. Hadn't they discovered that stuff in his getaway car?

He would soon find out. Hundreds of federal agents and police officers had begun chasing leads all across the United States, hoping for a break that would lead them to the Murrah Building bomber.

To many observers—from politicians to average citizens—the obvious assumption was that foreign terrorists were responsible. After all,

the bombing of the World Trade Center had been masterminded by Arab extremists operating out of New Jersey.

However, at the FBI's Behavioral Science Unit in Quantico, Va., Special Agent Clinton R. Van Zandt was offering a different opinion. Asked to put together a psychological profile of the Oklahoma bomber, Van Zandt said immediately that the date—April 19, the anniversary of the deaths at Waco—was the key.

"You're going to have a white male, acting alone, or with one other person," Van Zandt told colleagues.

The night after the bombing, agents hit pay dirt at the Dreamland Motel. The manager knew John Doe No. 1.

"He'll be in his mid-20s. He'll have military experience and be a fringe member of some militia group. He'll be angry at the government for what happened at Ruby Ridge and Waco."

THE FIRST BREAK was recovering the 250-pound rear axle from the Ryder truck, which hurtled through the air for a full city block before landing on a Ford Festiva. Federal agents found a confidential vehicle identification number stamped on the axle. Later, Oklahoma County sheriff's deputies digging through the rubble found the rear bumper from the same truck, its Florida license plate intact.

A series of computer checks showed that the axle and bumper came from a truck owned by Ryder Rental Inc., of Miami. The 1993 Ford truck, with a 20-foot cargo box, had been rented two days earlier at a body shop in Junction City, Kan. The renter was someone named Robert Kling.

Less than eight hours after the bombing, agents were on their way to Junction City to talk with the shop's owner. The next morning, using information from workers who had seen Robert Kling, an FBI artist drew up composite sketches of both him and another man who was in the shop. The possible suspects were designated John Doe No. 1 and John Doe No. 2.

Agents spent the day taking the sketches door-to-door through the Junction City area. On Thursday, April 20, the evening after the bombing, they hit pay dirt at the Dreamland Motel. The manager recognized John Doe No. 1 as a recent guest. But she didn't know him as Robert Kling. She knew him as Timothy McVeigh.

And yes, she recalled, she saw him in a Ryder truck, one of those big yellow rentals. And he had an old yellow Mercury too. The authorities had their suspect.

And soon they had another lead. When he registered for his motel room, McVeigh had listed his residence as the Nichols family farm in Decker, Mich. Before long, investigators would be looking in the direction of his old Army buddy, Terry Nichols.

McVeigh was now the subject of an intense manhunt. A huge task force of investigators, working out of Oklahoma City, began making phone calls to police stations throughout the state.

Maybe, the investigators thought, this guy was already sitting in a jail somewhere.

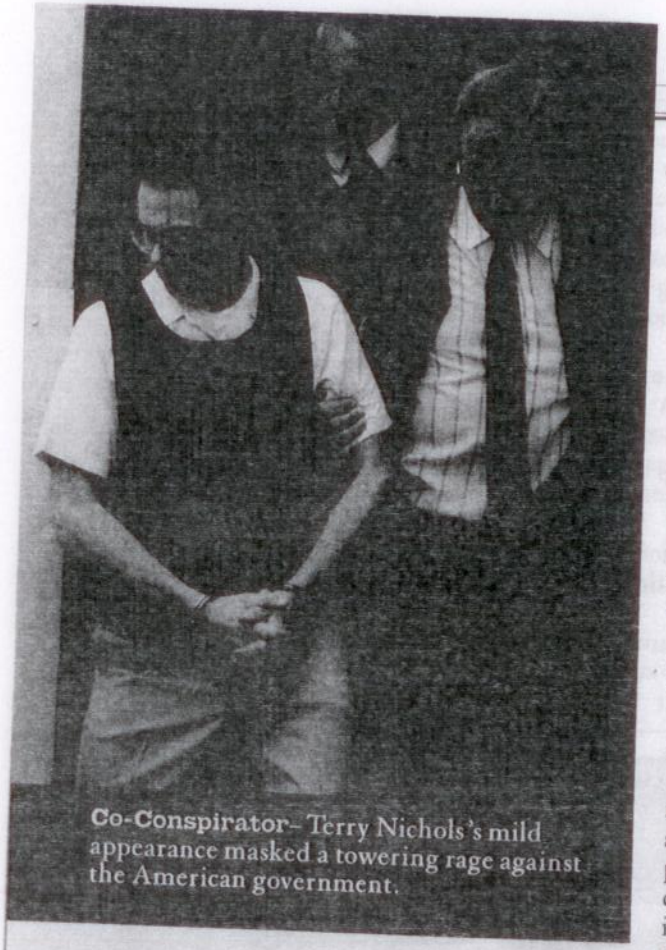
Again, a computer came through. A check with the National Crime Information Center at FBI headquarters in Washington, D.C., showed that less than two hours after the bombing, an Oklahoma trooper named Hanger had run a computer check on one Timothy McVeigh.

On Friday morning, two days after the bombing, an ATF agent called the Noble County sheriff's office. Did the sheriff's department know anything about this Timothy McVeigh?

The sheriff, Jerry R. Cook, remembered the name. He checked his records, then said, "Yeah. We got him incarcerated."

"Put a hold on him!" the ATF agent told Sheriff Cook. "Don't let him go."

In the task-force office in Oklahoma City, agents shouted out, "We found him! We found him!" Within



Co-Conspirator– Terry Nichols's mild appearance masked a towering rage against the American government.

minutes several of them bolted from the room for a waiting helicopter. Meanwhile, others started typing up an arrest warrant. Later one would also be drawn up for Terry Nichols.

McVeigh knew nothing of this as he sat in his cell on April 21, waiting to appear on his misdemeanor charges before a county judge. Assistant District Attorney Mark Gibson would prosecute the case. The appearance was expected to be brief. More than likely, the judge would release McVeigh on minimal bail. The matter was about as routine as it could get.

Gibson stood in the courtroom, waiting for the court session to begin. Sheriff Cook walked in and handed him a note.

"This guy, McVeigh, is the one the FBI has been looking for in the bombing case," the note said. "We need to keep him in custody."

Gibson looked at the sheriff. "You're yanking my chain," he said.

"No, I'm not," Cook said.

There was a prickly new vibration in the jail, and McVeigh instantly picked up on it. He could sense a change in the demeanor of the employees and the other prisoners as well. The people around him, he noticed, were giving him sideways glances.

It's happening, he told himself.

McVeigh could see that word was getting around fast. One by one, the four prisoners who shared the cellblock with him were taken away for a few minutes.

They're questioning these guys, asking them if I made any admissions about the bombing, McVeigh thought.

He looked out a window and saw

PHOTO: © JEFF TUTTLE/WICHITA EAGLE/SIPA PRESS

a police officer on the roof of a nearby building. A prisoner hollered to McVeigh, "Hey, dude, did you do it? Are you the bomber?"

He didn't answer.

"McVeigh," a deputy said, "there are some government agents here. They want to talk with you."

McVeigh agreed to see the agents; he wanted to find out what the government was up to. Two FBI men from the bombing task force, Special Agents Floyd Zimms and James Norman, Jr., were waiting in a room for him.

As he walked in, wearing handcuffs, McVeigh looked around. He bent down to look under a table for recording devices. Finding none, he sat down at the table. He was in combat mind-set, but working hard to control his emotions. These were federal agents: he was determined not to show signs of weakness or give them any satisfaction.

"Any idea why the FBI wants to talk to you?" Zimms asked him.

"That thing in Oklahoma City, I guess," McVeigh said.

"Exactly right," Zimms replied. "Our investigation has showed you may have information about the bombing. Before we ask you questions about it, I'm going to read you your rights."

McVeigh gave the agents his name, height and weight.

"Place of birth?" one agent asked.

McVeigh refused to answer. "I guess I shouldn't talk to you guys without talking to a lawyer first," he said.

A prisoner hollered to McVeigh, "Hey, dude, did you do it? Are you the bomber?" There was no answer.

"I just want to tell you what's happening right now," Zimms said. "Federal charges are being filed against you in connection with this bombing. Later today, you'll be transported back to Oklahoma City."

McVeigh's face stayed blank, expressionless.

As they prepared for the journey, McVeigh became concerned about his safety. Already an angry mob was gathering outside.

"Can I have a bulletproof vest?"

Gripped by Grief- Mourners at a makeshift memorial for the bombing victims, during McVeigh's 1997 trial. "There is nothing in my life that is the same," said one wife of a victim.

McVeigh asked. No, he was told. None was available.

McVeigh still had to appear before the judge on the charges from the Hanger arrest. A guard came to take him to court and—except for the large number of deputies in the courtroom—the matter was handled routinely. During the proceeding McVeigh was asked where he lived.

"I really don't live anywhere," he said. Assistant District Attorney Gibson recognized McVeigh's military bearing. He also noticed the cold, soulless look in the prisoner's eyes, which would linger in his mind.

By 5 p.m., 56 hours after the bombing, a team of agents from the FBI and ATF had arrived, with orders to bring McVeigh back to Oklahoma City. Another team had already secured his getaway car, which had been left by the highway, completely unattended, for more than two days. Later the FBI would find and open the envelope packed with the antigovernment materials McVeigh had left behind.

A convoy of vehicles pulled up outside the courthouse to await the prisoner's emergence. The world now got its first look at the bomber. McVeigh was still wearing the orange jail jumpsuit as he left the court-

PHOTO: © ROCKY MOUNTAIN NEWS/CORBIS SYGMA

house. The news photos and videos sent around the globe by satellite showed the prisoner, tall, wiry and grim, his eyes cold and narrow.

As cameras whirred, McVeigh squinted into the afternoon sun. He scanned the buildings for snipers, moving his eyes slowly from left to right and then up and down in a Z pattern he'd learned in the Army.

If there's a sniper, he'll be standing back, McVeigh thought. *He won't be hanging the gun barrel out the window where everyone can see it.*

He heard the screams of the crowd as he made his way toward a van, his shackled feet unable to move quickly. "Look over here," one man shouted, cursing at him. "Baby killer! Look me in the eye!"

McVeigh did not turn his head, nor hunch his shoulders. He walked erect, still scanning the area. He and a team of federal agents got into the van and left, as millions of Americans tuned in to see him on the evening news.

Guilty as Charged

UNITED STATES magistrate Judge Ronald J. Howland called the hearing to order at 8:30 p.m. on April 21, almost 60 hours after the bombing. Prosecutors introduced the FBI arrest warrant accusing McVeigh of using an explosive device to "maliciously damage or destroy" the Murrah Building.

McVeigh sat ramrod straight,

Visions of Violence

AFTER TIM MCVEIGH left the Army, his father, Bill, noticed a new intensity in his son's hatred for the government. Whenever the President appeared on TV, his son would glare and mutter, "Someone should kill the son of a bitch." Bill never suspected the angry words signaled any real threat. After all, he had shouted things as bad as that while watching football games.

While working as a security guard at a high-tech firm outside Buffalo, N.Y., one of McVeigh's fellow guards was Carl Lebron, Jr. During the long shifts, the two would talk. Lebron noticed that a tremor of rage seemed to cross McVeigh's face whenever he spouted off about the government.

One day McVeigh handed out antigovernment literature at the office. Sometime later he made an odd observation to Lebron: "It would be easy for two people to steal firearms from a military base."

Uh-oh, his colleague thought. McVeigh never repeated the threat. But years later it would be Lebron who called the FBI to help identify him when drawings of the bomber were released to the public.

In a letter to the authors, McVeigh mentioned his favorite TV show, "Star Trek: The Next Generation," saying he saw some of himself in each of the characters:

"Picard—the most respected man in Star Fleet. Highly skilled diplomat, yet lonely man. Keeps emotions in check.

"Worf—the consummate warrior.

"Data—android, so no emotion. Logic rules.

"LaForge—chief engineer. I absolutely relate to the pride and care he takes in the upkeep of his systems."

After McVeigh's arrest, Dr. John R. Smith was the court-appointed psychiatrist assigned to examine him. Smith found the prisoner very intelligent, with an IQ of 126. As McVeigh calmly explained how he designed, built and delivered his bomb, the psychiatrist saw no signs of remorse. *He talks about this crime like it's some kind of successful science project,* he thought.

According to Smith, as a boy, McVeigh had been so upset by his parents' fighting that he invented a fantasy world. "He created this superhero role for himself," Smith said. "He fantasized all these monsters, which he fought."

As an adult, McVeigh came to see the U.S. government as the ultimate monster. The psychiatrist concluded McVeigh was not delusional—that he knew exactly what he did.

In his opening statement, prosecutor Joseph Hartzler assailed McVeigh saying, "he liked to consider himself a patriot. Well, ladies and gentlemen, our forefathers fought soldiers. They fought them face to face, hand to hand. They didn't plant bombs, and run away wearing earplugs."

After the trial, a fellow prisoner poured his heart out to McVeigh during a recreation period, telling him how his life had gone wrong. When he finished, the inmate looked at McVeigh and asked, "Tim, where did you go wrong?"

"I didn't go wrong," McVeigh said.

Absolutely No Remorse– McVeigh (in 1997 photo) refused to apologize for his crime.

PHOTO: © ROBBIE MCCLARAN/SABA

Healing Place– The Oklahoma City National Memorial, unveiled in April 2000, includes 168 high-back bronze and stone chairs. Each chair bears the name of a bombing victim.

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looking forward most of the time. With his court-appointed defense lawyers beside him, the accused bomber told the judge that he understood the charges.

Afterward marshals took McVeigh to a nearby federal prison, a medium-security facility in El Reno, Okla.

On August 10, 1995, a federal grand jury indicted McVeigh. He was accused of using a weapon of mass destruction to "kill and injure innocent persons and to damage property of the United States."

McVeigh's new court-appointed attorney, Stephen Jones, brought in a psychiatrist to help determine whether McVeigh was competent to stand trial.

The doctor talked with the prisoner for nearly 25 hours, but found no signs of remorse as McVeigh dispassionately discussed the bombing.

"I expect to be convicted, and I expect to receive the death penalty," McVeigh told the psychiatrist.

He was right. In June of 1997 a federal-court jury in Denver found

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him guilty. A few days later, they sentenced him to death.

His fellow conspirator, Terry Nichols, would be sentenced to life in prison. Nichols continues to proclaim his innocence even as he faces a separate state trial for 160 counts of capital murder. Michael Fortier later received 12 years for crimes including failing to warn the government of the bombing.

In his summation during the McVeigh trial, prosecutor Larry Mackey lashed out at the defendant for the T-shirt he wore on the day of the bombing, and its slogan celebrating the spilling of patriots' and tyrants' blood. The 168 people who were killed were not tyrants, the prosecutor said. McVeigh had a right to protest the events at Ruby Ridge and Waco, he allowed, but he had no right to turn his political agenda into an assault on innocent people.

"In America," Mackey said, "everybody has a right to their beliefs, a right to think and say what they do. This is not a prosecution of Tim McVeigh for his political beliefs. This is a prosecution of Tim McVeigh because of what he did. He committed murder."

Mackey asked jurors to take one more thought with them to the deliberation room. "Who are the real patriots?" he asked. "And who is the traitor?"

When they were finished, 12 jurors, 12 of Timothy McVeigh's fellow citizens, gave him their answer.

Smooth Moves

Interviewers have always asked me, "How do you do it all?" The truth is, I only appear to be doing it all. Those balls that I seem to be juggling so effortlessly are, in fact, dropping all around me. What the public sees are moments of perfection, all the balls in the air, frozen for that instant, just like a photograph.

—CYBILL SHEPHERD, *Cybill Disobedience (HarperCollins)*

Big Chill

A friend and his wife were considering traveling to Alaska—a trip that the husband had long dreamed of taking. He kept talking about how great it would be to stay in a log cabin without electricity, to hunt moose and drive a dog team instead of a car. "If we decided to live there permanently, away from civilization, what would you miss the most?" he asked his wife.

"You," she replied.

—*Contributed by* MEREDITH DEVOE