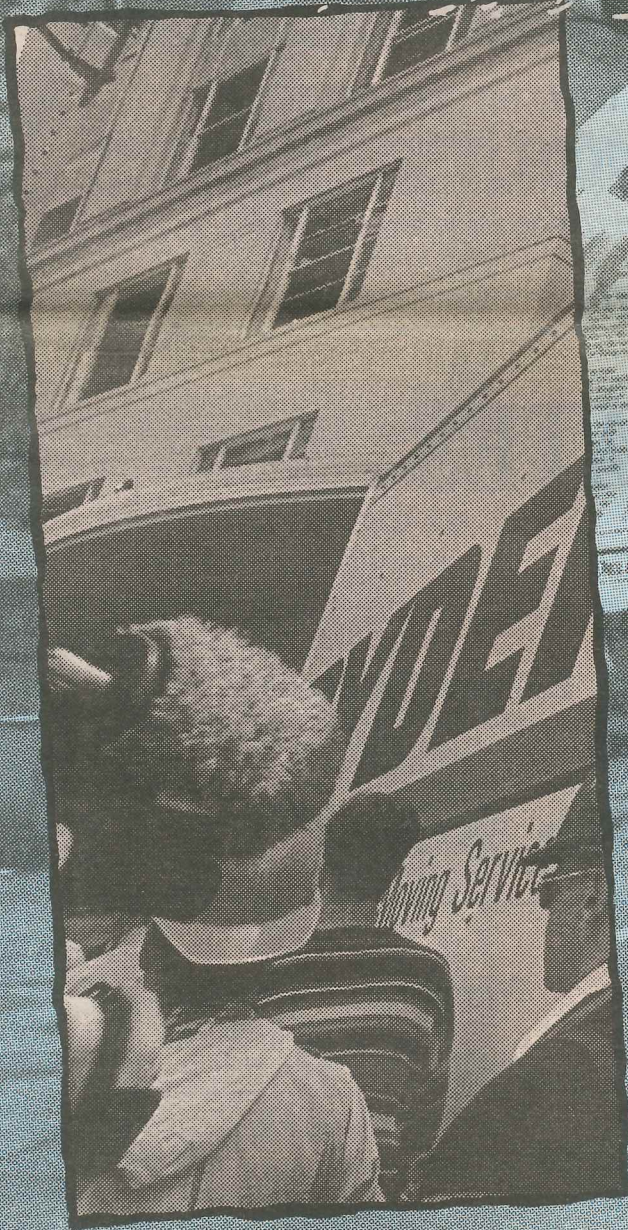
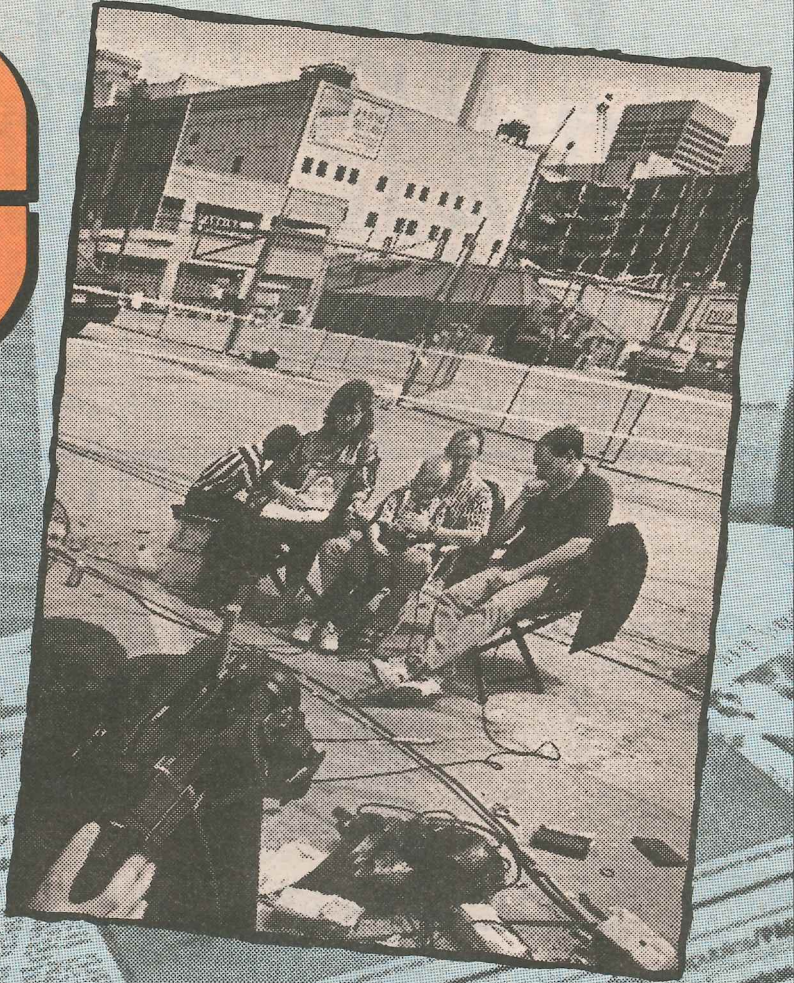


OKLAHOMA Gazette

MAY 4, 1995

AFTERSHOCKS

Coming to terms with the effects of a major tragedy
pg. 4

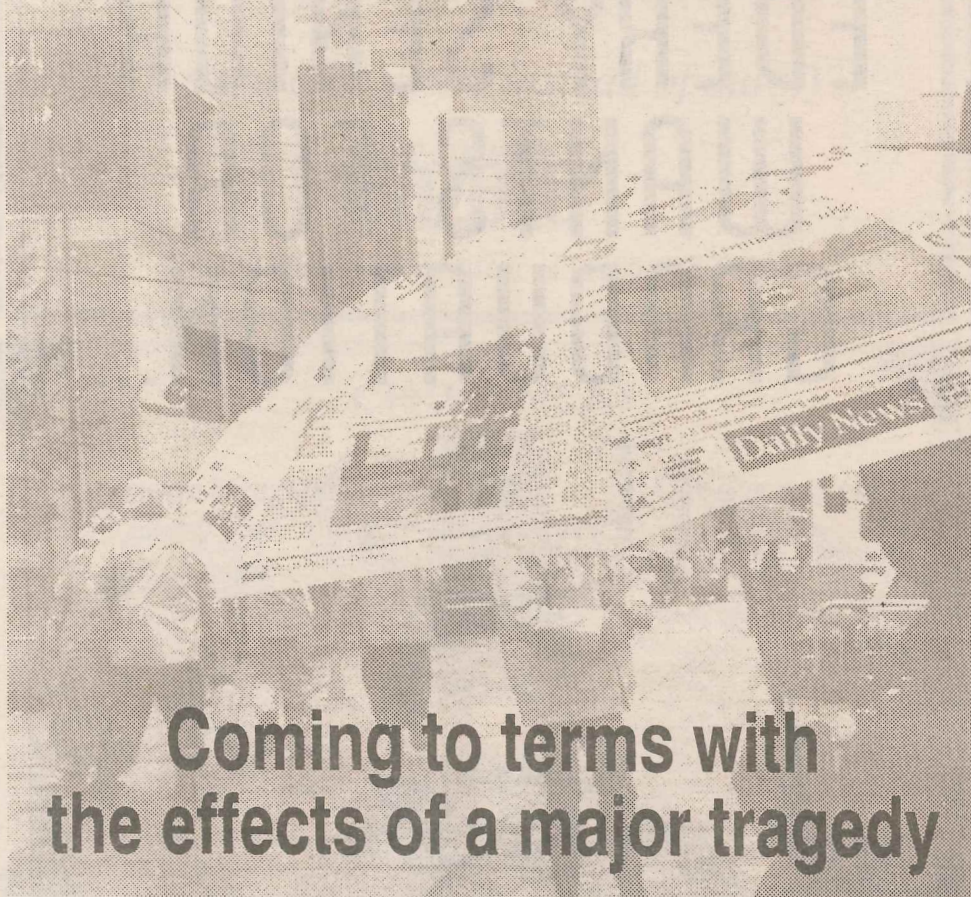


Blasting away
by Jonathan Nicholson
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Different standards
by Phil Bacharach
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AFTERSHOCKS



Coming to terms with the effects of a major tragedy

History doesn't usually announce itself with as much impact or immediacy as the April 19 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building did, but this was one event that, from the beginning, left no doubt about its significance. As these events have unfolded, it has become clear the attack has had such far-reaching, sensational implications it might take years, and the advantage of plenty of hindsight, to place it in the proper context.

For now, only two weeks after the explosion, there are more pressing concerns. Though national attention largely has shifted to the investigation into the bombing and exposure of the paramilitary movement across the United States, the situation remains especially grim for those who exist in the shadow — both figuratively and literally — of what remains of the federal building.

Dozens of families still await the

identification of loved ones believed buried in the rubble. Salvage teams continue to battle the elements, frustration, fatigue and the building itself in an effort to bring them closure. Bombing suspect Tim McVeigh awaits a grand jury hearing from his cell at the federal prison in El Reno while his alleged accomplice continues to evade capture, despite the largest manhunt in U.S. history. And a significant portion of downtown Oklahoma City remains a shattered reminder of this savage act.

Surrounding all that is a community trying hard to regain some semblance of a normal existence. How well Oklahoma City repairs itself, both physically and emotionally, is likely to be the slowest and most complicated angle to track of all these elements. But, in the end, and to the people who live here, it will be the one that matters most.

In the meantime, the work goes on.

—Mike Easterling



—Photo by Mark Hancock

Dr. Paul Heath, who was caught in the middle of the federal building bombing, and his wife Willetta look over some cards made by students at Sky Ranch Elementary School for Dr. Heath last week. Willetta Heath is a media specialist at the school.

They were still converging on downtown Oklahoma City last weekend, the crowds needing to see for themselves the grim carcass of the federal building.

They snapped photos and rolled their camcorders. They wept.

But most of the onlookers could do little more than gaze at the sight — the building's north face stripped away to reveal a surreal web of destruction — memorializing so much

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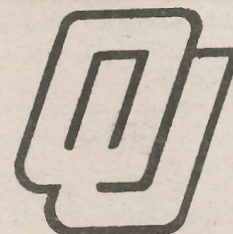
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mindless death, that it has yet to be fully comprehended.

And while the tragedy seeps into the the state's collective consciousness, some are wondering if the case of bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh reasonably can be tried here.

"I think it will be difficult, if not impossible, to find a jury," said long-time defense attorney D.C. Thomas.

He noted that Oklahoma City's tight-knit community is a far cry from cities such as New York, where "15 million people just walk on each other."

University of Oklahoma associate law professor Randall Coyne said he doesn't think getting an impartial jury is an insurmountable task, but said "it's going to be very, very difficult to make sure that happens."

Instead of moving the trial, he said one option might be to import an out-of-state jury.

With most witnesses and resources being in Oklahoma City, he said such a plan would probably be less costly than a change of venue.

"It would be a creative solution, and an unusual one," he said.

John W. Coyle and federal public defender Susan Otto — McVeigh's court-appointed attorneys — already have been denied a change of venue motion.

Although U.S. Magistrate Ronald Howland conceded that the case has received a torrent of publicity, he added that it's too early to tell if a fair trial is possible, pointing out that he hasn't even had a chance yet to question potential jurors.

But defense attorneys have said they will try again.

A change of venue for a federal criminal case is extremely tough to come by, according to local defense lawyer Irven Box.

He said even if the trial were moved, "I don't know anywhere you could get what we'd say [is] a fair trial, as far as people not knowing about the facts or who he (McVeigh) was."

But he added that he believes jurors generally try hard to be impartial.

Box said one aspect sure to be a problem is the location of the crime scene. The Alfred P. Murrah building is right across the street from the federal courthouse.

"You could ask, if you were a defense attorney — and I think it would be a valid request — is that you move at least the sight of the court hearing itself," he said.

There's also some question as to who will end up representing McVeigh.

Twice already, Coyle and Otto have been denied motions to remove themselves from the case. Both have said they knew victims of the explosion.

There is indication that a Texas attorney already has expressed interest in handling the case.

Most observers say they think Coyle and Otto eventually will be allowed to withdraw from the case.

But Thomas said representing McVeigh is something he surely wouldn't be able to do in good conscience.

"I've got to sleep tonight," he said.

— Phil Bacharach

So what is the unorganized militia, and why is everybody saying these terrible things about it? Gun-toting, conspiracy-minded bigots or just patriotic defenders the U.S. Constitution? It depends on whom you ask.

The militia movement has found itself under the national microscope. Oklahoma City bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh allegedly has been linked to such groups, and James and Terry Nichols — the brothers being held as "material witnesses" — evidently had ties to the Michigan Militia.

But members of such right-wing groups insist they had nothing to do with the federal building's explosion, claiming instead that the federal government is using the tragedy to justify a free-speech crackdown.

"We're talking about the government putting out false information," said Ross Hullett, commander of the Oklahoma Citizens Militia.

The 65-year-old Eufaula man and many of his colleagues suggest that the White House either orchestrated the recent bombing or are protecting the actual perpetrators, making McVeigh this decade's version of Lee Harvey Oswald.

Hullett predicted that President Clinton's proposed increase of the FBI's powers will easily pass through Congress.

"The bill's gonna go through, and the way they got that was from the dastardly act of killing a bunch of people," he said.

"They did the same thing in Waco. Little by little, all these things create legislation to take our freedoms."

Hullett and his cohorts see the U.S. as incrementally inching toward a "New World Order," in which there is only one government, one religion. Militia supporters say the move has been spurred by such disparate factors as gun control measures, the Federal Reserve Board and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).

Militia groups also claim that United Nations military forces have set up camp in the continental U.S.

To counter these perceived threats, many militia groups conduct weekend paramilitary exercises and practice shooting, in which members don green fatigues and bring out their guns.

They regularly voice their fears of a federal Big Brother via short-wave radio broadcasts and computer bulletin boards on the Internet.

Hullett said the militia relies on such sources of information because the national media have become a propaganda arm of the feds.

"When the truth's not there — and that's what the media has done to this country for the last 40 years — they've turned the lights out," he said.

"When there's no lights, you can't see, and that's when the cockroaches and the vermin come out."

The movement's main spokespeople — Vietnam veteran Bo Gritz, William Cooper, Mark Koernke and former Michigan Militia leader Norman Olson, who last week was forced to resign after he accused the Japanese government of the Oklahoma City bombing — have been unfairly demonized, according to Hullett.

"I believe that God-fearing American patriot citizens is only one rung down the ladder from a saint," he said.

"When the people wake up and find that they're willing to trade their God-given rights to be protected by a whore-mongering murderer, then the rat's gonna be on them."

But such beliefs typify the paranoia of these groups, according to Dallas sociologist Dr. Sally Caldwell.

"They're just socially constructing that reality to fit a certain view of the world," she said.

A former Oklahoma City resident, Caldwell has spent most of her professional career researching right-wing political extremism.

She said the militia and similar movements arise when people — generally white males in rural environments — blame a common enemy because they're not getting their fair slice of American prosperity.

"It boils down to a matter of being frustrated, and they're frustrated in terms of



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their status," said Caldwell.

She said that instead of centering on the two suspects in the Oklahoma City bombing, people should examine the existing social forces from which such devastating violence can spring.

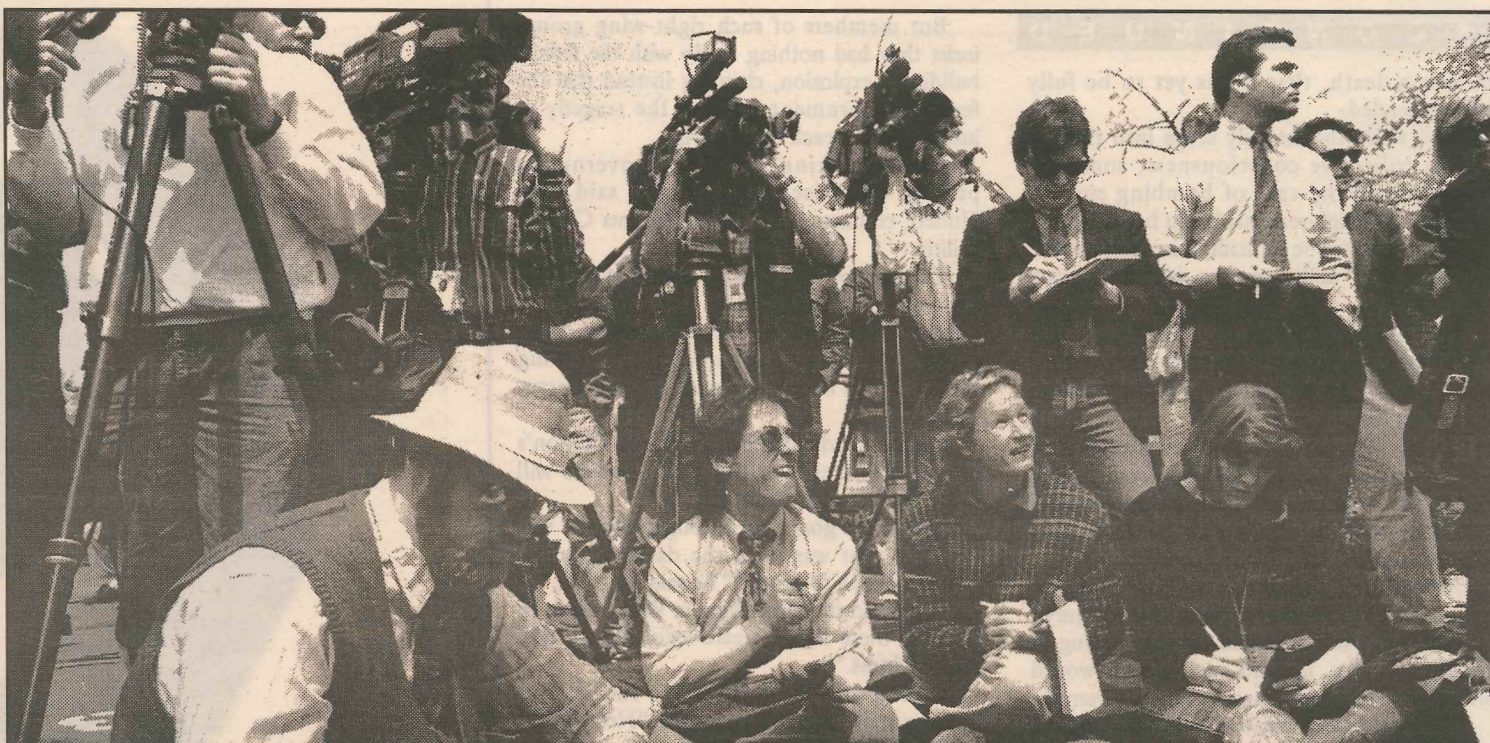
"Anything that might be out there," she said, "is off the hook if we can just shuck this down to, 'It was that guy.'"

While political extremism has always been part of the American landscape, Caldwell said previously undreamed-of technology — fax machines, cellular phones, the expanse of the Internet — has now created "an ideological village out there in cyberspace."

In this high-tech milieu, Caldwell said, all ideas are imbued with a new-found legitimacy — particularly the dangerous ones.

"I think we're in for the long haul," she said.

— Phil Bacharach



— Photo by Mark Hancock

The crowd at Satellite City, the base of operations for the media crowd covering the bombing, had thinned out considerably by early this week, but competition for stories was becoming more fierce.

large, full cooperation from network producers in verifying information and comparing notes.

"There's a good spirit of cooperation here, which is surprising for the business we're in — it's usually so cutthroat," Newbold said.

Newbold said the reporters at Satellite City, one week into their reports, were beginning to show signs of strain and fatigue, stemming from the lack of resolution of the story and the nature of their findings.

"On the one-week anniversary, you could kind of tell it in their voices," he said.

"They seemed obviously upset and angry over this. In fact, I know one reporter who broke down on the air."

Across the parking lot, Janet St. James of KOCO-TV Channel 5 was preparing for a stand-up report on a makeshift platform, many of which have sprung up in Satellite City. St. James has been filing reports since the April 19 bombing. She has seen some journalistic impropriety on the part of some out-of-state reporters, but said that the majority have been cooperative, both with authorities and with

each other.

"There's been a number of out-of-state media who have not handled themselves in what I consider a professional way — trying to cross the lines," St. James said.

"This is still a mass-murder crime scene behind me, and we have no business trying to get across."

Among all reporters following this story, none have been there as long or seen as much

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as Carrie Hulsey of KTOK. Hulsey had been assigned to the federal courthouse the morning of April 19 to cover the arraignment of a man who had threatened University of Oklahoma President David Boren when she saw the explosion.

There are some things Hulsey saw that morning which she said will stay with her for the rest of her life.

"Some people were literally covered in blood," she said.

"When I first started reporting on the story, I didn't realize that a day care center was in there.

"Then I started seeing all these kids being carried out. Seeing the children carried out — I've been to homicide scenes, and I've seen dead bodies before, but when you actually see a triage center being set up in downtown Oklahoma City, it's scary," Hulsey said.

"Three minutes earlier, and I would have been in front of that building... I don't think it's hit me yet how close I could have been, because I've been working. I think if I stop working at this point, I may not be able to come back."

Damon Gardenhire, a news reporter for KOTV in Tulsa, was among those who were feeling the tension. As one of the first television reporters to arrive on the scene, Gardenhire saw some of the reporters' behavior as reprehensible, particularly the national media.

"A lot of the media coming in don't have a grasp of the tragedy they're dealing with," Gardenhire said.

"If you were down here on the scene when it all happened — it's a cliché — but it was literally like a war zone. And I think a lot of the

people coming in don't really have a grasp of that.

"They're standing two blocks away, and they keep seeing the same picture, over and over again ... some of the media out here are callous. They are not empathetic to what's going on with these people. They don't understand that this is a small state of only about 3 million people, and everybody in this state feels the pain of what's going on. Yet, they are going out and still continuing to pursue those family members, continuing to go to their funerals."

Gardenhire said he believed the pool situation, with reporters vying for spots on a junket into the perimeter in order to share and disseminate their information and videotape, was fomenting resentment among the journalists.

"Unfortunately, I think the pool system fosters that," he said.

"And I think that until they started actively pursuing pool efforts, I don't think there was a lot of competitiveness. But now that you've got the opportunity to go ahead and do this, your station wants you to do it, your newspaper wants you to do it, your magazine wants you to do it."

As the pool of reporters gathered to go into the site, a callous act was happening before their eyes. A crew from a tabloid talk show had set up a makeshift studio, in which a group of family members sat in director's chairs, holding flowers, handkerchiefs and photos of their lost loved ones as the federal building loomed behind them.

They seemed like they didn't want to be there, but millions of viewers would soon be tuning in to either share in their grief or gawk at their misery.

Many reporters looked at the scene with

disgust, but as they did so, they prepared to don hardhats and get their first, exclusive look at the devastation.

— George Lang

The yellow tape which surrounded the press area at N.W. 7th and Harvey had taken on mythic proportions for most reporters covering the disaster. For the 17 reporters and cameramen who entered the perimeter of destruction surrounding the federal building on April 27, it was like Dorothy opening the door leading from her sepia tone world into a Technicolor Oz.

"Let these people know that if they don't stay together, I'm going to kick every single one of them all out of here," said a police officer in a golf cart to Paul Brum, city engineer and public works director for Oklahoma City.

Brum led the group on the tour and kept the reporters on a short rope, restricting them from wandering too far.

The first stop was the Journal Record Building, due north of the federal building. The 70-year-old structure was devoid of unbroken windows. As the reporters entered, Brum asked all photographers to leave their cameras at the north door, saying there was an FBI agent inside, waiting to confiscate their equipment.

"It's amazing the freak things that happen in something like this," Brum said.

In some offices, the walls had come down, but vases remained on coffee tables, completely undisturbed.

Glass littered nearly every inch of the hallways, although Brum said that a considerable amount had been cleaned away. With every step, the reporters' shoes met with the familiar crunch of glass.

The executive offices, which faced the federal building, were a shambles. Glass from the windows was imbedded in sheet rock, and considerable amounts of ceiling material had fallen on the expensive furnishings. Through the window, the federal building could be seen 150 feet away.

Rescue workers were visible on all levels, sorting through the site, continuing their search, while blue sky could be discerned through some sections. Down below, FBI investigators sifted material through screens, looking for evidence. Above them, a large section of roof hung precariously. That evening, the section, approximately 50 feet across, dropped to the ground.

"When you get this close, you can really tell why it's been so long, tedious and slow," Brum said.

Outside the building, the effect was as though a tornado had gone through. Marble had been ripped from the precipice of the structure. Across the street, the Southwestern Bell building was boarded up, but was still habitable.

"They don't have any structural problems there," Brum said.

"But they don't know what they want to do (with the building). It was partially shielded by the Journal Record Building."

Farther down 6th street, Walker Stamp and Seal was boarded up, with an American flag pinned to the plywood window coverings. Spray-painted beside the flag was a message: "We will be back."

The tour group turned down an alleyway near the C.R. Anthony Building. A group of ATF officials were crowded around a Ryder truck. When the officials saw the group, they

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immediately told them to move on and not take photographs. Reporters theorized that they were testing the truck to see how the explosives were mounted on the original vehicle used in the bombing.

At the end of the alleyway, near the YMCA, a window with chicken wire reinforcements had not shattered, but the metal window frame had been bent inward from the blast.

Despite Brum's promise to take reporters into the YMCA building, ATF officials at the command post outside the building did not allow entrance.

"They say they're still holding it as a crime scene, they won't let us go in," Brum said.

"One of the things they're afraid of is cameras. They just don't want pictures taken until they've cleared the building."

— George Lang

Mike Patana arrived in America from Thailand in 1972. He's run the Thai Kitchen, a downtown restaurant at 327 Dean A. McGee serving both lunch and dinner, for eight years.

Late last week the Thai Kitchen was still shuttered, with its natural gas service turned off, because of the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building. But Patana said he hasn't changed any of his perceptions of Oklahoma or the United States.

"I think people in Oklahoma are very, very nice people," he said.

"All the help from the government, that surprised me that they responded as fast."

Half of the Thai Kitchen's picture windows, facing south a block away from the building, had been shattered. The rest of the building that houses the restaurant had been boarded up. Patana said insurance adjusters, who were on the scene within days, estimated damage at about \$20,000.

Patana is by no means the only small business owner hurt by the blast, though not physically. The Federal Emergency Management Agency set up the Small Business Administration Friday to assist small business owners in getting back on their feet.

FEMA had made no official damage estimates and detailed estimate may not be available for weeks, given the off-limits status of much of the blast area.

According to Oklahoma City public works director Paul Brum, an estimated 312 buildings suffered minor damage, such as broken glass and doors, as a result of the blast, some as far away as one and one-half miles. Ten buildings collapsed, including one north of N.W. 7th Street, two blocks away from the Murrah Building. Twenty-five more were deemed as unsafe for occupancy because of structural damage.

Brum said that those structures could still be shored up to be made habitable.

Buddy Young, FEMA Region VI director, said two or three teams of 10 people each had helped the city's public works department with the assessment. FEMA programs include disaster housing assistance, small business loans at low rates, unemployment assistance and grants.

By late Sunday, FEMA said it had received 563 applications for aid and had cut 153 checks for \$221,850.

Behind those numbers lie real people. And there's hardly a small business in the downtown area that wasn't affected in some way. Patana said his restaurant usually has about 50 and 60 diners at lunch time. He only gained access to it when authorities pulled in the perimeter boundaries early last week.

Dan McCullough, executive director of Drug Recovery Inc., a non-profit group that owns about a block and a half of residential property near downtown, said its damage

estimates have run between \$1 million and \$3 million. The group helps about 2,000 clients recover from drug abuse each year, he said, and they would be affected.

"Addiction is hard enough as it is," he said.

"It'll take people months, just anybody, to get over this. One-third of this town is in post-traumatic stress syndrome. This will include our clients."

While the business owners had to deal with the financial loss of the blast, that was by far not the biggest worry. Charlene Fletcher runs a bail bonding business around the corner from the Thai Kitchen. A window sign painter was supposed to have been out that fateful day so Fletcher's customers could find her. She's sure she lost some business.

"How much, I don't know," Fletcher said.

"What do you say? A lot of people lost a whole lot, you know, little children. I'd gladly give my life for one of them. I'm 64 years old, and I would gladly took one of 'em's place. Them little kids never have hurt nobody."

Despite the destruction, city officials say they see no obstacle as yet to the \$285-million Metropolitan Area Projects (MAPS) downtown revitalization efforts.

"The effect of the blast at this time is not a known quantity," said MAPS project manager Jim Thompson.

"It may have some effect on subcontractors, but the magnitude and time of that are unknown," he said.

Thompson said there's the possibility of bid inflation, given reconstruction activity, but said proper timing could alleviate that.

"When you go out for bids, you don't want to schedule your bid at the same time as someone else's bid," he said.

— Jonathan Nicholson

Dr. Paul Heath, a counselor for the U.S. Veterans Administration, can't explain how he escaped the bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building with nothing more than a few scrapes.

But he did.

"I was standing next to a wall that did not cave in and the blast went around me," he said, "but all the material on the ceiling and some other offices just covered me up to my armpits."

Some of his fifth floor office mates were not so lucky.

One of them, George Dinker, had shards of glass lodged in the back of his head.

Another colleague "was down on his back with hundreds of cuts from the glass," said Heath.

"His eye looked like it was out. He was bleeding badly. Two fingers I noticed were severed. His ear was cut in one spot nearly clear back to his head."

Then Heath saw that another friend, Martin Cash, had lost an eye.

"I ripped the shirt off of his back, shook it to get out all the glass I could, folded it, put it in his left hand, and had him hold it up to his face," said Heath.

"We had to walk Martin over desks, and I had to take my hand and actually move his foot because he said he couldn't feel his left foot. George held on to the back of him. The debris was four or five feet tall."

Heath is one of an untold number of Oklahomans now grappling with some deep psychological scarring. But as a licensed psychologist for well more than 20 years, he knows that emotional wounds need to be squarely faced.

The first step is just to talk about it, he said.

"The people that don't talk about it are the people who oftentimes have trouble later," he said.

CONTINUED

"Lock it away, don't talk about, seal it away and finally it comes out in symptoms of dysfunction later."

Heath and a few others have started a therapy support group for the federal building's fifth-floor survivors.

The next several months — perhaps years — are bound to be difficult for us, the force of the April 19th bombing reaching past downtown and into the consciousness of an entire state.

"All of a sudden, our extended family has been attacked," said Oklahoma City psychologist Dr. Stewart Beasley, "and we take that personally."

As time wears on, Beasley said he expects many will experience a delayed grieving process.

"It's going to take some time for the adrenaline to wear off, and for the entire community to be able to deal with this," he said.

Indeed, already mental health officials are seeing many symptoms of post-traumatic stress syndrome — including flashbacks, depression, edginess, headaches, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, recurring nightmares and sudden panic attacks.

Beasley also said that for many, the bombing will spur a type of hyper-vigilance.

"We're just always watching for something or we're fearful that's something's going to happen," he said.

"That's just a pretty natural reaction to something that hits us from left field."

Still others are turning into media junkies, inundating themselves with never-ending bombing coverage.

"I've said to people to turn off your TV set and go out and sit on the porch or walk or do something," said Beasley.

Over the past two weeks, the crisis help-line called CONTACT has taken an average of 180 phone calls a day, more than double what the organization normally receives in a day.

Phone counselors from several states have flown in to help out with the influx of calls, said CONTACT executive director Darcy Harris.

The calls to CONTACT have come from a variety of people wrestling with the disaster — rescue workers, grieving family members, reporters, residents who just can't make sense of the tragedy.

And Harris said that for many, the explosion has dredged up a plethora of unresolved problems.

"There's a saying that sometimes a new wound makes all the old wounds ache," said Harris.

"When we go through things like this, it reminds us of previous losses."

A handful of CONTACT's usual volunteers can't currently work the phone lines because of their own involvement in the bombing.

In fact, one volunteer who worked in the federal building was the only member of her office to survive. At the time of the blast, she had gone to the snack bar.

Like many mental health professionals involved in the healing process, Harris said CONTACT is sensitive to the fact that many counselors, in turn, need to be counseled.

The CONTACT number is (405) 848-2273. The organization is also asking for financial donations.

Although Paul Heath said it will take a lot of time for the community to return to a sense of the normal, he said the recovery already is well underway.

"There's a healing process that started that day for the whole community," he said, "by the way every institution in this town rolled up their sleeves and went to work ... and have worked tirelessly to try to do the right thing."

— Phil Bacharach

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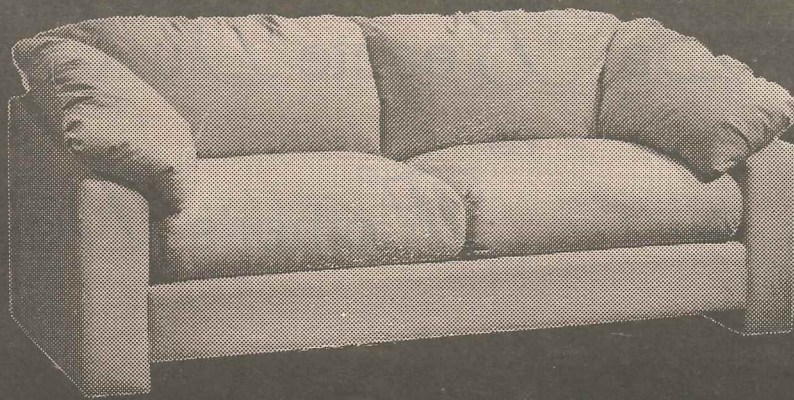
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O F C O U N S E L

Blessed with stability

The bomb blast that destroyed the A.P. Murrah building shook our sense of security. Our fears deepened with the news that the authors of this atrocity may have been home-grown terrorists who dedicated their sorry lives to playing soldier in a crisis of their own dark imaginations.

The grace, grief and determination of our governor and our president were sources of comfort. So too was the rousing response of the community, a burst of altruism and community spirit that led our fellow citizens to speak of Oklahoma in uncommonly admiring terms.

And yet, the question is ever present: Why?

For this reason — and others — the aftermath is a time for reflection. It is a time for sadness. But it is not a time for panic.

With our first, flinching glance at the militia movement, there seemed to be more reason to believe that something new and terrible was stalking America. It is not so.

Throughout American history, extremists of this ilk have been among us. Their doctrine is hate. Their weapon is terror. Their motives are rooted in some affliction of soul and psychology that science still has difficulty explaining and documenting.

As historian Richard Hofstadter wrote in a famous essay on "the paranoid style in American politics," American political life has often served "an arena for uncommonly angry minds." In America, some villains are familiar. John Brown. The Know-Nothings and the nativist, anti-Catholic movements of the years before the Civil War. The Ku Klux Klan. Joe McCarthy.

The world view promoted by the paranoid style follows a pattern, as described by Hofstadter:

"History is a conspiracy, set in motion by demonic forces of almost transcendent power, and what is felt to be needed to defeat it is not the usual methods of political give-and-take, but an all-out crusade. The paranoid spokesman sees the fate of this conspiracy in apocalyptic terms — he traffics in the birth and death of whole worlds, whole political orders, whole systems of human values. He is always manning the barricades of civilization. He constantly lives at a turning point: It is now or never in organizing resistance to conspiracy. Time is forever just running out."

Truly, anyone who actually thinks this way must live a frightened and frightening existence. Although the technology is new and the casualty list from a single criminal plot is longer and sadder than ever before, many others have chosen bombs, bullets and violence as political tools.

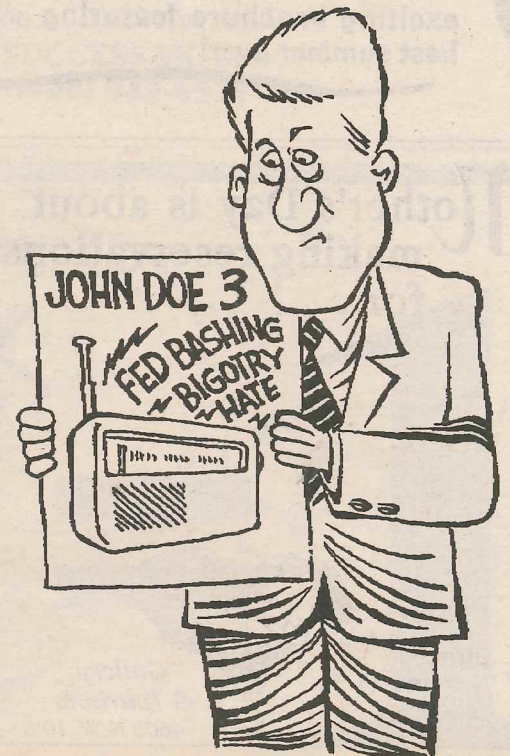
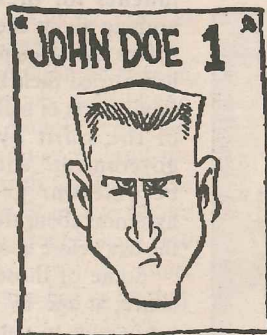
None of this has anything to do with liberalism or conservatism. The guilty ought not be compared to any national leader, Democrat or Republican. Whatever their ideas, it cannot be called thinking and cannot be found on any ordinary political map. If dangerous extremism has always been with us, what is our safeguard? On what can we rely to believe our future will not be as apocalyptic as these extremists predict?

One answer comes from basic American history. The nation has suffered through revolutions, civil war, depressions and many crises of a political or moral nature. Through it all, no radical movement has ever come close to attaining power. No one has even come close to winning power at the national level with a platform incompatible with the basic precepts of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. We have been blessed with a stability that helps sustain our liberty.

Think about it. The spectrum of views represented in our national leadership actually represent a very narrow spectrum of ideologies among those proposed in human history. Our system keeps the nuts confined to the margins of our society.

And so, we should not panic and destroy our Constitution in our zeal to punish the wrongdoer. We should not panic and tear our community apart in a misguided search for those whose views seem somehow similar to the phony politics of the guilty. We should enforce the law.

But we should not doubt this wound will heal. ■



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Support police, fire fighters

Editor — I for one am very proud of our police and fire department. My sincere appreciation is extended to these dedicated and professional firefighters and police officers. In the days since this terrible tragedy, they have proven themselves to be not only highly trained, but dedicated to their job.

Having had the opportunity to view their courageous performances on television these last few days leaves little doubt that we have one of the best police and fire departments in the nation. Words cannot describe the outstanding task that they have accomplished, but we have been afforded the opportunity to see them with our own eyes on television.

The citizens of Oklahoma City were aware in 1989 that they have very dedicated public safety departments. Acknowledging this, they gave their full support by overwhelmingly passing a 3/4-cent sales tax dedicated to increased police and fire protection. Then it was but a short period of time that a court action had to be initiated to prevent the misuse of these dedicated funds.

Now long before this terrible tragedy took place, some city leaders were busy making plans to cut many hundreds of thousands of dollars from the fire and police department budgets. There is no way that this can be accomplished without a reduction in services provided by these departments to the citizens of this city. As a 29-year member of the fire department,

now retired, I can assure you that what is being proposed is not in your best interest. We have a great fire chief, one we can all be very proud of, but he is being put in a very precarious position by his superiors. This position will cause him to lose the respect of his men. Their proposals will devastate your great fire department and set back its growth many years.

Since our mayor has spent many hours at the scene of the tragedy, I sincerely hope he now will realize the need for a strong, capable, well-mannered police and fire department. Since the passage of the sales tax they are just now reaching their full capabilities. To reduce this now would be disastrous for our citizens. I truly hope the mayor will put aside his personal feelings against our fire department and recognize their professionalism. I call upon him to lead the effort to maintain strong fire and police departments and to give them just funds to operate with.

I plead with you, the citizens of our great city, to stand by these dedicated men and women who protect you 24 hours a day. Rise up and let your voice be heard. Let your council person know that you want first class fire and police protection.

— Bill G. Liebegott
Oklahoma City

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Kids, before the bombing

Editor — How is a bombing like Christmas? The answer, of course, is that at both times, people become especially aware of children and that they should be loved and treasured. Oklahoma City's terrible tragedy brought out in us the urge to donate anything requested, and to volunteer in dozens of ways. Amid all of our feelings, we mourned for and felt angry about the dead children.

So it is at Christmas: We again donate and hope that every child, for that one day, will have a teddy bear and a basket of food.

Between times, they've on their own. The day before the bombing, we were content with the politicians we had voted into office, and cared not that they proposed cutting school lunches for these same children. We said nothing about the proposal to cut formula for babies living in poverty; after all, no fireman had carried their bodies, no TV had shown the slow effects of malnutrition nor the slow killing of the spirit by poverty. The "cut-back government" and a "balanced budget" had become our golden calf. We who were hysterical about the bombing cared not one wit the day before about child nutrition or poverty.

Some of those dead children, a few years hence, at age 15 or 16, would still have been too young to vote, but not too young to be violent, or for us to kill: We approve the death penalty for children, even mentally retarded children.

The bombing could make us take another look at ourselves, our hatred and our mean-spiritedness. We have not always been thus. A generation ago we sang songs that stressed, "He's not heavy...he's my brother." Who is our brother/sister now? Do we have any? The word "mercy" is gone from our vocabulary, hence from our politician's speeches. Our generous, compassionate side is reserved for Christmas and for tragedies.

Will the bomb help us look again and choose just how angry and hate-filled we will allow ourselves to become? We can choose to listen to and believe the hate-inspiring Limbaughs and Gingriches, or we can turn to another old song and begin to sing and practice "Let there be peace, and let it begin with me." I assure you, such peace will not begin with a concealed gun.

— Lou Jenkins
Oklahoma City

to the beginning of the healing process for Oklahoma City.

Then...people called the Arts Council and restaurants represented in the Arts Festival with threats — bomb threats, boycotting and picketing threats. So 148 artists have lost approximately one third of their yearly income (it would be like having a staff meeting at your place of employment and being told you have a job, but your income will be reduced by a third).

The income from the Arts Festival accounts for at least 60 percent of the Council's operating budget, which not only affects their staff, but other nonprofit agencies in the city.

The money from the food booths not only goes to the restaurants represented, but also to the nonprofit group represented by that booth.

I was very disappointed with the KRXO-107.7FM staff Monday. It was obvious by the digs of Mark Shannon that he felt the Festival should not go on, using the innuendo that people will be smelling decaying bodies. Even after Rep. Ernest Istook, R-Okla. City called in to say that the smell downtown was from the stockyards, just five minutes later Steve Bennett again made a sarcastic comment about the Festival going on and people smelling the decaying bodies. I was there: The smell was from the stockyards, the wind was from the south — it was impossible to smell anything from the north.

I am struggling with all the different actions/reactions throughout our city. We have lost so much of our income with the oil crisis years ago, the Penn Square fall. We have lost good people to other states to find employment. We have lost dear, good people to a bomb. We have lost what little art and culture we have had in the city. When are we going to become part of solutions rather than continuing to be a part of the problem?

When are we going to stop asking, "What are you doing?" and ask "What can I do?" We have been so generous in our volunteering with all the rescue efforts. I was so hopeful, so touched. Then I saw that we had not learned what anger and hate can do. We still want to bully and threaten.

— Name withheld upon request

Proud of Oklahoma City

Editor — A letter to Pam Fleischaker:

As a citizen of Oklahoma City, I listened with interest to your essay on National Public Radio last Friday. Although I believe you accurately described the solid character of the citizens of Oklahoma City (especially after the tragedy of the bombing of the federal building), you totally missed the mark in your portrayal of Oklahoma City.

In your essay you seemed fixated on the fact that Oklahoma is flat, windy and has an overabundance of red clay (the main ingredients of the Dust Bowl days that unfortunately is one of the first images that comes to mind with the rest of the nation). If you were an east coast journalist I could understand your bias and stereotyping of Oklahoma, but you have lived here for years. Why did you not describe Oklahoma City for what it is — a great place to live and raise a family?

Of course, with the bombing of the federal building this is not the time or place for boosterism. But we are a proud people as the last week has indicated, and we deserve to be portrayed in the proper light. No we don't have the latest Broadway plays, or an assortment of trendy nouveau cuisine restaurants (as you pointed out), but we do have a variety of cultural institutions and

Bullying the Arts Council

Editor — I have some thoughts about the Arts Festival I want to share. I am remaining anonymous in light of the people out there who use their anger to threaten people.

I do not want to debate whether it was right or wrong to cancel or go on with the festival. I want to share some realities and experiences that I had. The Arts Council was asked on Thursday, April 20, by city officials to continue with their plans in hope that it could begin a healing process for this city.

I was helping Monday with the Arts Festival and saw and heard things that I feel very privileged to have been a part of. Working with the staff and board of directors of the Arts Council as well as working with the artists is very rewarding. They are a very caring and professional group of people.

The Arts Council was going to give \$50,000 to the Red Cross and the Mayor's Fund for relief efforts. Several of the artists told me that all their commission sales were to be donated to the relief efforts.

Other artists told me they knew their sales were going to be down this year, but they wanted to come anyway as their contribution

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facilities (ballet, Philharmonic, Lyric Theatre, etc.) that would make almost any city in the country proud. Also Oklahoma City has a variety of restaurants that are more than adequate to satisfy any city of our size. From listening to your essay the rest of the nation probably wonders if we have anything beyond drive-in theaters and McDonald's.

Although I admit that Oklahoma City can get windy, it's not an everyday occurrence as your essay inferred. In fact it is this very wind that makes Oklahoma City one of the most smog free cities in the entire country. If you had to say anything about the weather, why didn't you mention the fact that Oklahoma City has a temperate climate with four distinct seasons and plenty of sunshine?

For the last few years, Oklahoma City has diligently tried to tell the nation what a great place this is to live (e.g. "It's a Wonderful Life"). You had a unique opportunity to tell our story, but you succumbed to the bias of the east and west coast journalistic establishment and told them what you thought they wanted to hear.

Unfortunately with the media coverage of the federal building bombing, it's to be expected for NBC to portray the everyday Oklahoma City lifestyle from the "general store" in the Oklahoma City Stockyards and for CBS's Connie Chung to insult the entire state. But it's a great disappointment when the associate editor of the leading weekly newspaper (and long-time Oklahoma City resident) bad mouths her own hometown. Oklahoma City is a wonderful place to live and has a lot to offer. Unfortunately, your essay missed a unique opportunity to tell the rest of the nation.

— Clay T. Farha
Oklahoma City

Column re-affirms hope

Editor — We are all victims of the bomb. I had never before thought of myself as a victim. I do not like the feeling of being a victim. In seeking answers and explanations, it occurred to me: What if I am a victim — we are all victims

— because the gradual decline of society in the past 25 years has come to this? Has our way of life spawned home-grown, urban terrorist violence and unspeakable inhumanity?

It occurred to me that maybe, just maybe, the cumulative effect of all our ills has finally wrought the triumph of evil over good. How often have we all thought that the once unthinkable is now a near daily occurrence? Drugs, unsafe schools, child abuse, divorce, illegitimacy, illiteracy, immorality, greed, violence, intolerance, hatred, war and unnamed other sins plague our house. Who has not doubted whether we had the capacity to prevail much longer as a people? The bomb shattered my consciousness and made me doubt people and institutions like never before.

And so too did all the people I have met and talked to in the aftermath of the bomb have doubts. One of those people, Pam Fleischaker, wrote of her doubts in the "At Liberty" opinion in the April 27 issue of the Gazette.

She has been the target of unfair criticism on talk radio. Her doubts are my doubts and maybe your doubts, and the doubts of countless others in this city, state and nation. And the people of Oklahoma City, with the boundless generosity of people literally from around the world, have answered those doubts with one voice: No, we have not over time lost some measure of the capacity we once had to be truly noble and compassionate.

Fleischaker observed that. You and I observed that. Every visitor, guest to the city, correspondent and newperson has observed the unprecedented and unpredictable outpouring of decency from our people. Some, like Tom Brokaw, have told the world that on TV and in his letter to the Daily Oklahoman. Part of the news is the depth and the dimension of our compassionate response.

Fleischaker's commentary, including its metaphors and imagery of our landscape, climate and lifestyle, captured beautifully in words the essence of what we doubters all observed here: The triumph of profound goodness over evil; hope over despair. Instead of being criticized she should be applauded. Congratulations, Pam. Thank you and all the

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staff, writers, photographers, artists and others at the Gazette for a wonderful job.

— Ronald E. Stakem
Oklahoma City

Thanks from Red Cross

Editor — To the people of Oklahoma City:

On behalf of all the men and women at the Oklahoma County Chapter of the American Red Cross, let us express a very deep and heartfelt "thank you" to everyone who so generously gave of themselves, their time, and their revenues during the past week and a half following the terrible disaster at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. No description can ever adequately characterize the outpouring of volunteer efforts, nor can any words express the

true appreciation and gratitude that we have for every single person involved.

Wednesday morning, April 19, began as a beautiful, sunny spring morning here in Oklahoma City. Within a matter of a few minutes, our community, our state, and our nation had been rocked and shaken as never before. Just as quickly, the people here and the entire state responded and mobilized in an unprecedented effort to be of assistance to our fellow citizens who had been harmed.

Everything the Red Cross needed to aid these disaster victims came in quickly and in abundance. We immediately mobilized more than 500 Red Cross trained volunteers and could have easily mobilized many times that number. The response to our initial calls for contributions and supplies was fantastic.

Simply, everyone did whatever they could do and the generosity was overwhelming.

Grandmothers brought in their garden shovels when we sent out a call for shovels to dig through the building ruins; restaurants came with hot food by the truckload; school children collected blankets, pillows and stuffed animals until we had no room for any more; small companies donated their services; large corporations donated services and money; churches opened their doors for shelters; young and old lined up to donate blood; and everyone did what needed to be done without hesitation.

Unfortunately, the disaster is still not over and volunteers from Oklahoma City and from around the U.S. still dig through the ruined building to find and identify our loved ones. Many have said that our city and our state will never be the same, we believe they are right.

It has also been said that this is the first time that Oklahoma has redefined itself in the eyes of

the nation since John Steinbeck's portrayal of our state in the "Grapes of Wrath." Sadly, it took a tragic event to do this, but each of us should be proud of how we accounted for ourselves in the eyes of our great nation and the world. We at the American Red Cross hope and believe that from this unthinkable disaster and the uniting of people that occurred in its wake, we will all grow together and make our home an even better place to live, raise our children and pursue a life of goodness and grace.

Again, the American Red Cross is proud of all of you. Thank you for each and every donation and volunteer effort!

— Sue Ann Hyde
Chair, Board of Directors
Oklahoma County Chapter,
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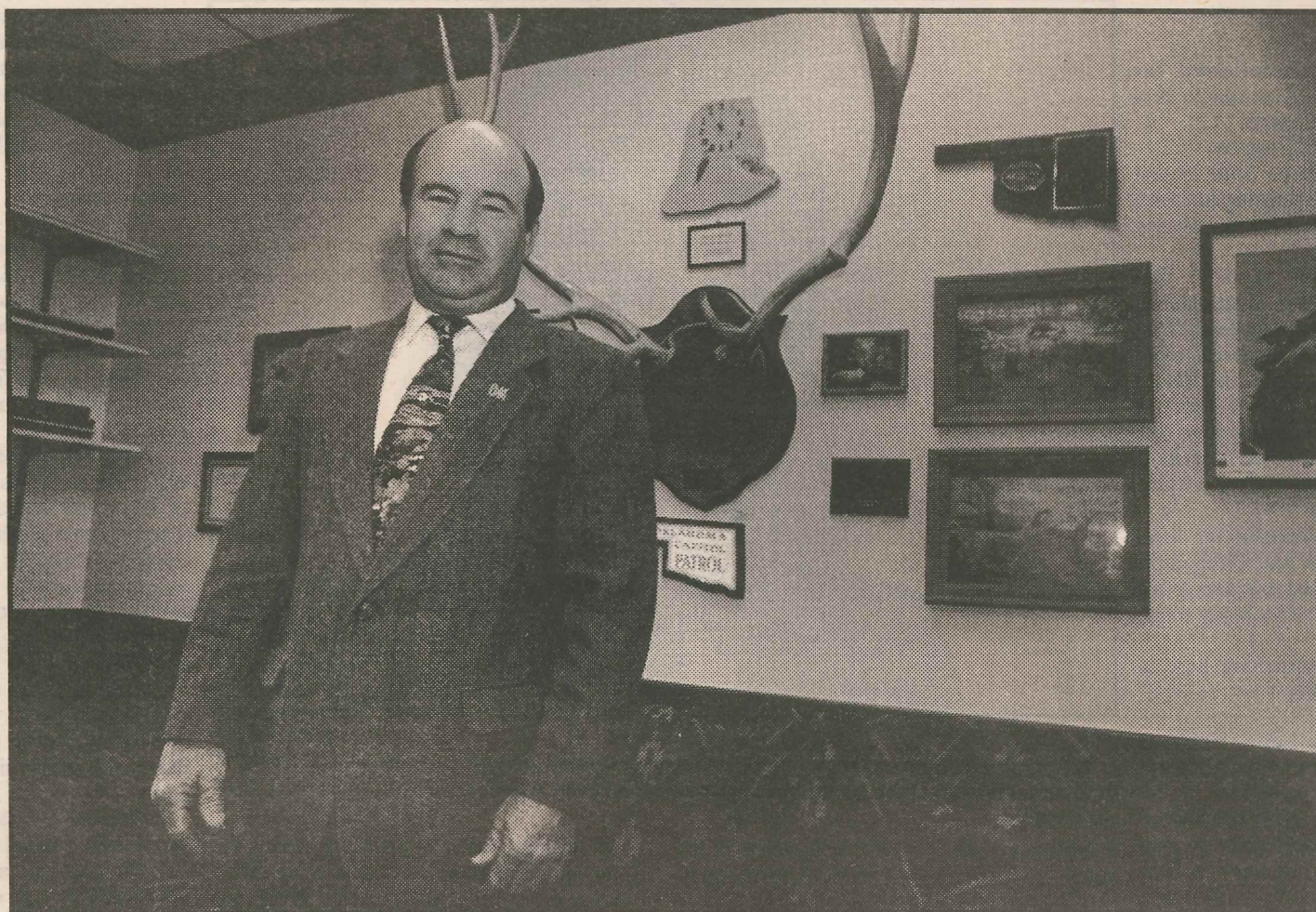
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— Photo by Mark Hancock

State Sen. Frank Shurden, D-Henryetta, author of one of two bills currently before the state Legislature which would legalize the carrying of concealed weapons, says he may hold his bill over for consideration until next year in the wake of the federal building bombing.

Blasting away

Federal building bombing reignites already heated debate over gun control

BY JONATHAN NICHOLSON

Within the last two weeks, members of America's unorganized militia groups have been subject to more poking and prodding and curiosity than ever before. On the television and in the news magazines, they can be seen proudly brandishing rifles, dressing in camouflage clothing and going through obstacle courses.

With the alleged ties between bombing suspect Timothy McVeigh and the Michigan militia, as well as reports McVeigh was arrested while wearing a German 9mm Glock handgun, America's heated gun debate lurched forward once more.

To gun control supporters, McVeigh would look mighty handsome as the National Rifle Association's new poster boy, dressed in orange prison overalls with a cold sneer on his face.

But gun rights advocates say their positions on concealed weapons and repealing last year's federal assault weapons ban are being unfairly linked to far-right wingers.

"I've got to let emotions settle down and let common sense come back," said state Sen. Frank Shurden, D-Henryetta, last week.

Shurden was one of two state lawmakers to propose that Oklahomans be allowed to carry concealed weapons. State Rep. Fred Stanley, D-Madill, had asked April 18, the day before the bombing, for a conference committee to be named for his bill, HB 1374. Shurden said he would be mulling his options this week on whether to ask for a conference committee on his bill, SB 3.

"I've put it on hold for awhile to see what shakes out," Shurden said last week.

But after the bombing, and the arrest of McVeigh, on charges of speeding and transporting a loaded firearm, Shurden's reticence is understandable.

And it could be rubbing off. According to Joe Sudbay, state lobbyist for Handgun Control Inc., about 20 states are

considering concealed weapons legislation, three have already passed it and Texas was expected to pass it early this week. According to Rick Buchanan, spokesman for Gov. Frank Keating, the governor still supports the concept of a concealed weapons bill, as long as it includes appropriate precautions.

But the trend toward adopting concealed weapons laws may be slowing.

"The longer the debate goes on, the more opposition grows," Sudbay said.

Out of the 16 remaining states considering concealed gun laws, Sudbay said a couple more may pass the laws, but not the majority. He said lawmakers and governors are increasingly listening to law enforcement officials concerned that concealed weapons laws may make their jobs more dangerous.

"It tends to be extremists that tend to think we need more guns on the street," Sudbay said.

While Sudbay stopped short of saying gun rights advocates such as the NRA are responsible for the Murrah Building bombing, he said their rhetoric in the gun control debate has been extreme.

"If you read their direct mail, the leadership of the NRA is fostering a lot of anti-government rhetoric," he said.

As an example, he pointed to an NRA fund-raising solicitation sent out in April that said, "It doesn't matter to them that the semi-auto ban gives jack-booted government thugs more power to take away our Constitutional rights ... break in our doors ... seize our guns ... destroy our property ... and even injure or kill us."

The same letter also said, "Randy Weaver at Ruby Ridge ... Waco and the Branch Davidians ... Not too long ago, it was unthinkable for Federal agents wearing Nazi bucket helmets and black storm trooper uniforms to attack law-abiding citizens."

Repeated calls to the National Rifle Association for comment were not returned.

But Shurden said not all gun rights advocates should be lumped in with anti-government militias and whoever bombed

the Murrah building.

"There's a lot of decent people who want this bill," he said of SB 3.

It's opposed, he said, by extremists on the right and the left. On the right, he said, there are groups that think the conditions for getting a concealed weapon permit — a \$75 fee, fingerprints and certified training — are too strenuous.

Shurden also said criticism that McVeigh would not have been arrested had his bill been in effect was off-target.

"He's the type of the far right-winger that wouldn't have gotten to carry it anyway," Shurden said.

As an out-of-state resident, McVeigh wouldn't have been eligible for a permit, he said.

"Are we going to penalize all law-abiding citizens for the 1 percent of the people" that go over the edge, he asked.

"I feel like most law-abiding Oklahoma citizens still feel the same way about their Second Amendment rights," said Paul Newsom, president of the 5,000-member United Sportsmen's Alliance of Oklahoma.

He estimated about 75 percent of Oklahoma households have guns.

"There are radicals in every group and every faction in America," he said.

Shurden, who said he owns a few rifles and keeps an unloaded .38 Special in his home, said he would decide this week whether to go forward with the bill or hold it over for next year.

On the federal level, the repeal of the ban on the manufacture and importation, though not the the possession, of assault weapons is also on hold, apparently. Bob Walker, legislative director for Handgun Control Inc., said the repeal effort likely will be delayed until June or August. But Walker said it was too early to gauge the effect of the bombing.

He estimated the group was short by about 30 votes in the GOP-controlled House of Representatives from stopping repeal. The Senate, he said, was closer.

"We still have got a tough fight ahead of us," Walker said. ■

Local Islamic community suffers in aftermath of terrorist bombing

BY PHIL BACHARACH

The first two days that followed the Oklahoma City bombing seemed to be a case of "round up the usual suspects."

Or maybe just old-fashioned bigotry. Shortly after news spread on April 19 that the Alfred P. Murrah federal building had been blown up, many Americans suddenly indulged in armchair analysis.

Amid unsubstantiated reports that authorities were looking for three men of Middle Eastern descent, the media focused on the possibility that Muslim terrorists were behind the explosion. Then news hit that a Jordanian-American from Oklahoma City had been detained in London, and many were sure that, indeed, Middle Easterners were the culprits — even though the man was only a possible witness and later was released.

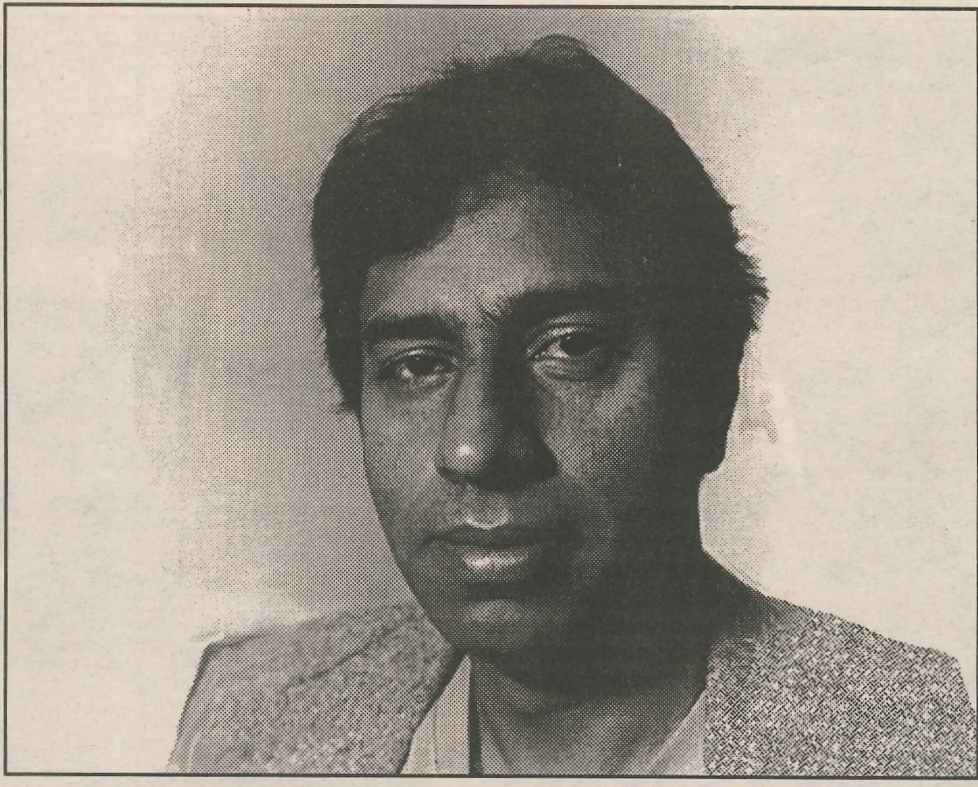
Saleem Nizami, spokesman for the local American Muslim Association, said Oklahomans were understandably concerned, but added that such suspicions exacerbated an already tragic situation.

"Something this bad happening here in Oklahoma, there was one sadness to our lives," he said.

"Then to add to that, we had to look over our shoulders because of stereotyping. So we were going through a double-stress."

Incidents of harassment against Muslims surfaced. Someone fired a pellet rifle at the wall of a Stillwater mosque, while in Oklahoma City, an Islamic woman allegedly suffered a miscarriage after being pelted with rocks, though the incident cannot be confirmed by police.

That first day proved to be especially



— Photo by Mark Hancock

Saleem Nizami, spokesman for the local American Muslim Association, says prejudice against Muslims in the wake of the federal building bombing could have been avoided if people knew more about Islam.

troubling, said Ali Setoodehnia, president of the Islamic Cultural Union at the University of Oklahoma.

"I stayed at home," he said.

"I didn't go anywhere because I didn't want to have any kind of harassment."

The national media, in particular, fanned the flames of speculation, as a cadre of so-called terrorism experts concluded that the bomb was likely the work of Middle Eastern extremists. On the night of the explosion, Tom Snyder devoted a segment of his TV program "Later" to "Mideast behavior and terrorism."

That same evening, former U.S. Rep. Dave McCurdy, D-Norman, furthered the Middle Eastern theory when he said that some Muslim "fundamentalists and radicals" had participated in a 1992 Islamic conference in Oklahoma City.

"In my opinion," said Nizami, "of anybody in Oklahoma, he (McCurdy) might have jumped the gun."

The next day, a New York Times story suggested that international terrorism had arrived in Oklahoma City, partly because "the city is home to at least three mosques."

Nizami said the media reports plainly smacked of stereotyping.

"These people feel so smug and confident about what they are saying without facts," he said.

But like thousands of other Americans, many of Oklahoma City's estimated 5,000 followers of Islam had immediately pitched in to help. The president of the city's American Muslim Association and his wife — a cardiologist and anesthesiologist — both volunteered at area hospitals the day of the explosion.

The American-Muslim Community, an umbrella name for a dozen Islamic organizations, last week donated \$21,000 to bombing victims.

Nizami said he thinks prejudice could be dissolved if people simply knew more about the Islam.

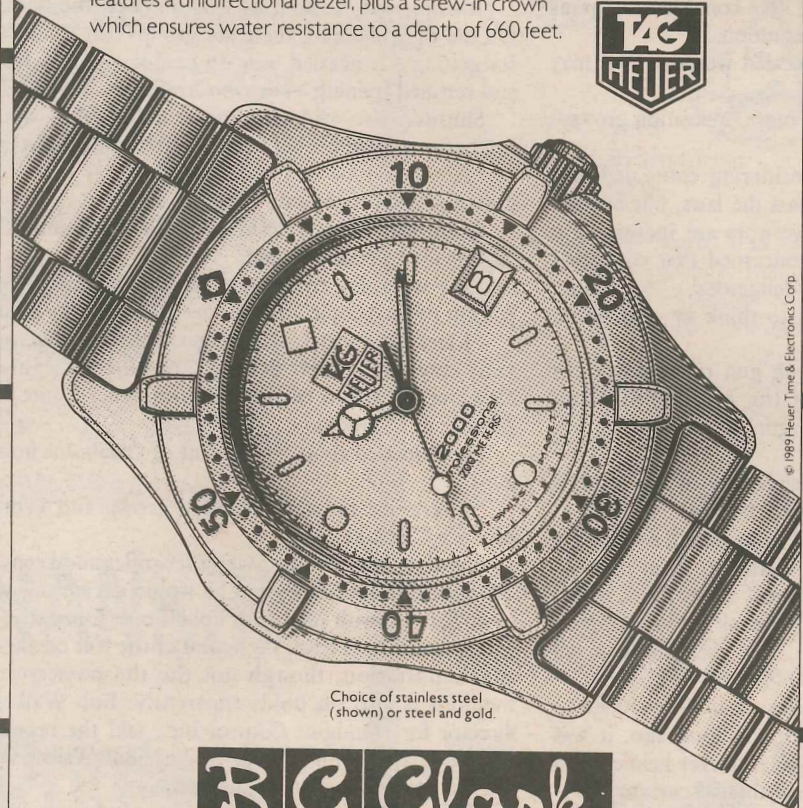
"We have the same heart as the Christian people have," added Setoodehnia.

"Whoever knows what is God, they always condemn this type of devil thing. This is not coming from any one kind of religion, but coming from Christianity, Judaism or Muslim.

"They have the same common denominator, and that is God."

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— Photo by Mark Hancock

Debra Moore, the new executive director of the Neighborhood Alliance of Oklahoma City, says her top priority is determining the organization's direction.

Neighborhood Alliance head hoping to formulate vision

BY JONATHAN NICHOLSON

One of the first things a visitor notices at the headquarters of the Neighborhood Alliance of Oklahoma City is the green chalkboard right as you step inside the door. In big letters are the words "Wish list" and a litany of things the group needs — a video-cassette recorder, a laser or bubblejet computer printer and an IBM computer, either a 486 or 386 series.

Debra Moore claims credit for the list, though she realizes not all the items may be forthcoming. But, she says, there's no harm in trying.

Moore has been on the job for several weeks as the new executive director of Neighborhood Alliance. The alliance serves as an umbrella organization for more than 250 Oklahoma City neighborhood and homeowner associations.

"She's extremely experienced," said Neighborhood Alliance president Amy Brooks.

"Her fund-raising experience is real strong, and right now that's what we need."

She said Moore was selected out of an original pool of about 60 applicants.

The group has two annual contracts with the city, totaling about \$45,000 annually and making up about 45 percent of the budget. Negotiations over the \$20,000 neighborhood organizing contract have in the past been bogged down with the City Council, leading some to wonder about the group's independence.

"We're trying to get off the public dole," Brooks said.

"The city could take that money and use it for parks."

While fund-raising will be important, Moore said her top priority now is to figure out where Neighborhood Alliance wants to go.

"My first priority really is to learn as much as I can about the Neighborhood Alliance," she said.

"What is our strategic plan? Every non-profit has to have a vision about what it wants to be."

Moore takes over the reins of an

organization that has seen three executive directors since 1993. Also, as an organization that aims to represent and strengthen neighborhood groups, it also skirts the edge of political involvement.

In 1989, it was a leading proponent of a three-quarter-cent sales tax hike to fund extra police and firefighters.

"Where have we been, and where do we want to go?" Moore asked, saying she wants to look first at the big questions — should the Alliance be looking at expanding its ties outside of Oklahoma City and into other central Oklahoma towns? What kind of services do its members most need?

"We've got this dream we need to weave," she said.

Moore has a history with non-profit organizations. She started out in Norman with the Cimarron Circuit Opera Company in 1983, went to Oklahoma City's Metropolitan Library System as a development officer and then moved to Amarillo, Texas, in 1990.

There she headed up a United Way-affiliated counseling service called the Family Guidance Center. In the three years she was there, she survived a merger with another non-profit group and saw the payroll grow from less than \$200,000 to almost \$1 million, she said.

In late 1993, she returned to Norman and was executive director of the American Red Cross in Cleveland County. She still lives in Norman.

Moore said any plan the organization comes up with will have to have time-lines, goals and measurements of how those goals will be met. And those goals will have to make the organization stretch a bit.

As an example, she said in 1990 when officials did a plan for the Family Guidance Center, one goal was to get a separate building in which to expand. Though few thought it could be done, the group later moved into a 40,000-square-foot building, Moore said.

As for city funding, which could be seen as impeding the independence of the group, Moore said she sees there are conflicting views.

"I think we need to explore all the options," she said. ■

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Explosion damage leads to hectic times for many metro-area businesses



BY JONATHAN NICHOLSON

“Within a matter of minutes” is how quickly Algrita Massey said people called her office after the catastrophic bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah building April 19.

Massey is an office manager with City Glass OKC, one of the city’s many glass companies working to repair the damage done to downtown businesses and some residences. The company is only about six blocks from the bomb site, and Massey said it only suffered “very minor” damage.

While city search and rescue workers swung into action quickly that day, so did some businesses. Even a week later, Massey said company crews were working 12 to 14 hours a day, trying to fill orders. That was with up to six three-person crews working, including a pair of men from Kansas City.

Massey estimated City Glass had gotten about 125 calls within the first two hours. But most of the first day’s “repairs” were installing plywood until crews could come back later with glass.

“We took care of as many as we could that evening,” she said.

Despite the extra crews and the long days, Massey said last week the company still was backed up.

It stands to reason there also would have been a great demand for plywood after the blast and, indeed, most buildings within the day of the blast had boarded up the gaping holes in window frames left by the explosion. But while two local home improvement center managers said they have stocked up on plywood, sales have not been what they expected, in large part because so much of the blast area is still off limits.

“To me, the market didn’t flex too much. On that first day, some people came in, but since then it’s been about normal,” said Tom Aeby, manager of the Builders Square at 7700 S. Walker.

Aeby declined to say how much more wood was sold that first day, but said, “It would be a large percentage increase.”



— Photo by Mark Hancock

Shattered windows resulting from the bombing of the federal building on April 19 have left some area glass companies scrambling to meet demand.

He said four truckloads of wood had been brought in by the end of the first week.

At the Builders Square location at 2905 N.W. 36th, manager Greg Wilkes said, “We had a little bit of a run, but not what we expected.”

He said many owners are still waiting to get back into their business and still have to determine if their buildings are structurally sound.

“We’ve got enough to take care of whatever demands that will come up,” Wilkes said.

The other hot commodity immediately following the blast was cellular telephones. With the regular phone system largely down in the first few hours after the bombing, cell phones were the best means of communication.

Walter Patterson, a spokesman with Southwestern Bell Mobile Systems, said the volume of cellular traffic was so high that the company moved a portable transmitter site downtown.

“We responded immediately,” Patterson said.

“We knew there would be people down there who would need emergency communication.”

Part of that response was getting about 500 cell phones in the hands of emergency and rescue workers after the blast.

Patterson said the company also set up a portable charging system at the site, allowing workers to switch out batteries when the charges ran down.

Though he declined to disclose how many more calls were handled, Patterson said there a “tremendous call volume on the network” following the bombing.

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Even the power of music fails to ease pain of city's tragedy

This column is supposed to be about music. It exists, for the most part, as a way for folks to find out about music that is hardly ever played on the radio around here.

When I am not advising beginning college students on how to write a transition sentence, I am completely involved in music. I spend a good deal of my time promoting small concerts. That is what I do. Music, or more specifically, performing songwriters, have been my focus for the last 10 years. I have written about them, presented them in concert, known many of them as close friends and championed them as artists of the highest order, the most important cog in the music business machine.

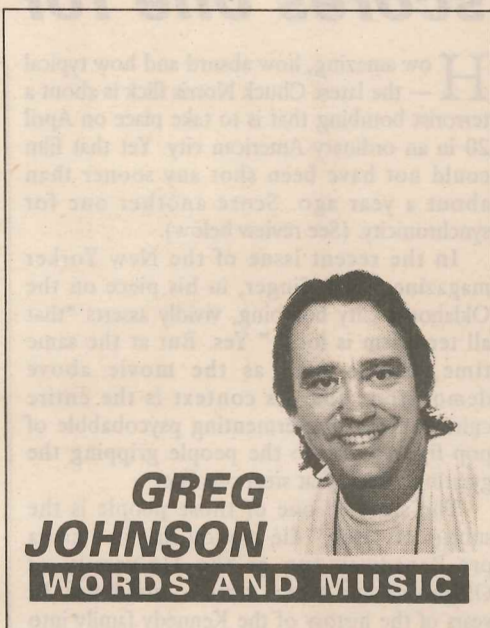
While others become movie buffs or avid readers of novels, I study songs and songwriters. I am a fan of those who give us snapshots of life, who say the things we feel but just can't express. Everyone has been in love. Everyone has lost sometime in their lives. And in turn, everyone has had their share of victories.

As you read this, it has been two weeks since our lives were forever changed. Nearly every person you talk to knew someone who was near 200 N.W. 5th that morning.

I believe in the power of song to evoke emotions that are everyday and universal and also to paint a much broader picture of the human condition. I also believe in the power of song to heal and create community. That is why the music world cherishes the matter-of-fact writing of Woody Guthrie, as well as the moment-of-emotion writing of the Tin Pan Alley masters.

Songs. I love them, the little marriage of words and music, be it the three-chord simplicity of the folk song or the intricate chord progressions of a more involved process.

But now I can't listen. I haven't really listened to music since that day. I have tried to write my usual column, to tell you how Pete and Maura Kennedy's "River of Fallen Stars" has surrounded me in such joy and aliveness. How Chris Smither is still consistently great



with "Up on the Lowdown," or Michael Fracasso etched a new design of edgy folk/rock with a subtle pop sensibility on his "When I Lived in the Wild."

That is what I should be writing about, but the words just won't come. For now, I can only muster those mentions.

As you read this, it has been two weeks since our lives were forever changed. Nearly every person you talk to knew someone who was near 200 N.W. 5th that morning. I talked to a friend who escaped the shattering of glass in a nearby travel agency, and she was feeling as fragile as you'd expect.

We all are fragile and will be for some time now. I just put on Alison Krauss and the Cox Family's "I Know Who Holds Tomorrow," letting the joyous sound of faith wash over me. I don't really know how to explain my faith. I am not a church-goer, nor do I embrace any certain dogma. But I know I am closer to my God today than I was two weeks ago.

I don't want to be angry with anyone, except those who did this horrible crime. I know history, and regardless of all the government atrocities of the past — Native American removal, intolerant use of power by the FBI regarding anti-war activists, the overthrow of elected officials in third world countries and, yes, even the obvious mistakes at Waco — but nothing justifies doing this or even explains the hatred and rage these white trash men feel.

The songwriter sings, "Love is the answer we all have known/why then must we let each other live and die alone." Why don't these people have love in their hearts? I wish I knew. In the aftermath of this tragedy, we all saw our fellow citizens demonstrate love of the highest order. An active love that asks for nothing in return.

In that same spirit, songwriters have called me from all over the country expressing their sadness and offering help. With their help, I am establishing a series of "Songwriter Support" concerts to benefit local rescue workers. The first show will be May 14 with Hamilton Pool (Iain Matthews, Michael Fracasso and Mark Hallman) at the Blue Door, 2805 N. McKinley.

Then on May 28, Kevin Welch will be hosting performing songwriters Mary Chapin Carpenter, Jimmy Webb, Lucinda Williams, Alejandro Escovedo, Michael Fracasso and David Halley at the Civic Center Music Hall. Show starts at 7 p.m. Tickets are \$20. For ticket information call 525-7472. ■