

SURVIVING: Living through one of the worst terror attacks on U.S. soil



The damage done to the north side of the Murrah Building after the bomb. This photo was taken just before they imploded the building.

MIKE DRAHOSHI | HINCKLEY NEWS



ALANEA WHITE | HINCKLEY NEWS

These words are printed on the memorial building: "Welcome here to remember those who were killed, those who survived and those who changed forever. May all who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, strength, peace, hope and serenity."

FROM PAGE 1

accompanied by the vibrant sound of moaning metal. The base pitch of the whirlwind's groaning noise immediately rose half an octave as objects flew by too fast to

recognize, except for a computer monitor and a typewriter. The velocity of the blast was reported anywhere from 10,000 to 40,000 feet per second. "I caught a glimpse of a girl approximately ten feet northwest of me, seated behind her desk, who realized that she was in the middle of an awful explosion. Both of her arms went straight up, but not of her own accord."

Later, Peterson learned that in a vertical free fall the air lifts up a person's arms because they are much lighter than the rest of the body. Peterson didn't realize at the time that he and the girl were actually falling.

"I could not relate this experience to anything familiar; the powerful wind instantly changed to a calm settling of debris in a coal-black atmosphere," he wrote. "At least, to me, that wind change appeared instantly."

He thought he was conscious throughout the entire ordeal, but in reality he was unconscious for about 35 minutes. Later, when Peterson regained consciousness, he found himself in a sitting position on a four by five ceiling tile which was on top of a three story pile of rubble. Looking out, he saw that practically the entire north half of the building was gone.

Peterson stretched his arms out to the side,

swirling them in a circular motion, glad they still worked, and wondered how he could still be alive. His answer to the question was "God's angels were protecting me!"

He moved from his sitting position closer to what was left of the building. He could hear a woman calling for help under the debris. Peterson tried to figure out a way to get to her and help, but realized he was unable to reach her. "I was helpless to help," he said. "She and countless others needed immediate help, and my only available place to walk was a path bound by two piles of rubble."

Peterson was lifted back up to the edge of the fourth floor and was directed to get immediate medical attention. After exiting the building, he was taken to Children's Hospital where he was treated for his injuries which consisted of cuts, bruises and scrapes, requiring a total of 15 stitches. Five floors of debris had fallen around him; he had no broken bones.

BACK IN MINNESOTA

Peterson said he never thought about it being national news until he was at the hospital and saw the television reports. Back in Minnesota Peterson's aunt saw the report on television and called his parents

saying, "Something bad happened in Oklahoma City, doesn't Clark work there?" His parents were at the flea market in Pine City and didn't get home until 10 a.m. and immediately turned on the television. His mom attempted to call Peterson but was unable to get through. At the hospital Peterson told the nurse that he needed to call his parents; she said they would get him a social worker to help him. The social worker called his parents and the first words out of her mouth were, "Clark will be okay."

To this day, Peterson is still appreciative of the support from his hometown. "I would like to say thank you again for all the prayers and support 25 years ago. They really helped!" said Peterson.

A DIFFERENT POINT OF VIEW

Mike Drahosh of Finlayson was living in Oklahoma City at the time of the bombing. He worked nights at Bridgestone/Firestone Dayton Tire and Rubber Company and lived about 3-5 miles (as the crow flies) from the Federal Building. He woke up, not knowing why. The phone rang and it was his kids telling him there was a gas explosion downtown and they couldn't get a hold of their mom who also worked downtown.

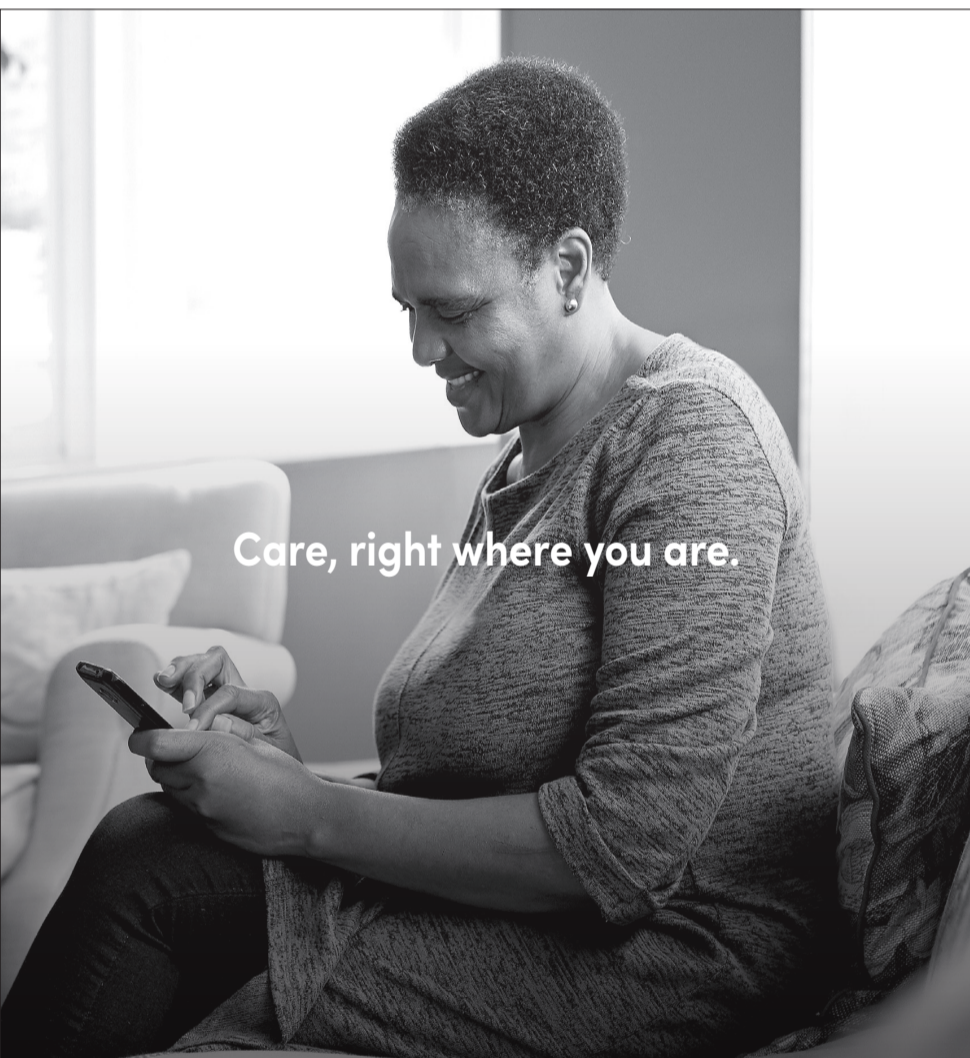
He turned on his television and saw the news coverage and he saw people running down the street. "They were running for their lives," he said. They thought there might be another bomb in the area.

"A few days later I went down, they had fenced off two city blocks. They had Federal Marshalls guarding the building. I remember walking along the fence and the marshalls really watched," said Drahosh.

"It's hard to find the words to describe what it was like...it was panic and not knowing what was going on...all you could hear was sirens," Drahosh said.

"It was horrific...just horrific. It is not something that I ever want to witness again..."

The present site of the Murrah Building is now a dedicated memorial and museum. To this day, this one act of terrorism has had lasting impacts on the skyline of Oklahoma City, hundreds of lives and the memory of the United States. Daily, people visit the memorial to sit quietly and remember those that they have lost, some still leave mementos and notes on a living memorial fence that is maintained by the museum. In the quiet place created by the reflecting pool and statuesque chairs, Oklahoma City and the nation remembers the collective strength and grief felt by the nation on that April day twenty-five years ago.



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HOMETOWN HERO




of the week

RACHEL SCHLOMKA

Rachel (Daggett) Schlomka is this week's hometown hero. Rachel has kept Daggett's Fresh Foods running throughout the COVID-19 crisis. She is doing everything she can to provide the items the community members need. Rachel also set a time for those most vulnerable (seniors especially) to shop so there isn't so many people in the store at that time. Thank you Rachel for your hard work and dedication to this community!

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