



# 'Get Me Out Of Here!'

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By [Newsweek Staff](#)

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ONE MINUTE, THEY WERE going about the usual business of bureaucracy. The next, their lives were blown apart. Capt. Randy Norfleet, USMC, had gone to the Marine Recruiting Command Center on the fifth floor of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building to talk about funding his station in Stillwater. Dana Bradley had gone to get a social-security card for her 4-month-old son. Across the street at the Oklahoma Water Resources Board, administrative assistant Irish Hall said the blast was instantaneous - a flash of blue lights and then her head was bleeding. For Henderson Baker 11, it seemed like eons. The 34-year-old army captain had been chatting with his NCO in the fourth-floor office of the Army Recruiting Command. Suddenly, the floor blew out from



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Rudy Jimenez was in a state of shock Wednesday morning-for a different reason. His wife of 20 years had left him, and in a last-ditch effort to win her back, he'd driven to her downtown office to give her a greeting card. When she told him what to do with it, he got back in his car and headed home. "I hadn't gone three blocks when I heard this blast. I thought someone had shot me." Jimenez saw smoke in his rear-view mirror and turned back, concerned about his wife. "When I got to the federal building there was

smoke everywhere," he said. "The first two people I saw were dead."

The blast from thousands of pounds of fuel oil and fertilizer tore upward through the nine-story federal building, ripping a huge crater from the street to the roof. The initial boom then gave way to a deafening roar, as layer after layer of the building collapsed, ceilings crashing into floors. Desks, chairs, file cabinets, refrigerators and potted plants rained down into the street with a tangle of wires, steel and concrete. As a cloud of dust billowed up into the blue spring sky, bodies tumbled out as well. One man landed in the 30-foot-wide crater where the bomb-carrying truck had been parked. A woman lay on the street, charred and dead. Even at that moment, the rescue efforts began -a backbreaking and increasingly heartbreaking task that called on police and firefighters, National Guard troops, doctors, nurses and neighborhood volunteers. They were to spend the next days picking through the rubble-risking their own lives as the building shook and shimmied-in a desperate search to find someone left alive.

Reverberations from the blast shattered windows throughout the city; people more than 25 miles away thought there'd been an earthquake. Cars parked on the street crumpled, flipped and burst into flames. Hundreds of frantic people streamed out of nearby office buildings, crying, their clothes in bloody shreds. A few blocks away, one bloodstained man walked along the sidewalk mumbling that he was going home but he didn't know where home was, and he couldn't remember his name.



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Rudy Jimenez ran toward the building where his wife worked as a secretary. She was standing on the sidewalk, stunned but unharmed. But Jimenez's relief didn't last long

as he turned toward the federal building, still raining down carnage and dust. A man on the third floor waved frantically for assistance. Jimenez and two other men grabbed a ladder and started up. They rescued him, and spotted others—a woman, with her legs broken, another naked from the waist up. "Then I saw this poor black man," Jimenez said. "He was alive, but I don't know how. His legs had been blown off. He was just sitting there, looking out the window, like he was at peace. A few minutes later, he died."

When Henderson Baker regained consciousness, there was smoke and dust all around. He saw light, walked toward it and found himself on Fifth Street, four floors below where he'd been moments before. He staggered up a stairwell at the back of the building, dodging victims who were stumbling down. Upstairs, a crush of concrete and shredded furniture covered his office; a hole gaped where his desk had been. Baker helped unearth a girl, the daughter of a new recruiter. He and a few other survivors quickly regrouped and counted heads. Of the 27 personnel in the Army Recruiting office, six were missing. They called out names. No one called back.

About a mile away, Gov. Frank Keating had been sipping coffee at his desk in the Capitol when he heard what sounded like a large artillery shell. Moments later his chief of staff rushed in to say there'd been some kind of blast downtown. Out the window, a plume of black smoke was rising above his city. By 10 a.m., Keating was barking orders. "Get General Cortright [head of the state National Guard] on the phone and get him in here immediately! I want a disaster declaration! This is awful! This building was full of people and it's in total devastation!" As a former assistant Treasury secretary, Keating had supervised the Secret Service and ATF—he had scores of friends in the Murrah building. Then he had an even more awful thought: "Oh my God, there's a daycare center there.."

The same sickening realization was spreading through the rescue teams. Some of the first bodies brought out were impossibly small. Oklahoma City police Sgt. John Avera deposited one limp, blood-soaked baby, into the arms of firefighter Chris Fields. She was identified later as Baylee Almon, who had turned 1 the day before.



## **Plastic Surgeon Tells: If You Have Wrinkles, Do This Immediately (It's Genius!)**

Beverly Hills MD

All through the awful morning, crews picked through the still-cascading Wreckage. At about 10:30 a.m., firefighters from Oklahoma City Station 8 found a woman's right hand in the basement rubble. Cpl. Mike Roberts squeezed it. It squeezed back. Amy Petty, a federal credit-union employee, was lodged in a crevice between what had been the third and fourth floors. "Am I going to die?" she asked. "I promise you, we're going to get you out," Maj. Allen Hill assured her. Working with gas-powered tools and bare hands, a team of seven men sheared away enough debris to free Petty's head, and give her oxygen. Then a command came over the radio to exit—there was word of another bomb. Hill told Petty mildly that they had to get more tools. "I think she knew better," he said. He and three others got permission to stay: they managed to free her after four hours.

Twenty year-old Dana Bradley wasn't so lucky. Rescuers found her in the rubble of the ground floor, her right leg pinned under a concrete slab. Dr. David Tuggle concluded there was no way to lift it, so he paged a colleague and called for an amputation kit. Dana was horrified, but doctors convinced her that it was her leg or her life. Dr. Andy Sullivan, chief of pediatric orthopedics at Children's Hospital, was the only one small enough to climb into the dark, eavelike space to reach her. He lay on top of Dana as he went to work with his scalpel. Both lay in a pool of water; blood from a body above dripped down. Sullivan couldn't find a vein to give Dana a proper anesthetic. He had to give her a less effective intramuscular shot. She screamed in pain and begged him to stop the operation. Twice the surgeons had to interrupt their work, as the bomb scares continued and the building shook. Finally, Sullivan had severed her leg below the knee. Firefighters tied a harness around her upper body and pulled her free, but she kept

asking what about her son, her daughter, her sister and her mother-in-law? They'd all come with her to the Social Security Office.

In Stillwater, 55 miles away, Jamie Norfleet wasn't watching TV or listening to the radio. She learned about the blast when a woman from her church called to ask her to help pray "for all the people at the federal building in Oklahoma City." "Oh my Lord," blurted Jamie, seven months pregnant. "My husband is there."

For the next two hours, Jamie learned nothing: "The waiting was horrible. You just sit there, paralyzed in fear." Finally, the Red Cross called to say that Capt. Randy Norfleet was in surgery at St. Anthony Hospital. A church friend came to stay with the Norfleets' two sons; and a relative put Jamie in the car and started to drive. The contractions started even before she left home, and by the time she reached Oklahoma City, Jamie feared that her baby daughter would be born that dreadful day. But the doctors soon calmed her, and the contractions stopped. By then Randy Norfleet had undergone five hours of surgery. He feared he would never fly planes again: his right eye was too damaged. But he considered himself lucky-two other marines were still missing. Later, the Norfleets marveled at the irony that Randy had survived seven months in Desert Storm only to be blown apart in his home state. Said Jamie, "I never would have dreamed that a workday would have turned to this."



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Neither would air force Sgt. John Brozef, one of hundreds who volunteered from nearby Tinker Air Force Base. Brozef helped search through the rubble far into Wednesday night. Scattered checkbooks told him he was in what had been the federal

credit-union office. Spots of blood in the debris told him something else: "If the insulation was red, you knew someone was there." Most of the bodies were mangled beyond recognition. Brozef carried out four body bags and braced for more as estimates of the missing fluctuated wildly- "They say there were 500 people at work that day. And there are only 200 accounted for," he said grimly. "Do the math." Then he added quickly: "You gotta have hope."

That hope was rewarded later Wednesday night when rescuers heard a female voice cry, "Get me out of here! I can't breathe!" Brandy Liggons, 15, was buried under four feet of rubble. Firefighters summoned Dr. Rick Nelson, a surgeon from Muskogee, to sit beside her as they worked. "I told her I was the best-looking surgeon in Oklahoma," Nelson said. For two hours he held her hand and promised her she'd make it. All the while, he was lying on the body of someone who hadn't.

Brandy was apparently the last survivor. All through the night and into Thursday, rescuers pawed through the rubble with cranes, backhoes and acoustic equipment, listening for signs of life. Dogs trained to sniff human scents prowled the wreckage; so did cave-rescue specialists and crews with fiber-optic cameras. Body parts were everywhere, but all rescue workers could do was paint near them with large orange "D.B.s"(for "dead bodies") to be removed sometime later. The first priority was to find "voids" in the bombed-out structure that might contain survivors. But all they found were bodies, and body parts. Meanwhile, the rescuers courted danger themselves as they clambered through the precarious caverns of concrete, steel and wires. Construction crews brought in a large steel I-beam to shore up the middle of the building; structural engineers fretted about further collapse and survey crews used time-lapse cameras to watch for widening fissures.

The horror didn't hit Bay Washburn until later. The blind owner of Raymond's Snack Shop on the fourth floor had suffered only a few lacerations in the blast and was released from the hospital on Wednesday. But back home, listening to the radio, he got scared all over again: "My livelihood is gone, my business is gone. If they were to rebuild this building tomorrow, I would not go in. Would you?" On Thursday, he returned to the hospital -this time for psychiatric care. The doctors said his reaction was typical; phobias, sleeplessness, disorientation are all hallmarks of posttraumatic stress

syndrome, and they expected to see much more. "Therapy is going to have to be available for years," said Dr. John Andrus, chief of psychiatry at St. Anthony.



### **Top Doctor: If You Eat Oatmeal Every Day, This Is What Happens**

GundryMD

There were rare happy moments. At midday on Thursday, Presbyterian Hospital appealed to local TV stations for help in identifying a "Jane Doe," brought in semiconscious and stripped of everything but her shorts. The stations asked listeners if anyone was looking for an African American woman in her teens or 20s, small build, with red painted toenails; in periods of consciousness, she'd been calling for "Mama," "Daddy" and "Dana." Members of the Bradley family heard the appeal as they waited at University Hospital for news of Dana's amputation-and knew it could only be her sister, Felicia. The hopes of two dozen other families searching for young black women were dashed. Daniis son, daughter and mother-in-law were still missing.

On Friday, the search crews kept working-but optimism was fading fast. When the word came that a suspect had been arrested, "there were a lot of folks hugging each other and giving high-fives," said Fire Department spokesman Jon Hansen. "But that can't change the fact of what happened here." In a building across the street, rescuers located three more bodies in a basement restaurant, and another in a first-floor office. More body parts were found, blown blocks away. Even the trained rescue dogs were getting upset, their handlers said, by the smell of death that settled everywhere.

On Saturday, stiff winds and a driving rain repeatedly forced workers to halt their operations. More debris fell from upper stories; huge pieces of concrete swayed in the wind. Water was rushing into the basement sections. Authorities noted that it had

been more than 72 hours since the explosion and 48 hours since the last victim was found alive. More than 150 people were still unaccounted for-and relatives were running out of plausible excuses as to why they hadn't come home. Teresa Alexander's family had clung to a faint hope that the 33-year-old nurse was just busy working in her intensive-care unit, or at either of the other two jobs she held down to send her kids to Roman Catholic school. But they also knew she had gone to the Social Security Office Wednesday morning. "We have to hope, since we don't know for certain," said her friend Cathy Hickman. She was also sure that Teresa, who organized Bible studies for her coworkers, "would forgive the people who did this awful thing that's how she is" - even if the rest of the nation never could.

Trained in high-tech search-and-rescue techniques and medical care, more than 300 members of the Federal Emergency Management Agency worked In shifts around the clock, searching crawl spaces and treating victims.



**Plastic Surgeon Tells: If You Have Wrinkles, Do This Immediately (It's Genius!)**

Beverly Hills MD

working in two-hour- shifts, more than 600 poked through fallen sheetrock, concrete and steel beams to remove the living and the dead.

coordinated triage, performed first aid and surgery, counseled survivors and their families.

177 members worked with police to disperse onlookers.

using time-lapse cameras, examined the buildings stability and installed beams to keep the structure from collapsing, especially as rain swelled the debris.





## **Top Doctor: If You Eat Oatmeal Every Day, This Is What Happens**

GundryMD

1,200 members pulled victims and survivors from the rubble and kept the gawkers away.

More than 1,400 volunteers aided victims' families and helped feed rescue workers.

raise steel structure beams and lift heavy debris.

carry workers up and down building's facade, allowing them to inspect for survivors without entering precarious floors.



## **Top Doctor: If You Eat Oatmeal Every Day, This Is What Happens**

GundryMD

Acoustic sensors detect victims' breathing and shifting debris. Ground radar locates hidden voids.

detects body heat in the wreckage.

Fist-size, fiber-optic cameras on long poles snake through holes to look for bodies. Images are shown on portable video cameras.

Working with rescue teams. search dogs trained since they were puppies--sniff for humans and scratch at the surface when one is found.



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Within hours of the blast, rescue workers from around the country began the search for survivors. Using high-tech optical and listening devices, they worked down through the layers of 61 "pancaked" floors. But much of the digging was done by hand, for fear of upsetting the building's precarious balance atop layers of crushed debris.

YMCA: Day-care center destroyed. About 30 children escaped, but several were seriously injured.

First United Methodist Church: Stained-glass windows destroyed, severe structural damage.

Front of building: Heaviest damage. Floors collapsed to the ground.



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The day-care center: At least 12 children have been found dead and half a dozen are still missing.

Journal Records Building: Heavy damage. Parts of the federal building were blown into its facade.

The crater left from the blast measured eight feet deep and 30 feet wide.

Oklahoma Water Resources: Windows were shattered and offices damaged.

Rear of building: Most people escaped through back stairwells, which were left largely intact.

Federal Courthouse: Some workers sustained injuries from flying glass.

Altred P. Murrah Federal Building: Opened in 1977, it housed 15 federal agencies, several defence-department offices and a government-operated day-care center.

ESTIMATED Employees NUMBER Housing & Urban Development 125 Social Security Administration 60 Army 48 General Services Admin. 23 Federal Employees Credit Union 51 Federal Highway Administration 26 Drug Enforcement Administration 19 Defense Investigative Services 22 Department of Agriculture 22 Department of Veterans Affairs 10 Alcohol, Tobacco and Fireanns 15 General Accounting Office 5 Marine Corps 17 Secret Service 15 Customs Service 6 Health and Human Senices 8 Department of Labor 1 Others Day-care-center children 24 Visitors unknown

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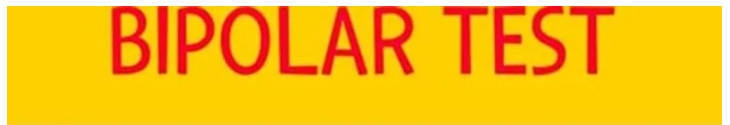
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