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Oil analysts: Get used to it

Besides gas pump, other goods, services feel pinch from record prices

By Robert Manor
Tribune staff reporter

If you're waiting for gasoline prices to fall below \$2 a gallon, forget it.

No one can say for sure what the price of petroleum will be in the future, but some industry observers are warning that the cheap crude oil of the past is

gone forever.

"I think it is more likely to stay in the \$50 range than in the \$40 range," said Mark Baxter, director of the Maguire Energy Institute at Southern Methodist University.

"If people can depend on it stabilizing at this price, they can conduct their business and plan their future," he said. "If so, the

economy will be a lot more comfortable."

Unevenly, sometimes imperceptibly, higher petroleum prices are filtering through the nation's economy, affecting everything from the cost of plastic car parts to the suffering of bankrupt airlines.

A spectrum of factors drove crude oil above \$58 a barrel this

year, although its price has fallen back into the low \$50s recently. Two years ago it was at \$28.

The world is in no danger of running out of oil anytime soon. Many billions of barrels await extraction.

But industry analysts say world petroleum output barely

PLEASE SEE OIL, PAGE 22

IN BUSINESS

ETHANOL PRICES DOWN: Analysts say it's a simple matter of too much supply meeting too little demand.

DOMINO EFFECT: Food costs more, vacation budgets are squeezed.

MANUFACTURING: Some producers can adapt. Others are hurt when consumer demand drops due to higher gas prices.

SPECIAL REPORT, SECTION 5



OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER



Tribune photo by Pete Souza

P.J. Allen, now 11, suffered severe burns in his lungs in the Oklahoma City explosion. He has endured years of therapies and surgeries.

A bomb's bitter echoes

First of two parts by Howard Witt | Tribune senior correspondent

OKLAHOMA CITY—To many Americans, the terrorist attack on the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building on April 19, 1995, is ancient history. Tuesday will mark the 10th anniversary of the sunny morning when two homegrown anti-government zealots ignited a 4,800-pound fertilizer truck bomb that killed 168 people and injured 842 others in what was, at the time, the worst terror attack in American history.

But the Oklahoma City bombing by Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols is not a dusty memory for P.J. Allen, the 6th grader who still struggles to breathe because his lungs melted when he inhaled the intense heat unleashed by the blast; or for Jim Ramsey, a police officer who rescued two women only to become so haunted by the experience that he eventually collapsed into a life of gambling, alcohol and crime.



Although the attacks against America on Sept. 11, 2001, came to overshadow Oklahoma City, the 1995 tragedy carries important lessons for a nation in the throes of a war on terror. The country treats casualties of terrorism unequally. The heroes of a disaster often go on to become its victims. And the wounds do not ever fully heal.

The Chicago Tribune has spent the past year examining the long-term aftermath of the Oklahoma City bombing. After more than 100 interviews with bombing survivors, relatives of victims, rescue workers, psychi-

atrists, disaster experts, charity officials and political leaders, and a review of thousands of pages of court papers and other documents, it is possible to sketch a portrait of hidden suffering and unfinished business left in the wake of a bombing. **The report begins on Page 20.**

Medicaid loophole for middle class at risk

Move afoot to block seniors' asset shifting

By Judith Graham
Tribune staff reporter

For years, middle-class seniors have been emptying their bank accounts and signing away their homes so they can qualify for nursing home care under Medicaid—the government's health program for the poor—when they become frail and ill.

It's a perfectly legal practice. But with Medicaid budgets soaring nationwide, state and federal officials are floating proposals to crack down on these financial arrangements and make seniors pay more for long-term care. Unless changes are made, experts warn, Medicaid will be burdened with huge bills as Baby Boomers age, threatening the program's ability to serve poor Americans.

"Medicaid must not become an inheritance protection plan," Health and Human Ser-

PLEASE SEE MEDICAID, PAGE 19

Iraq tunes in to see rebels get grilled

For insurgents, rough justice on reality TV

By Colin McMahon
Tribune foreign correspondent

BAGHDAD—The imam delivered the kind of plug that even network television money can't buy: Go home, the cleric instructed worshippers at the end of evening prayers, and watch "Terror in the Grip of Justice."

Not that the flock at Al-Zuwiya mosque in Baghdad needed to be reminded. "Terror in the Grip of Justice" is a cultural phenomenon in Iraq.

The setup of the reality TV program is as straightforward as its name. Iraqi police and military interrogators badger, bully, coax, cajole and question suspected insurgents. They tape the sessions and then air them nightly on state-owned Al-Iraqiya TV.

The confessions often are

PLEASE SEE CONFESS, PAGE 10

INSIDE

METRO

Crises mode

Familiar theme hints long legislative session.

SECTION 4

Weather: Light winds; high 73, low 55.
COMPLETE INDEX, PAGE 2

24 hours a day go to
chicagotribune.com

To skateboarders, Chicago plaza would be sweet

By Hal Dardick
Tribune staff reporter

Once viewed warily by adults and recreation officials, skateboard parks with their bowls, half-pipes and ramps are now staples of park districts across the Chicago region.

But a growing number of skaters prefer to slide and grind on city streets and plazas, particu-

larly in downtown Chicago.

That preference forces them to play cat-and-mouse with police enforcing a ban on skateboarding downtown. So they are asking Chicago Park District officials to build a skate plaza—distinctly different from a skate park—in Grant Park.

"You would have an international phenomenon," said Steven Snyder, a former profession-

al skateboarder who makes a living designing skate parks and, at 42, is something of a father figure in Chicago's skateboard community.

Snyder and his fellow skateboarders envision Chicago as a Mecca for street skaters across the nation. Tourists hooked on the skateboard lifestyle, with its unique lingo, clothing and media, would descend on the

city. It would be featured in video magazines on DVDs sold across the globe, they say.

They have found a friend in Bob O'Neill, president of the Grant Park Advisory Council.

"I want Chicago to be the first big city to have a downtown skate plaza," he said.

O'Neill first backed a skate-

PLEASE SEE SKATERS, PAGE 19



OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER

Torment lingers in OK City

THE THOMPSONS



Joann Thompson (right, with grandson Joey) lost her husband, Michael, in the bombing. The family has struggled ever since.

One family's disintegration

Michael Thompson, a claims representative for the Social Security Administration, was the center of his family's universe. When he perished in the Oklahoma City bombing, his family imploded into the vacuum left behind.

It wasn't merely the loss of his \$50,000 annual salary, although that was a crippling blow. What made the family even more vulnerable was its classic suburban ordinariness: a husband who was the breadwinner and disciplinarian, a wife who stayed home to care for the children, two sons accustomed to the daily routine of private school.

After Michael Thompson was killed, his wife, Joann, unaccustomed to managing the family finances and overcome with grief, ended up destroying her credit. The sons dropped out of school before finishing 9th grade.

The eldest, Brett, racked up multiple juvenile arrests for stealing cars and using drugs, Joann Thompson said; the proceeds of Michael's life insurance policy went to pay for defense lawyers. An additional \$70,000 in savings was used up to repair damage to the family's four-bedroom home caused when Brett set it ablaze while shooting off fireworks in his bedroom.

Eventually Joann Thompson lost that home, and two others, and had to sell off most of the family's possessions.

Today the Thompsons rent a run-down house barren of all but a few pieces of old furniture, living on \$1,600 a month in worker's compensation. Listlessness and desperation seem to permeate the walls.

The sons, now 22 and 18, sit at home, refusing to work or return to school, and Thompson says she's powerless to force them. A daughter, 32, left home years before the bombing; Thompson is raising her 12-year-old son, Joey. Overwhelmed by public school, Joey stays home as well, where

Thompson is educating him.

"People say it's my fault," said Thompson, 54. "But when something like that happens, you're not prepared. ... Everybody says [my sons] are old enough to take care of themselves. Yes, but mentally, maybe they're not. ... There's no man in the household for them to look up to."

With no other relatives available to help, the Thompsons are completely on their own. Despite charitable funds set up to assist the families of bombing victims, Thompson said she was refused each time she sought help from the Red Cross and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation.

"They wanted me to say that I need psychological help," she said. "They wanted me to go to counseling, which I have nothing to go to counseling about. They wouldn't help me unless I signed a paper."

Officials of the charities declined to comment on Thompson's case, citing confidentiality rules. But even she concedes that she long ago lost control over her sons. Brett,

who was 12 when his father was killed, says his arrests and his aimlessness stem directly from his unresolved anger over the loss. And he's matter-of-fact in explaining why he doesn't expect to make something of his life.

"At this point, I've fallen into this pattern where it's hard to escape. It's like trying to get into orbit, but you don't have enough thrust," he said. "I know what I don't want to do. ... If it's going to cause me physical turmoil or mental turmoil, I'd rather avoid it."

He's certain, however, that if his family had received millions in federal compensation similar to what the Sept. 11 families received, he would have ended up very differently.

His mother "would have been able to afford to control us, pacify us," Brett said. "Instead, we kind of went out and found our own entertainment, which was criminal activity. If we hadn't been worrying about money every five minutes, it would have been a lot different. I wouldn't have been so bitter."

Congress left us high and dry, families say

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

OKLAHOMA CITY—What is the value of an American life claimed by terrorists? The answer, it turns out, depends on where and when you die.

Congress gave the families of victims of the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks generous federal compensation payments. Most ended up millionaires.

Congress gave the families of victims of the April 19, 1995, Oklahoma City bombing a two-year reprieve on their federal income taxes. Some ended up losing their homes.

The families of victims of future terrorist attacks may get nothing at all.

For all the nation's focus on homeland security and the probability that the United States could someday be struck again by terrorists, the vexing question of what would happen afterward—whom the government should try to make whole—remains unasked.

And the lesson of Oklahoma City remains unlearned.

"Everybody thought that all the people from the bombing were taken care of," said Tim Hearn, who quit a promising college basketball career to return home and care for his four younger siblings after his mother was killed in the bombing. "That's how the media made it look. But it wasn't nothing like that. We're living day by day."

The site where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building once stood was long ago covered over by a striking memorial. A modernistic—and blast-resistant—new federal building stands defiantly across the way. The scarred downtown has been sleekly remade.

But 10 years after the Oklahoma City bombing, which killed 168 people and injured 842 others, the shock waves are still radiating outward.

Families in poverty

Despite more than \$40 million in donations that streamed into Oklahoma City in the days after the bombing to help the victims, more than 60 families of modest means were thrown into such poverty as a result of deaths or injuries that they must still rely on charities to meet their basic needs. Another 70 victims are still receiving psychiatric care.

Theirs are not the stories most likely to be heard this week as the nation momentarily returns its attention to this heartland city in solemn commemoration of the bombing. Instead, the ceremonies at the Oklahoma City National Memorial, titled a National Week of Hope, will focus on "stories of life moving forward."

It turns out, though, that while the Sept. 11 attacks were vastly more devastating in both human and economic terms, the Oklahoma City bombing was a more intimate crime. Officials here estimate that more than one-third of the 1 million people in the Oklahoma City metropolitan area knew someone who was killed or injured in the bombing.

The Oklahoma City attack also struck a more vulnerable population. While the World Trade Center towers in New York were gleaming icons of American prosperity occupied largely by office workers, executives and stockbrokers, the Murrah Federal Building was a dowdier destination, a place where workaday government employees served working-class constituents.

Yet in a state buffeted throughout its history by oil booms and economic busts and Dust Bowl droughts and killer tornadoes, deep religious faith and unblinking middle American values seem to have guided many Oklahoma City bombing victims to a quiet acceptance of their fates.

How else to explain the equanimity of a man like Hearn, 37,

whose life was upended by the death of his mother, Castine Deveroux, 49, an employee of the Department of Housing and Urban Development.

"I think the reason why we went through the situation is to get close to God," he said. "We had a lot of evil in our life. The devil was in this house a lot of times. But we always found something positive out of everything."

Concerned about what would happen to his siblings, Hearn gave up his basketball scholarship at the University of New Mexico to move back home to raise them.

Through the years, the family weathered the deterioration of their inner-city neighborhood and the struggle to hold on to their modest house on the small income Hearn managed to earn selling custom-made hats.

When the bills became overwhelming, Hearn sought help from one of the principal charities designated to help bombing victims, the Oklahoma City chapter of the American Red Cross, which assisted with some mortgage payments.

Hearn has accomplished his main goal—keeping his family together. But he's not sure how much longer he can provide for everyone. He believes, like many here, that Congress should compensate the Oklahoma City families just as it did the Sept. 11 families.

"I felt like my mom worked for the government and she died for the government and they should have stepped in and helped her kids," he said.

It is a faint hope.

Sept. 11 compensation

In the weeks after the Sept. 11 attacks, Congress swiftly approved a \$7 billion compensation package for the victims, whose families received an average of \$2.1 million each. But every time the issue of compensation for other terrorism victims has been raised since then, lawmakers have ducked.

In 2002 and 2003, Congress declined to reopen the question of compensating victims of past terrorist attacks such as the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing, the 1998 bombings of two U.S. Embassies in Africa and the 2000 attack on the USS Cole.

Lawmakers have refused to provide any budget funding for a terror victims compensation fund that Congress itself voted to establish.

The Senate Foreign Relations Committee conducted one hearing to examine a Bush administration proposal to set a standard compensation award for future victims of terrorism. Then it promptly dropped the matter.

Nor did Congress examine the critical conclusions of the man who oversaw the Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund.

Kenneth Feinberg, the Washington, D.C., attorney who was the fund's special master and decided the amount of each multimillion-dollar award, questioned the fairness of Congress' instruction to replicate the tort system and base compensation on the lifetime earning potential of each victim. That decision ensured that the richest survivors received the most.

"The system ... fuels divisiveness among the very people you're trying to help," Feinberg said. "The fireman's widow comes to me and says, 'My husband died a hero, why am I getting a million dollars less than the banker who shoveled pencils for Enron on the 103rd floor?'"

"I think that if you do it again," Feinberg added, "I would urge a flat payment."

Congress' decision to compensate the Sept. 11 families "set an incredible precedent that will be very powerful if a large event like this happens in the future," said Lloyd Dixon, an analyst at the RAND Institute for Civil Justice in Santa Monica, Calif., who conducted a study of Sept. 11 compensation issues. "But the bottom line is: There really isn't any ongoing strategy at this point of how we're going to deal with compensation if this happens again."

The lingering equity questions have embittered many Ok-

SUSAN WALTON

Getting well and moving on

Susan Walton started planning her charity, Suited for Success, in the early 1990s, sketching out an idea to collect used suits and blouses from working women and then distribute them to needy recipients who can't afford professional outfits for job interviews.

It took until 1997, however, for Walton to gather her first donations and finally open for business.

In between, she was busy fighting for her life.

Walton was grievously wounded in the Oklahoma City bombing, a victim caught, like so many others, in the wrong place at the wrong time. She happened to be visiting the federal employees' credit union, on the third floor of the Murrah Federal Building, to make a deposit into her account at the moment when the bomb went off.

Walton has no memory of that April day in 1995, and she thinks that is for the best considering how close she came to dying. She suffered a basal skull fracture, nerve damage behind both eyes, multiple jaw fractures, a broken nose, a ruptured spleen, two crushed legs and severe damage to her left ankle.

A doctor at the scene who first treated her, Walton said, later told her that "he broke all



Two years after the bombing, Susan Walton opened a charity clothing business.

rules of triage to do anything to me. That's how far gone I was."

Five weeks of hospitalization and 15 surgeries ensued, followed by five years of physical therapy. For three months, Walton had to wear special metal braces pinned through her flesh into the bones of her legs in 66 places. Every six hours, a doctor came in with a wrench to expand the braces and stretch her bones in an excruciating procedure.

Today, Walton, 54, must walk with either a cane or crutches. Her left ankle is fused solid. If she falls, she is in trouble: Her knees no longer bend enough to allow her to get up.

Yet she evinces no anger about what happened to her.

"It's kind of hard to be angry about something you don't remember," Walton said. "That's just not normally something I tried to deal with. I tried to focus on getting well and moving on with my life and helping others and paying back the society for the help

that was given to me. There was no room for anger."

Walton has no idea how much that help cost. At the time of the bombing, she was back in school, working on a degree she had long put on hold to raise her family, and had no health insurance. But thanks to the Red Cross, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation and, later Medicare, Walton said she never had to pay a medical bill. The Lions Club bought her a handicapped-equipped van.

She finally finished the degree, in administrative leadership, in 2003.

Because her wounds and her leg braces were so visually disturbing, federal prosecutors asked Walton to testify at the murder trials of Timothy McVeigh and Terry Nichols, the two perpetrators of the bombing.

Yet sitting in a witness box just a few feet from her assailants provoked not rage in Walton but "heartbreak that this young man [McVeigh] chose that way to express his

opinion about the way things were going in the country."

Walton's determination to open her clothing charity was born of her experience as a single mother working in entry-level positions in several banks and having to choose between shoes for her children or work attire for herself.

"Usually, the kids won," she said.

She began collecting clothing and cash donations, and officials of Catholic Charities donated some space in their Oklahoma City office. Last year, Walton suited her 2,000th client, and the charity will soon move to larger quarters so it can expand.

Donors tell Walton she is an inspiration, but she says she doesn't understand why.

"I'm not sure what other people are seeing," she said. "I just get up and put one foot in front of the other every day just like everyone else. I think that the good Lord gave us a spirit to survive and keep going. Most of us choose that option."



About the writer

A decade ago, Howard Witt, now the Tribune's Southwest bureau chief, covered the Oklahoma City bombing. Over the past year, he has returned to the city repeatedly to examine the long-term fallout from the tragedy. Previously, Witt was the Tribune's chief diplomatic correspondent based in Washington. He has also been stationed in Toronto, Johannesburg and Moscow as a Tribune foreign correspondent and in Los Angeles as bureau chief. He joined the Tribune as an intern in 1982. He can be contacted at hwitt@tribune.com.

OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER



Tribune photos by Pete Souza

Using a surgical scope, doctors in Cincinnati check P.J. Allen’s air passage. Ten years after the bombing that devastated his lungs, P.J. still gasps for every breath.



After the bombing, Deloris Watson had to quit her job to provide full-time care for P.J. Now she hopes to return to work.

P.J. ALLEN

Fighting for every breath

Deloris Watson will forever be grateful for the medical care given to her grandson P.J. Allen, one of the children inside the day-care center when the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building was bombed.

She wonders, though, why she sometimes had to battle so hard to get that care.

One-year-old P.J. suffered severe burns on the insides of his lungs in the explosion. He inhaled so much heat and smoke and gas that the interior sacs of his lungs literally melted.

Years of therapies, surgeries and several tracheotomies ensued, all covered by either the Red Cross, the Oklahoma City Community Foundation or Medicaid. But when P.J. was finally well enough in early 2004 to have the last tracheotomy tube removed from his throat—in his case a particularly delicate procedure requiring the skills of a specialized surgeon—Watson says the agencies suddenly balked.

Watson, who cares for P.J. and agreed with her daughter to adopt him shortly after he was born, sought out an expert surgeon in Cincinnati, who consented to do the operation. But she said Medicaid initially refused to pay for it, insisting that the surgery should be covered by the main bombing relief

fund, administered by the Community Foundation.

But Watson said foundation officials told her she would need to allow Oklahoma surgeons to try the operation five times before they would consider paying for the procedure in Cincinnati. Watson refused to put P.J. through such an ordeal.

Finally, after months of argument, Watson said she persuaded Medicaid to cover the surgery, and the Red Cross to pay for the travel expenses.

“There is a fund out there that was set up from [donations from] people from the United States to assist us,” Watson said. “They didn’t give P.J. the help to get back on his feet. That trache was a direct result of the bombing. And [the Community Foundation] would not pay for the ex-

pense of having it taken out.”

Community Foundation officials, who at the end of 2004 still had more than \$14 million in unspent donations in their Oklahoma City Disaster Relief Fund, dispute that assertion.

“From the onset, the Survivors’ Fund has fulfilled every need recommended by the medical staff that has treated P.J.,” Nancy Anthony, executive director of the Community Foundation, said in a statement.

Today, P.J. is an unfailingly polite and soft-spoken 11-year-old, excelling in his studies in 6th grade and enthusiastic about sports, even though he gasps for every breath and the diminished capacity of his lungs won’t allow him to participate in many activities.

“I can’t play football because of the injury, because if I get hit in the chest that could cause damage and I could die,” he said. “And I can’t play soccer. ... But I can swim.”

P.J.’s injuries, which included hearing damage, turned Watson’s life inside out. She had to quit her job as a telephone technician at Southwestern Bell to provide full-time care for him,

plunging her into dependence on the Red Cross to pay for many of her basic living expenses. Her relationship with her husband broke down and ended in divorce. She had to learn a whole new way of looking at the world: as a source of potential danger to her child.

“We could walk past somebody who has perfume on that’s too strong,” Watson said. “Anything can trigger this child’s asthma.”

Now, though, after 10 years of revolving her world around P.J.—she must still give him breathing treatments nearly every night—Watson is hoping to return to work, although she worries that she lacks sufficient job skills. The Red Cross is pressing the matter: Officials recently informed Watson that her monthly benefits would be cut from \$1,200 to \$425 this summer.

“They’ve been wonderful—they’ve supported us all that time when nobody else was,” Watson said. “But 10 years is a long time. Their hope is the same as mine: that I can quickly obtain some type of employment and go back to work.”

lahoma City families, who wonder why Congress left them to rely on charities or struggle with insurance claims. A few attempts by Oklahoma City families to file liability lawsuits—against the government and the manufacturer of the fertilizer used in the bomb—were dismissed before they ever got to trial.

“‘You don’t count,’ ” is how Randy Ledger, an Oklahoma City survivor, says he and other victims of the attack interpreted the snub from Congress. “‘You’re just a bunch of redneck hicks down in Oklahoma.’ ”

Ledger, 48, a custodian in the Murrah building, suffered multiple skull fractures, brain damage and hearing loss, and has two chunks of glass embedded so near his spine that surgeons are reluctant to operate. Other shards periodically still work their way out through his skin.

After 10 years, he is still battling the federal Department of Labor over a worker’s compensation claim.

“There’s just a lot of plain anger,” Ledger said, “because we got shafted.”

Not the same

The Oklahoma City bombing was no Sept. 11, of course. The singular horror of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon and a collective national desire to respond were among the principal motives cited by lawmakers as they sped the victim compensation package through Congress.

“Vengeful philanthropy” is

Oklahoma bombing vs. Sept. 11

Although the Oklahoma City and Sept. 11 terrorist attacks both had devastating effects on their communities and the nation, victims’ compensation was handled very differently in each case.

	Number killed	Average federal compensation per family (Form of compensation)
Oklahoma City bombing	168	\$10,000 (Income tax relief*)
Sept. 11	2,973	\$2.1 million (Cash payment from \$7 billion Victim Compensation Fund)

Source: Tribune reporting

the description Feinberg used to describe the compensation package.

“I completely agree with the victims in Oklahoma City, or the USS Cole, or the Kenya bombing: ‘Why not us?’ ” Feinberg said. “If you’re looking at the victims, I don’t know why not you. If you’re looking at the impact of the tragedy on the American psyche, I think 9/11 stands in a very unique category with Pearl Harbor, the American Civil War and the assassination of President Kennedy.”

There was also an urgent economic imperative: The nation’s troubled airline industry faced collapse under the potential weight of thousands of Sept. 11 lawsuits. Congress averted that crisis by offering victims generous compensation in exchange for their surrendering the right to sue the airlines.

“At the time, the entire economy of the United States was teetering on the brink,” said Larry Stewart, a compensation expert and former president of Trial Lawyers Care, a national pro bono program set up to assist Sept.

11 victims. “In that mix there was also such an outpouring of sympathy for the victims that we were able to tag sympathy onto the airline rescue.”

The Oklahoma City victims also lost out in Congress for reasons that had more to do with their political naivete and lack of clout than the merits of their claims.

Frank Keating, the former governor of Oklahoma, said victims of the Murrah building bombing did not think to seek federal compensation at the time of their loss. “It just never was a subject of discussion in the immediate aftermath of the bombing to make victims rich,” Keating said.

Feinberg believes Oklahomans suffered because of their essential prairie stoicism—the same “Oklahoma spirit” for which they were lauded in the aftermath of the bombing, when Oklahomans demonstrated extraordinary decency, humility and bootstrap resiliency.

“I really do think that the character of Oklahoma is different than the character of New

York,” Feinberg said. “New Yorkers are in your face. We want compensation for something that wasn’t our fault. But Oklahomans thought, ‘Hey, we run risks for the last hundred years out here. There’s always something. Life is filled with misfortune.’ ”

Lobbying for equal treatment

Kathleen Treanor was one victim who didn’t accept her fate. Treanor lost her 4-year-old daughter, Ashley, and both of her in-laws, who had taken the child with them on what was to have been an ordinary visit to the Social Security office inside the Murrah building.

After the Sept. 11 Victim Compensation Fund was created, Treanor, 41, formed a group called Fairness for OKC to lobby for equal treatment for Oklahoma City families.

“Why did they single out one terrorism event and not take care of all terrorism events?” Treanor said. “Honestly, if you think about it, isn’t the United States more culpable for the homegrown terrorists than for

the outside terrorists?”

But Treanor got nowhere. Her calls to the offices of Oklahoma’s senators and representatives were shunted off to junior aides. The news media failed to notice.

And when she signed up with a lawyer from St. Louis who came calling, promising to pull strings in Washington in exchange for 25 percent of any compensation Oklahoma City families might receive, it was the coup de grace. Skirmishing over the fees for the trial lawyers eventually scuttled Senate discussions of compensation for Oklahoma City victims, and the matter died.

The St. Louis lawyer, Charles Polk, was indicted last month on 23 federal counts of bank fraud, money laundering, tax evasion and theft from his legal clients. The charges include Polk’s Oklahoma City scheme.

Some \$18 million of all the charitable funds donated to Oklahoma City victims remain, including enough money to fulfill a promise to provide a college education for each of the 219

children who lost one or both parents in the bombing.

Most of the rest was distributed directly to bombing victims like the Hearn family, whose cases were assessed by a committee of charities that weighed each individual request for help.

Early on, local officials responsible for distributing the funds made a strategic—and controversial—decision not to try to compensate every victim individually. Instead, the goal was to provide temporary assistance to get those most severely stricken back on their feet and hold the rest of the money in trust for longer-term medical and psychological needs.

But choosing that approach over lump-sum distributions meant that bombing victims with some means had to rely on their own resources to get by, a decision that angered many.

“The perception of people unfortunately is that you need to give people money and that money will make them feel better,” said Nancy Anthony, executive director of the Oklahoma City Community Foundation, the city’s umbrella charity.

“Well, it probably does make them feel better. But heroin makes them feel better for a short time too. ... But it’s the services that really help them go forward. That’s what we really focused on: What services do we need to put in place for people to help them begin to turn their lives around and go forward?”

Monday: Rescuers in need of rescue.



Absences make the firms grow tougher

More white-collar companies are adopting attendance policies that might make you think twice about taking a sick day

By Barbara Rose Tribune staff reporter

Perfect attendance is such a virtue at Lawson Products Inc., that employees who go a year without missing work or arriving late are rewarded with extra paid days off.

But for some, there's a downside. At the distributor's warehouse and customer-service center in Addison, there are no excuses for missing work unless time off is scheduled in advance. Any unplanned absence, whether for illness, a flat tire or family emergency, is a black mark.

Punching in one minute to one hour late earns half a point. Missing one to two hours merits one point. A full day adds two points.

Six points results in a reprimand; 10 points, suspension without pay. Employees can be fired if they exceed 12 points within a year.

Such "no-fault" attendance programs, which run counter to the trend toward more family-friendly workplaces, are migrating from factories and warehouses to white-collar environments as companies try to standardize discipline and wrest greater control over workers' schedules.

In Chicago, J.P. Morgan Chase & Co.'s Bank One tracks and disciplines unscheduled absences at its operations centers. People's Energy Corp. does the same in its call centers.

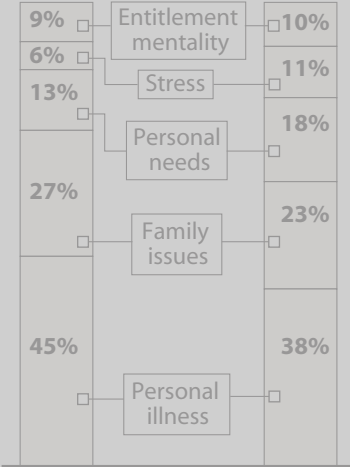
Such policies are gaining sway in an unforgiving economy where staffing is lean and turnover and absenteeism are chronic problems in some lower-paying clerical, technical and service jobs, experts said.

PLEASE SEE ABSENCE, PAGE 16

Excuses, excuses

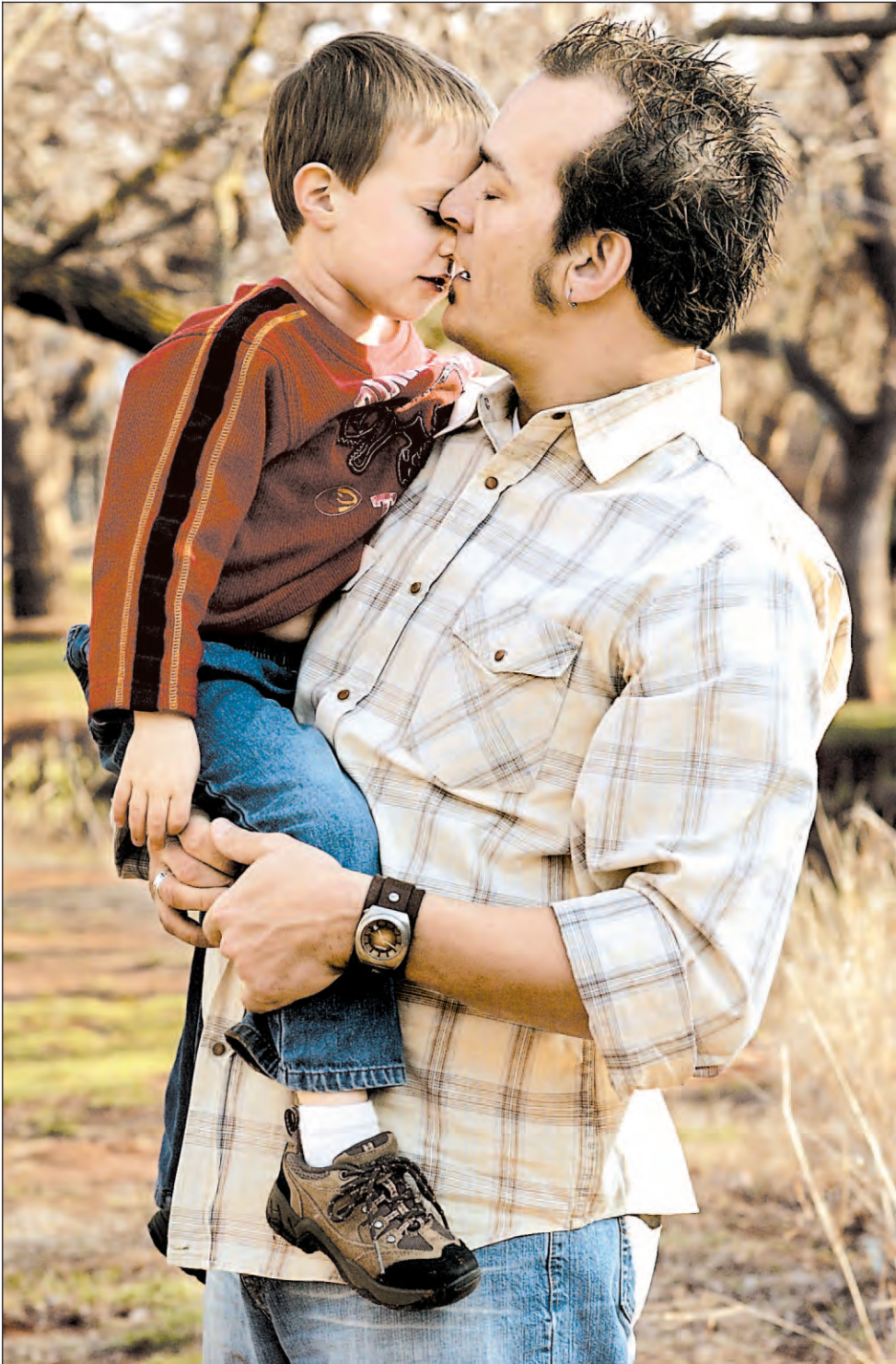
Some companies are beginning to implement a "no fault" policy, whereby workers must schedule time off in advance, regardless of the reason, or face penalties.

REASONS FOR ABSENCES



Note: 2004 results from a CCH survey of randomly polled organizations with an estimated total of more than 1 million employees. Sampling error was estimated to be ±6 percentage points. Source: CCH Chicago Tribune

OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER



Jim Ramsey (with son Trevor) was honored for bravery after the bombing. But then, as a result of post-traumatic stress, his life fell apart. Now he's putting it back together.

Tragedy haunts the heroes

1st responders' suffering intense, delayed

Second of two parts by Howard Witt | Tribune senior correspondent

OKLAHOMA CITY—Jim Ramsey stood before an Oklahoma City judge last December a few days before Christmas, nervously awaiting his sentence on nine felony counts, yet another face in an anonymous parade of drug defendants.

The 35-year-old had been charged with drunk driving, possession of cocaine with intent to distribute, breaking and entering, and escaping from police custody, among other counts stemming from a string of arrests in 2003 and 2004. Years in prison loomed if the judge decided to be harsh.

But Ramsey was no ordinary drug criminal. He was a former cop and the recipient of the Oklahoma City Police Department's highest citation for bravery, awarded for his role in rescuing two women trapped on a precarious 7th-floor ledge of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building after the bomb went off on April 19, 1995.

For Ramsey, the road from decorated police hero to convicted drug felon ran straight through the smoking ruins of the Murrah building, with stops along the way for gambling, drinking and divorce. Yet, spectacular as his descent was, Ramsey's case was far from unique: Scores of other Oklahoma City police officers, firefighters and emergency workers followed similar routes.



There's a dark underside to the heroics performed by rescue workers that is little noticed by the citizens they protect: Long after the smoke clears and the last bodies are retrieved, massive disasters and terrorist attacks routinely claim additional casualties among the first responders who rush in to help, only to succumb to alcoholism, broken families and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

No amount of experience, it turns out, was enough to armor firefighters against scenes of Murrah building office workers impaled on rods of steel rebar who bled to death before they could be reached. No training could have prepared police evi-

PLEASE SEE STRESS, PAGE 14

Cardinals embark on epic task

Expectations high as conclave opens to choose pope

By Steve Kloehn Tribune staff reporter

VATICAN CITY — History towers over the 115 Roman Catholic cardinals who will gather Monday to begin selecting a new pope, but some of the church's ancient traditions are shifting beneath their feet.

The cardinals' isolation from the outside world, first codified in 1274, will be bolstered this year by jamming devices reportedly hidden under a false floor in the Sistine Chapel, there to defeat any sophisticated microphones or eavesdropping satellites.

The cardinals will be confined beginning Monday afternoon, as those in such conclaves have been for more than 1,000 years, but this time with comforts previously unimagined, including private bathrooms and a chance to stroll in the Vatican gardens.

IN METRO

Immigrant dreams

Newcomers in Chicago hope for a historic choice for pope.

Prayers in Chicago

Cardinal Francis George asks for prayers throughout the conclave.



As they select the next pope, the cardinals face a more fundamental test about how to read history and how that interpretation should guide the church's future.

"The pope started the last century as a prisoner in the Vatican [when there was a dispute with Italy over sovereignty], and now the pope is the most famous person in the world," said Rev. John Wauck, a professor at the Santa Croce Pontifical Uni-

PLEASE SEE POPE, BACK PAGE

Iraq bomb takes 'angel' of mercy

Californian won aid, hearts with dedication

By Colin McMahon Tribune foreign correspondent

BAGHDAD—Marla Ruzicka should have left Iraq last week. But there was too much work, too little time and too many Iraqis who had been maimed, widowed or orphaned by a conflict they did not invite but could not avoid.

Vacation could wait, Ruzicka said. The little Iraqi boy whose leg was blown off could not.

So Ruzicka stayed. And on Saturday, Ruzicka died, killed by a car bomb that was not aimed at her but took her just

the same. Along with an Iraqi colleague, the 28-year-old Californian became the very figure she had gone to Iraq to help: a civilian casualty of war.

"She went from being just an anti-war activist to someone who realized that the war was a reality and that people needed to be helped because of it," said Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-Vt.), who credited Ruzicka with helping secure U.S. government funds to compensate Iraqi and Afghan civilians hurt by U.S. military operations.

"You hear of that occasional thing where one person makes a real difference," Leahy said. "This is an example. She accomplished what large organiza-

PLEASE SEE RUZICKA, PAGE 6



Marla Ruzicka (right) poses for a photo with a family her organization helped in Baghdad. She died the next day in a bombing.



Workers install sections of slides at Six Flags' Hurricane Harbor in Gurnee, which is set to open Memorial Day weekend.

Cement ponds are out. Today's swimmer prefers a steep slide to a laid-back back float, and amusement parks and park districts are competing to please.

Water parks aim to saturate market

By Trine Tsouderos Tribune staff reporter

Six Flags' new 15-acre water park in Gurnee boasts 25 slides, a river churning with waterfalls, a 500,000-gallon wave pool, a tiki bar and one thing sure to warm the oft-chilled hearts of Midwesterners in summer—heated water.

And that's just one weapon deployed by amusement parks, commercial resorts and even lo-

cal park districts in their increasingly competitive bids to persuade children—and their parents—to slip, slide and surf in the multimillion-dollar aquatic playgrounds.

Call it the water-park wars. Long gone are the days of the rectangular cement municipal pool with its accompanying tot pond. From Bloomingdale to Gurnee to Elk Grove Village, communities and companies are responding to the mania for

water parks by installing sky-high water slides, slow-moving rivers for inner tubing and gonzo playgrounds that shoot, dump and spray cataracts of water. Chicago alone has more than 30 water parks, many built by the Park District in the last five years.

Unable to compete, many communities with old-style pools have suffered a drop-off in

PLEASE SEE WATER, PAGE 12

INSIDE

METRO

Da mayor named one of da best

Time magazine ranks Mayor Daley among the top 5 big-city mayors in the U.S.

Weather: Summer; high 80, low 57 Index, Page 2 Online at chicagotribune.com



OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER

STRESS:
The fallout from attack was severe

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

dence technicians to have to slit open the tiny fingertips of dead children so they could press their own fingers inside the skin to obtain clear prints.

The delayed suffering of emergency first responders is a phenomenon that researchers and trauma experts are only beginning to understand—and are deeply divided over how to prevent.

But one thing the experts do know is that some of the most serious troubles tend to surface three to five years after a traumatic event—which means that the thousands of New York City police and firefighters who responded to the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks are only now heading into their most dangerous and vulnerable post-disaster period.

“Probably, yes, the worst is yet to come,” said Dr. Frank Dowling, medical adviser for the Police Organization Providing Peer Assistance in New York City, a mental health support agency, who noted that two-thirds of the city’s police officers are currently reporting stress-related symptoms. “I can’t tell you that all of a sudden at year five, we’re going to have a hundred suicides,” Dowling added, but officials are concerned.

Despite the enormity of the Oklahoma City attack—it was, at the time, the worst act of terrorism ever to strike the United States—few rigorous studies of the bombing’s psychological aftereffects on civilians and emergency workers were ever conducted.

Only one study attempted to quantify the occurrence of PTSD and its attendant nightmares, withdrawal and depression among Oklahoma City firefighters who responded to the bombing, and its conclusions were actually optimistic. Three years after the bombing, PTSD was diagnosed in only 13 percent of the firefighters, compared to 34 percent of bombing survivors, suggesting a particular resilience among rescue workers.

But the psychiatrist who led the study, Dr. Carol North, a nationally recognized PTSD expert at the Washington University School of Medicine in St. Louis, noted that the 181 firefighters interviewed were not randomly selected and were not diagnosed by experts. Both factors could have skewed the results.

Officials of both the Oklahoma City Police and Fire Departments, hoping to avoid stigmatizing their employees, said they collected no data on adverse aftereffects among rescue workers.

Many other measures, however, indicate that the fallout from the Oklahoma City bombing was severe.

Project Heartland, a five-year counseling program set up to help Oklahomans affected by the bombing, provided services to 363 first responders, according to the program’s final report. The Fire Department chaplain said he conducted nearly 80 suicide interventions among firefighters.

A police officer and an assistant prosecutor committed suicide.

Alcohol abuse among firefighters, already endemic among half the department before the bombing, may have worsened after it, but by how much is not clear; according to North’s study.

The divorce rate doubled in the Fire Department and tripled in the Police Department in the years after the Oklahoma City attack, according to Diane Leonard, who coordinated three-day crisis-debriefing sessions to help first responders.

“They were just there to help us, to help get our people out of the building, and as a result of helping us they ended up with these huge horrible situations,” said Leonard, whose husband, Don, a Secret Service agent, was killed in the bombing.

Traumatic aftereffects from the bombing were scarcely limited to professional rescue workers. Project Heartland counselors provided services to more than 8,800 individuals, and the Red Cross and the Oklahoma City Community Foundation are still paying for regular therapy sessions for several dozen bombing survivors and relatives of those who died.

Yet as tragic as it was, the psychological suffering of civilian victims caught up in such a catastrophic event was not unexpected by trauma experts. Quite



Tribune photos by Pete Souza

Last summer, Jim Ramsey enrolled in an addiction rehab program in rural Oklahoma. When he got out, a sympathetic businessman gave him a job managing a chicken restaurant in Oklahoma City. He knows he has been granted a precious second chance, and he thinks he can stay sober. “My life has changed,” he says.

Post-traumatic stress disorder explained

Definition

PTSD is a psychiatric disorder that can affect people who have experienced or witnessed life-threatening events such as:

Military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, accidents and violent assaults.

BACKGROUND

PTSD has likely been around as long as humankind, but its diagnosis was not widely used until the 1980s.

PHYSICAL SYMPTOMS

- Sleep abnormalities
- Increased startle reflex
- Headaches
- Digestive problems
- Immune system problems
- Dizziness
- Chest pain

AFFECTED GROUPS

PTSD affects people of all ages and ethnic groups. Nearly 8 percent of Americans will experience PTSD at some point in their lives, with women twice as likely as men to develop the condition. About 30 percent of people who have spent time in war zones develop PTSD.

Source: National Center for PTSD

Chicago Tribune

apart from extraordinary terrorist attacks, about 3.6 percent of U.S. adults will suffer PTSD during an average year as a consequence of accidents, crimes or natural disasters, according to the National Center for PTSD.

Experts are more alarmed by the torments experienced by rescue workers—the men and women who are the nation’s front-line response to domestic terror attacks, whose training and experience presumably inure them to catastrophe.

Oklahoma fire and police officials say they did everything they could think of to help.

They activated a crisis-response protocol popular with police and fire departments across the country known as Critical Incident Stress Management, in which first responders are gathered into small groups for intensive debriefing sessions where they can share their experiences among their peers. They made attendance at the sessions mandatory. They gave out phone numbers for crisis hot lines.

Everything was aimed, the officials say, at overcoming the instinctive reluctance of police and firefighters to admit they might be having psychological problems as a result of what they encountered at the bombing scene—an admission many in the hypermacho rescuer world equate with weakness.

It’s harder for cops

Police officers actually have it harder than firefighters, said Kathy Thomas, a psychologist who specializes in treating first responders.

“Firefighters have sort of a built-in mechanism for informal debriefings: Back at the firehouse, they’re sitting around, they’re eating, they can talk about it if they want,” she said. “But the police officers are [largely] by themselves.”

Police chaplain Jack Poe said his department was sensitive to that problem. “I think anybody that came forward, the department tried anything in the world they could do to help them,” Poe said.

Yet some police officers angrily disagree. They say supervisors stigmatized those who reached out for help and questioned their fitness for duty. They assert that the counseling they got was perfunctory.

“My retort to Mr. Jack Poe is: Show me what you did,” Jim Ramsey said. “You didn’t do anything.”

Ramsey is a particular sore point for the Oklahoma City Police Department because of his high profile as a decorated rescuer. Officials will not comment on his case, other than to say that he was offered help to deal with his problems.

On May 11, 1996, Ramsey walked across an Oklahoma City stage to a standing ovation as he received the Police Department’s Medal of Honor for rescuing two women in the Murrah building in the face of grave danger and despite his profound fear of heights. Yet even as he accepted the award, Ramsey was already deeply troubled.

He had begun a gambling addiction that would ultimately cost the \$60,000 he and his wife had saved for the down payment on a house.

And just hours earlier, Ramsey had attended the funeral of his close friend, Police Sgt. Terrence Yeakey—the fellow police hero who committed suicide.

“I buried him at 10 o’clock in the morning ... 7 o’clock at night I received the Medal of Honor,” Ramsey said. “How am I supposed to accept that award?”

Beset by nightmares of the bombing and intrusive memories of carrying out the bodies of children and laying them on the grass, Ramsey soon began spiraling out of control. He turned to petty theft and kiting checks. He started having affairs. He began using cocaine and then dealing it. His wife divorced him.

“I was a good cop. I never got in any trouble,” Ramsey said. “And then all of a sudden, it hits me like a ton of bricks ... [I was] medicating myself for my fear and my feelings and my pain.”

In 2003, after 13 years on the police force, Ramsey quit rather than fight a charge of bad conduct stemming from his check kiting. He fell even further, racking up the felony arrests. Finally, last summer, he enrolled in a three-month addiction rehab program.

A psychiatrist diagnosed him with post-traumatic stress disorder and bipolar disorder, and alcohol and drug dependence.

When Ramsey got out, a sympathetic businessman gave him a job managing a chicken restaurant in Oklahoma City. His

ex-wife was among more than two dozen friends and family who submitted supportive testimonials to the judge hearing Ramsey’s case last December.

The judge, Virgil Black, believing Ramsey’s attempt at rehabilitation was sincere, gave him a 5-year deferred sentence—if Ramsey stays clean, the felonies will be erased from his record. Atop the 10-page presentencing report on Ramsey’s life history and crimes, Black scrawled “Good Luck.”

Ramsey says he has been off drugs and alcohol since July. He knows he has been granted a precious second chance, and he thinks he can stay sober.

“My life has changed,” he said. “I can deal with the pain.”

Textbook case

Ramsey exhibited a textbook case of PTSD, a debilitating malady that can drive its sufferers into major depression, substance abuse and autoimmune disorders, as well as suicide, according to the National Center for PTSD.

Telltale symptoms include traumatic nightmares, recurrent intrusive thoughts, intense feelings of helplessness or fear, psychic numbing and avoidance of people, places or stimuli that might trigger traumatic memories.

But how to help first responders like Ramsey avoid PTSD after their repeated exposures to catastrophic events is a subject of growing debate in the psychiatric community.

Small group stress debriefings conducted soon after a traumatic event have been the preferred approach for first responders since the early 1980s.

During the debriefings, specially trained counselors lead participants through a detailed recounting of the event to help alleviate feelings of guilt, blame or helplessness. Any participants who exhibit extreme reactions are screened for further counseling, while the rest return to their jobs.

Yet scientific studies in recent years have concluded that the debriefings do no good and may actually harm some participants by forcing them to relive their traumatic experiences.

“There is no current evidence that psychological debriefing is a useful treatment for the prevention of post-traumatic stress disorder after traumatic incidents,” wrote the authors of one influential study, published in 2002 in the Cochrane Database of Systemic Reviews, an international scientific clearinghouse. “Compulsory debriefing of victims of trauma should cease.”

Dr. Bryan Bledsoe, an author of several paramedic training manuals and a critic of the debriefings, says the practice is popular because it appeals to an intuitive sense of what ought to work, even in the absence of scientific data supporting it.

“We have this need in Western society to do something for everybody,” Bledsoe said. “But sometimes the best thing is doing nothing.”

So what does work for first responders? Some experts recommend simple palliatives, such as making rescuers comfortable when they come off a shift at a

In the wake of the bombing

Notable figures from the Oklahoma City bombing, and what has happened since:

PERPETRATORS

Timothy McVeigh

The main perpetrator of the Oklahoma City bombing was convicted of 11 counts of murder and conspiracy in 1997 and sentenced to death. On June 11, 2001, he was executed by lethal injection at the federal penitentiary at Terre Haute, Ind. He was 33.



Terry Nichols

In 1997, Nichols, a friend of McVeigh’s, was convicted by a federal jury for his part in the bombing conspiracy. He got a life sentence. Last August, an Oklahoma state court convicted him of 161 counts of first-degree murder. Earlier this month, the FBI found explosives at his former Kansas home.



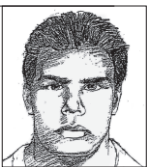
Michael Fortier

An Army buddy of McVeigh’s, Fortier pleaded guilty to failing to warn law enforcement about the plot and was sentenced to 12 years in prison in 1998. The sentence was upheld in 2001.



John Doe #2

Initially cited by the FBI as a possible bombing co-conspirator, John Doe #2 turned out to have been mistakenly identified by a witness. That explanation never satisfied conspiracy theorists, however, who believe he is still at large.



FAMOUS PHOTO



AP photo by Charles H. Porter IV

Chris Fields

Fields was the firefighter (above) shown cradling 1-year-old Baylee Almon, a victim of the bombing who was pronounced dead later that day, in a photo that became one of the lasting images of the bombing. Fields still works for the Oklahoma City Fire Department, where he is a captain, and his family still keeps in touch with the Almons.



Charles Porter

Porter was the amateur photographer who took the Pulitzer Prize-winning photo of Fields holding the young bombing victim. Today Porter lives in Ft. Worth, where he is a physical therapist and sometimes shoots weddings and portraits.



Source: Tribune reporting

disaster scene. Where necessary, cognitive behavioral therapy may help—a form of psychotherapy in which patients are taught to redirect their traumatic thoughts.

In other words, there may be no quick fixes. North concedes that researchers don’t have any

definitive answers.

“In order to speak intelligently about any kind of intervention and how effectively it worked, you need to do a randomized control trial,” North said. “In a disaster setting, that’s very difficult to do. It’s chaos.”

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OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER



Alan Prokop rushed headlong into the twisted wreckage of the federal building and carried victims to safety. Today he's a recluse on a small farm in the Oklahoma hinterland.

OKLAHOMA CITY

2 rescuers in need of saving

Alan Prokop was an Oklahoma City police officer who rushed headlong into the twisted wreckage of the Murrah Federal Building and carried several victims to safety. Today he's a recluse on a small farm in the Oklahoma hinterland, divorced from his wife, estranged from his children and tempted by thoughts of killing himself.

Jim Norman was the crisis counselor who tried to help Prokop contend with the paralyzing effects of post-traumatic stress disorder. Now he's a stress victim himself, forced into semiretirement, his molars ground down so completely that they all had to be replaced.

Sometimes the rescuers need help. And sometimes those who rescue the rescuers fall victim as well.

Nearly 200 miles from Oklahoma City, secluded on the hilltop farm he named Purgatory, Prokop struggles to keep his nightmares at bay.

The worst one, he says, is when the dust-covered bodies rise up out of the Murrah building ruins, blood spurting from their wounds—the scene he says he encountered as one of the first rescuers to arrive in the minutes after the explosion.

"I can't tell you how many times I've sat down, pulled a Magnum out..." Prokop said, his voice trailing off as he recounted his frequent flirtations with suicide.

In April 1995, Prokop was a veteran of 26 years on the Oklahoma City police force, a sergeant who had seen his share of murder and accident victims, of abused children and battered spouses. But nothing, he said, could have steeled him for what he encountered at the bomb site.

There was a woman's writh-

ing hand sticking out of the rubble, the rest of her body obscured under tons of concrete and steel debris. Helpless to free her, Prokop said he did the only thing he could: He squeezed her hand for five minutes as her life ebbed away.

There were the cascades of liquid pouring down everywhere, slickening every jagged foothold. Prokop thought at first that it was water. He soon realized it was blood.

There were the children's body parts.

And there was Brandon Denny, a 3-year-old who had been blissfully playing inside the building's day-care center when the bomb went off.

"I looked down and saw a chunk of rock, brick or something sticking out of his head," Prokop recounted. "I put my hand over the rock and I ran him out of the building, ran him back to triage."

"The boy was in bad shape,"

he continued. "I could see his eyes were looking two different directions. He had a little green block in his hand that stuck to my uniform, to the blood of my uniform. ... I still have the block, by the way."

Brandon survived the blast, which drove pieces of wallboard deep into his brain and crippled his right arm. Today he's a soft-spoken 6th grader who still suffers severe seizures and requires extensive physical therapy.

He and his 2-year-old sister, who was also severely injured, were two of only six gravely wounded children who survived the bombing. Fifteen of their playmates were killed.

Prokop, 53, hates being called a hero, a label he says sets up impossible expectations that no one can ever live up to. He insists he did not save Brandon's life.

"The Lord saved his life. I just carried him out," he said.



Prokop says he has suicidal thoughts.

"Brandon fought his way back. His dad and family saved his life. They took care of him. ... I'm real proud of him."

"But it cost a lot."

The cost for Prokop was his family, his health and his job.

Guilt, depression, agitation and nightmares set in several months after the bombing, Prokop said. All are telltale signs of post-traumatic stress disorder. He developed lupus, an autoimmune disorder. He started drinking heavily. His adult children became estranged.

But when he finally reached out for help and told his superiors that he was experiencing problems—and then testified about his nightmares at Timothy McVeigh's trial for capital murder—Prokop says the Oklahoma City Police Department shunned him, hounding him to retire on a medical disability.

"I showed weakness," Prokop said. "Not only did I show weakness, I testified to the world that

I have nightmares about this bombing. ... I was an embarrassment to [the Police Department]."

Jack Poe, the Oklahoma City Police Department chaplain, disputes Prokop's assertion that he was driven out. He said he tried to help Prokop, accompanying him to Denver for McVeigh's trial in 1997 and sending him to intensive counseling and debriefing sessions.

But he also has sympathy for Prokop's situation.

"I can understand how Alan feels," Poe said. "There is a stigma attached, and that's why it's so hard to get people to come forward. I don't think it's real, but some people do feel there is a stigma."

Jim Norman, a Vietnam veteran-turned-crisis counselor who dedicated himself to working with traumatized first responders to the Oklahoma City bombing, was the one person who was able to walk Prokop back from the brink of shooting himself.

But the price Norman paid for absorbing Prokop's nightmares and those of other police officers and firefighters was steep. His immune system grew compromised, like Prokop's. He suffered a persistent infection. He ruined his teeth.

"You know those nocturnal splints? Bit through a couple of them," Norman said. "Even cracked a crown once."

Nor was Norman the only one. Of the two dozen counselors alongside Norman who were originally assigned to Project Heartland, a mental health program set up in the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, nearly a third later succumbed to stress that program officials tied directly to their work. Two counselors suffered heart attacks, one of them fatal. Several were afflicted with hypertension. One came down with multiple sclerosis. The director of the program took a medical re-

tirement.

Norman, 56, was widely hailed by first responders and other therapists for his empathy and effectiveness, and his name quickly spread as the counselor of choice for those in crisis.

For years after the bombing, he was on call 24 hours a day. He says he interrupted hundreds of suicide attempts by police officers and firefighters who felt too stigmatized to seek help within their departments.

"If emergency service personnel get caught ... seeing a counselor, they're marked," Norman said. "So what we told them was ... you don't even have to tell us your name. I'll meet you wherever you want to meet. So we have done one-on-ones in parking lots, in coffee shops, on creek banks, at the intersections of highways."

Others never directly attempted suicide but began exhibiting increasingly reckless behavior on the job, such as cops not wearing their Kevlar vests.

As Norman's reputation spread and his successful interventions multiplied, so did his stress. He was summoned to help after the Columbine school shootings in Colorado, an earthquake in Taiwan, the Sept. 11 attacks and last winter's tsunamis in Asia.

For a long time, he felt like he could never stop, that too many lives depended on him.

"Mostly [it was] denial. You know, nobody can do this. They really count on me," he said. "Get up. Go do it. Come back. Get up. Go do it. I think people get caught in that. It's been my experience that people don't start doing anything different until they hurt bad enough. I finally started hurting bad enough."

Now Norman restricts himself to a small counseling practice and, when disasters strike, he consults with other crisis counselors—at a distance.

"I will not go to a disaster to do that work. I'm not going to do that," Norman said. "Probably."

NEW YORK CITY

Firehouses and police stations brace for 9/11 trauma

NEW YORK — Trauma experts commonly predict that the odds of any individual rescue worker at a disaster scene suffering post-traumatic stress disorder increase if there is massive loss of life. They rise further if the catastrophe was caused by an act of terrorism, the exposure is prolonged and rescuers directly experience extreme fear for their own lives. And the risk goes higher still if friends, relatives or colleagues die at the scene.

Every one of those risk factors was present on Sept. 11, 2001, at the site of the World Trade Center attacks in New York, in which unprecedented numbers of civilians and first responders were killed.

Now New York City police and fire officials are groping through uncharted psychiatric territory as they seek to protect the mental health of their entire departments from what could become an unprecedented crisis.

"In most events, the first responders are there in a helping capacity, not in a victim capacity," said Dr. Kerry Kelly, chief medical officer of the Fire Department of New York. "And you're usually there taking care of people who are essentially strangers. In this event, you had first responders who suddenly became part of the perished."

More than 340 New York City firefighters from 61 firehouses were killed when the trade center towers collapsed, many of

them caught high in the stairwells as they raced upward to try to rescue victims. An additional 23 New York City police officers died as well, along with 37 Port Authority police officers and 7 paramedics. The civilian death toll was more than 2,300.

For the Fire Department, Sept. 11 was a family tragedy. Despite its mammoth size—more than 10,000 people—the department is really organized around each tightly knit individual firehouse. Many firefighters are closely interconnected through relatives, friends and neighbors, which magnified the impact of each loss.

Worse still, the firefighters were unable to recover every victim, despite spending months at the site in rotating 12-hour shifts, raking the millions

of tons of debris down to dust.

"It was the first time in history that we left bodies behind—our bodies," said Malachy Corrigan, director of the FDNY Counseling Service Unit. "I can't overplay how important that was."

Unlike many fire departments in smaller American cities, the FDNY already had a large counseling unit in place at the time of the Sept. 11 attacks that is dedicated to helping firefighters deal with substance abuse problems and the traumas associated with "bad calls" that result in the deaths of civilians or firefighters.

For Corrigan, Sept. 11 meant a rapid and extraordinary expansion of his existing operation—he quickly stationed counselors directly in each of the fire-

houses where firefighters were lost—but at least he was not starting from scratch.

Nor did Corrigan choose to rely on standard protocols for Critical Incident Stress Management debriefings employed by most other fire departments across the country. He had determined long ago that rigid, large-group debriefings did not fit the insular culture found inside each New York City firehouse. Instead, each fire station conducted the same type of informal, after-action discussions around the kitchen table after Sept. 11 to which participants had long been accustomed.

"They call it a critique so it sounds like business, but they talk about everything," Corrigan said.

He hopes that the huge in-

creases in the counseling unit's caseload indicate that firefighters who need help dealing with Sept. 11 trauma are seeking it out. Before the attacks, the unit handled an average of 600 new clients each year. In 2002, that number shot up to more than 4,500, and it stayed at more than four times the pre-Sept. 11 level in 2003 and 2004, according to FDNY figures.

Other figures, however, hint at the depth of the psychological problems the department is facing. From Sept. 11, 2001, through last January, the counseling unit had diagnosed 1,245 cases of anxiety, 809 cases of marital problems, 675 cases of depression and 394 cases of post-traumatic stress disorder. Alcohol and drug abuse cases nearly doubled from 2003 to 2004.

Forgotten victim: A child unborn

• Iraqi lost baby after Oklahoma City attack

By Howard Witt
Tribune senior correspondent

OKLAHOMA CITY—There is no chair for Salam Mohammad. One hundred sixty-eight empty bronze chairs line the grassy field where the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building used to stand, each one a solemn memorial to an individual killed in the April 19, 1995, bombing. Salam did not perish on the day of the bombing. Nor did he die anywhere near the Murrah building. His name will not be mentioned on Tuesday morning, when Vice President Dick Cheney and former President Bill Clinton are scheduled to be among the dignitaries who are to speak at a 10th anniversary commemoration of the Oklahoma City bombing. But to many here in Oklahoma City's small Muslim community, the 7-month fetus was a casualty of the attack just the same, one of countless collateral victims whose hidden stories have never been told.

Salam's pregnant mother, Sahar al-Moswi, was at home in her Oklahoma City apartment on the morning after the bombing caring for her two young children, listening to the news and wondering, like everyone else in America, who could have perpetrated such an awful crime. The broadcasts were filled with experts confidently asserting that the bombing bore the hallmarks of a Middle Eastern terrorist attack. Al-Moswi felt a chill. She and her husband, Haider al-Saidi, both Shiite Muslims, had fled the persecution and torture of Saddam Hussein's Iraq in the early 1990s and, thanks to family ties, had landed in the middle American tranquility of Oklahoma City. Like many refugees and immigrants, they had tried to keep a low profile in their new neighborhood, where they stood out as the only Muslims. Suddenly the living room window shattered, sending shards of glass flying across the room. A rock landed on the carpet.

"I was scared somebody



Tribune photo by Pete Souza

Iraqi immigrant Sahar al-Moswi suffered a miscarriage in April 1995 after her home in Oklahoma City was attacked.

OKLAHOMA CITY 10 YEARS LATER

■ For more stories and photos of survivors, go to CHICAGOTRIBUNE.COM/OKLAHOMA

shooting," recalled al-Moswi, now 35. "I did not see the rock. I heard the noise. The glass is all over the place. ...

"I take the kids and I go to the bathroom," she continued. "It's hard to move—big stomach and two kids. I go to the bathroom. I thought I might be safe there. I [feared] people that might come" and break into the apartment.

Moments later, al-Moswi doubled over in pain and started bleeding. But, terrified that attackers might be waiting outside the bathroom, she waited nearly an hour before sending one of her children to get a portable phone from another room so she could call for help.

The next day in the hospital—about the time authorities were discovering that they already

had the suspected bomber, Timothy McVeigh, in custody on a traffic charge—al-Moswi suffered a miscarriage.

"The doctor, he says because she heard the noise, she jumped, she lost the control of the baby," al-Saidi said.

No one was arrested in the attack, but the family is certain they were singled out because of the initial surge of suspicion directed at Muslims. They even think they know who threw the rock—a neighbor who had always treated them warily—but they have no proof.

Devastated, frightened and unable to bear staying in Oklahoma City, the couple quickly fled with their children, selling their car and possessions at a loss to raise enough money to move to Maryland, near al-Sai-

di's brother.

"No government, no police, no anybody come and help us," al-Saidi said. "Nobody comes and says, 'Sorry [for] what happened.'" Today the family lives in a cramped three-bedroom apartment in a tattered complex in suburban Washington. The couple have had three more children in the years since the bombing, and the parents are struggling to make ends meet in low-wage jobs.

But anti-Muslim hysteria followed them to their new home: Al-Saidi said he lost a well-paying job at a supermarket warehouse after Sept. 11, 2001, when other employees falsely accused him of participating in the attacks.

Yet al-Saidi answers forcefully when asked whether he bears his adoptive country any malice for the suffering he has endured since escaping his native Iraq.

"My country doesn't give me anything—[Iraq] took from me,

doesn't give me anything," he said. "I come here to United States. The people when I come to this country, they treated me very well. ...

"Not all Americans bad as these people done to me," he added. "A lot of people, they've been on my side. I work for seafood market right now. I feel like they my family. All friendly, all nice. I have had no problem with them."

What few of his co-workers know, however, is the sorrow that overtakes the family in April every year as Salam is mourned. Their 12-year-old daughter, not understanding what happened, has begun asking whether he is still alive.

"We pray for the baby, and every year we just make some food and pray to God, and read him some books, you know, for the baby," al-Saidi said.

But, he added somberly, "we cannot go visit the grave in Oklahoma City. We cannot afford it."

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U.S. scotches heart-healthy booze theory

Associated Press

ATLANTA—The government Tuesday warned that a few drinks a day may not protect against strokes and heart attacks after all.

Some studies in recent years have touted the health benefits of moderate drinking.

Some have even said that up to four drinks a day can significantly reduce the risk of heart disease in people 40 and older.

But researchers at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention analyzed data from 250,000 Americans who participated in a 2003 telephone survey. They found that the non-drinkers had many more risks for heart disease—such as being overweight and inactive and having high blood pressure and diabetes—than the moderate drinkers.

Based on those results, the agency could not say that moderate drinking actually was a factor in reducing the risk of heart disease.

The findings were published in the May issue of the American Journal of Preventive Medicine.

"We're feeling the pendulum has swung way too far, and Americans are getting sort of the wrong idea" on alcohol, said the study's lead author, Dr. Tim Naimi of the CDC's chronic diseases division. "The science around moderate drinking is very murky."

Moderate drinkers tended to be in better health, better educated, wealthier and more active than their non-drinking counterparts, and that likely influenced their lower risk of heart disease, the study said.

"It appears that moderate drinkers have many social and lifestyle characteristics that favor their survival over non-drinkers and few of these differences are likely due to alcohol consumption itself," the study said.

Alcohol is the nation's third leading cause of death, killing 75,000 Americans each year through related injuries or diseases, the CDC says.

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