

Nichols' trial seems condensed

Testimony taking minutes, not hours

By Sandy Shore
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DENVER — Streamlined testimony about the horrors of the Oklahoma City bombing carried no less emotional punch, causing three jurors to break down in tears yesterday during the trial of Terry Nichols.

Witnesses who testified for hours in Timothy McVeigh's trial recounted their stories in minutes this time and were sometimes cut off by the judge.

Three jurors sobbed as Helena Garrett, who was crying herself, told how she waited anxiously for word of her toddler while rescue workers "made a line of our babies" at her feet.

"There was glass everywhere, all over the place, and I remember screaming, 'Don't lay our babies on the glass. They wouldn't want our babies on the glass.'"

Garrett learned three days later that her 16-month-old son, Tevin, died in the blast at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, along with 167 other people.

A pregnant Edye Smith, who lost her two sons, 3-year-old Colton and 2-year-old Chase, in the April 19, 1995, bombing, rubbed her belly as she listened to testimony. About half a dozen other victims' relatives cried quietly.

Nichols appeared agitated and whispered emphatically to one of his attorneys.

In a soft voice, Nichols' lead attorney, Michael Tigar, asked Garrett two brief questions about the location of an alley. He has promised to question every prosecution witness. McVeigh's attorneys seldom cross-examined them in the earlier trial.

Richard Williams, the federal building's manager, and Susan Hunt, manager of the Housing and Urban Development office, described the chaotic scene of



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For the defense: *Michael Tigar, defense attorney for Terry Nichols, arrived yesterday at federal court in Denver, accompanied by his wife, Jane, and his mother, Elizabeth.*

black smoke, wounded people and rubble shortly after the bombing.

Williams was in his first-floor office the morning of the bombing. The next thing he recalls is waking up under a pile of rubble.

"I could visualize my left arm out to my side," he testified. "At that point, I could not feel anything. . . . I recognized the pink shirt that I had on that morning with my watch."

Williams said he was pulled to safety by a police officer. He needed 150 stitches for shrapnel wounds and had a crushed hand, broken cheek bone and head wounds.

At one point, Williams began describing screams he heard as he left the area in an ambulance, but U.S. District Judge Richard Matsch cut him off, sustaining a defense objection. "I think we're going on beyond what is relevant," Matsch said.

Nichols, 42, could be sentenced to die if convicted of murder, conspiracy and weapons-related counts. McVeigh was convicted of identical charges in June and was sentenced to death.

Jurors stretched to see photographs of 35 Housing and Urban Development employees who died and charts that Hunt used to show locations.

Earlier in the day, jurors stood as prosecutor Beth Wilkinson and a co-worker wheeled a dolly close to the jury box and took off a white cloth to reveal the 250-pound, 7-foot truck axle from the Ryder truck used to drive the bomb to the building.

James Elliott, a retired FBI agent in charge of the bomb evidence control center, said the axle was found 575 feet from the federal building outside an apartment complex.

Under cross-examination, Elliott acknowledged that the bomb evidence was stored in a warehouse that was swept several times but was still "pretty dirty."

The questioning apparently was part of the groundwork for an expected defense attack on FBI methods used in the investigation. Tigar has contended FBI agents quickly collected samples but did "sloppy work."