

Bombing in New Jersey

Various Authors

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THE ATTACK; F.B.I. Says Fatal Mail Blast Is Work of Serial Bomber

Source: The New York Times, December 12, 1994, Section A, Page 1. <nytimes.com/1994/12/12/nyregion/bombing-new-jersey-attack-fbi-says-fatal-mail-blast-work-serial-bomber.html>

Author: Clifford J. Levy

Federal officials said today that a mail bomb that killed a prominent advertising executive here on Saturday was sent by the same man who has mounted a string of similar attacks since 1978, striking targets across the corporate and academic landscape in one of the most notorious unsolved crime sprees in the nation's recent history.

The death of the executive in this wealthy suburb about 15 miles from New York City deepened the mystery of the bomber. The suspect, described as an anarchist with a mastery of explosives and a grudge against the influence of technology in society, has long eluded a team of Federal investigators that has roamed from Connecticut to California trying to track him down.

With the death on Saturday, the bomber, dubbed "unabom" because in the past he had seemed to want to torment universities and airlines, has now killed two men and wounded 23 other people in 15 attacks that are growing increasingly violent, officials said.

The officials said at a news conference today in Newark that they had concluded that the explosion that killed the executive, Thomas J. Mosser, 50, was related to the earlier ones because the bomb was built with similar materials and had a similar, sophisticated design. But once again, they said they were not exactly certain what connected Mr. Mosser to the other victims.

"The components of the bomb, its construction, make us believe the bombs are linked," said Barry Mawn, the head of the F.B.I.'s Newark office.

Mr. Mawn said there was nothing to indicate that Mr. Mosser was involved with organized crime or had been a witness in a criminal trial. Nor, Mr. Mawn said, were there any threats made against him or his family.

THE SUSPECT; Meticulous in Building His Bombs, Fastidious in Remaining At Large

Source: The New York Times, December 12, 1994, Section B, Page 6 of the National edition. <nytimes.com/1994/12/12/nyregion/bombing-new-jersey-suspect-meticulous-building-his-bombs-fastidious-remaining.html>

Occasionally the digitization process introduces transcription errors or other problems; we are continuing to work to improve these archived versions.

From the loving way he pieces together his explosives, his choice of targets and clues about which newspaper he might read, Federal investigators have gleaned some notion of his Luddite mind, but they have been unable to predict or prevent his attacks.

The investigators say they believe they know much about the parcel bomber who has left two people dead and 23 injured since 1978. Based on a glimpse years ago, they believe they know what he looks like. From the swath he has cut across the country and the clues he has left behind, they think they know where he is from and where he has gone. They might even know his motivation: a hatred of sophisticated technology, the one apparent link among his targets.

But after more than 16 frustrating years of meticulous sifting through the biographical details of his victims and the microscopic traces his deadly devices leave behind, Federal agents have been unable to identify him. Investigators from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms, some of whom have spent more than a decade on the case, call him one of the cleverest villains they have ever sought.

The bomber struck again on Saturday, when a mail bomb killed Thomas J. Mosser, an advertising executive, at his home in North Caldwell, N.J.

His treacherous packages, some mailed and some just left lying around, have been convincingly disguised as books, gift boxes, cassettes, even road debris. Each has been built from scratch, avoiding the use of even the most basic components that could be bought in a hardware store, and making him all the harder to trace. Investigators say the bomber dotes on his creations, polishing each wooden element, although it will be blown to splinters.

“This individual meticulously constructs his explosive devices and is a loner,” Barry Mawn, special agent in charge of the F.B.I. office in Newark, said yesterday. Mr. Mawn said the construction of the device that killed Mr. Mosser linked it conclusively to the other bombings, but he would not elaborate.

Investigators say that one of the bomber’s signatures, the letters “FC,” stand for an obscene phrase belittling computers, but they will not say how they reached that conclusion. The letters have appeared on the surviving pieces of some of his bombs, as well as a letter he sent to The New York Times last year.

From an instance when a shadowy figure was spotted in a Salt Lake City parking lot just before a bomb went off in 1987, investigators have compiled a description of the bomber as a man in his late 30’s or early 40’s, about six feet tall, thin, with reddish-blond hair and a ruddy complexion.

Investigators say they believe that the bomber is from the Chicago area, where the first four explosions occurred, and that he later moved to Utah, and then to California, possibly Sacramento.

As an executive of Young & Rubicam, the advertising and public relations firm, Mr. Mosser at first seems not to fit into a group of targets that includes scientists, university laboratories, a computer store and an airline executive. But in the two weeks before the bomb was sent, Young & Rubicam was hired by two of the nation's computing giants, the Digital Equipment Corporation and the Xerox Corporation.

"That, unfortunately, seems to put him in the ballpark," said a law-enforcement official who has been involved in the investigation of previous bombings, and who spoke on condition of anonymity.

And Mr. Mosser, like three other victims of the serial bomber, had been mentioned in The New York Times. The Times published the news of his promotion to general manager on Dec. 5, just as it had published articles on Young & Rubicam being retained by Digital and Xerox. Investigators theorize that the bomber reads either The Times or another newspaper that carries articles from The Times News Service.

In 1993, shortly before a pair of bombings two days apart maimed scientists on opposite sides of the continent, the bomber sent a letter to The Times, warning of "a newsworthy event." One victim, a Yale computer scientist, had been featured prominently in a Times article on a technology called massively parallel computing. The other, a geneticist at the University of California at San Francisco, had been quoted in an article on genetic engineering.

Both technologies figured prominently in the film "Jurassic Park," which opened two weeks before the bombings, and investigators say they do not believe the timing was a coincidence.

Another eerie signature, the bomber's affinity for certain dates and times of year, would seem to point to his involvement in Mr. Mosser's death. Four of his 15 explosives have gone off in early or mid-May, and two exploded on Nov. 15, one in 1979 and the other in 1985. Mr. Mosser was killed one day short of the nine-year anniversary of the blast that killed a Sacramento, Calif., store owner, Hugh Campbell Scrutton, the only person before Mr. Mosser to be killed by one of the bombs.

THE VICTIM; Executive Had Vaulted To No. 2 Post at Agency

Source: The New York Times, December 12, 1994, Section B, Page 6 of the National edition. <nytimes.com/1994/12/12/nyregion/bombing-in-new-jersey-the-victim-executive-had-vaulted-to-no-2-post-at-agency.html>

Author: Stuart Elliott

On Dec. 1, Thomas J. Mosser was promoted to a position that was likely to be the pinnacle of his 25-year career in public relations and advertising. Nine days later, he was dead, the victim of a powerful mail bomb that exploded in his home in North Caldwell, N.J.

Since early this year, Mr. Mosser, 50, had served as executive vice president at Young & Rubicam, the giant worldwide advertising and communications company based in New York, as well as a member of its powerful operations committee. His duties included corporate projects and initiatives for clients including the Philip Morris Companies, the nation's second-largest advertiser. With his recent promotion he also became the general manager of Y.& R.

Before that, Mr. Mosser spent almost a quarter century at Burson-Marsteller, Y.& R.'s wholly owned public relations subsidiary.

Colleagues and competitors remembered Mr. Mosser yesterday as someone who was far different from the stereotype of the glad-handing, smooth-talking public relations practitioner. Rather, they described him as a low-key, thoughtful, deliberate man, more of a counselor than a hail-fellow-well-met.

A former co-worker of Mr. Mosser's at Burson-Marsteller, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of concerns about the bombing, described Mr. Mosser as the type of person who, "when he spoke, everyone listened; he was more pensive, erudite."

Robert L. Dilenschneider, chief executive at the Dilenschneider Group, a New York public relations agency, said: "I've known him on and off for 20 years. He was a very fair, honest, ethical competitor, a real all-American."

Mr. Mosser "wasn't the kind of person who lit up the room," Mr. Dilenschneider said, "but he was the kind of person you could always count on, a very solid guy."

Neighbors on the hilly cul-de-sac where Mr. Mosser lived with his wife, Susan, and daughters Kim, 13, and Kelly, 15 months, said they did not know him very well, because of the long hours he spent at his job.

Neighbors said he also had a daughter and son, both college age, from a previous marriage. The son lives in Maryland, and the daughter lives in New Jersey, they said.

Mr. Mosser built the house, at 15 Aspen Drive, about four years ago, said Donald McKay, who lives nearby. Mr. Mosser and his family lived there about a year, Mr. McKay said, then moved to London, and had only been living in the house again for about a year.

Yesterday, windows on one side of the first floor of the house were covered with cardboard, and glass was strewn across the yard.

Some neighbors said yesterday that it was only luck that others were not injured by the bomb. Mr. McKay said that he held a party for the neighborhood on Friday night and that several children wandered from the party to the Mossers' house.

"They had half a dozen kids there with the bomb sitting on the table," Mr. McKay said. "His wife signed for the package on Friday and left it on the table."

Robin Sommese, 13, stayed over for the night and was in the house with the Mossers and their daughters when the explosion occurred. She said she took the Mossers' daughter Kelly next door after the blast.

A former newsman in the Philadelphia bureau of The Associated Press, Mr. Mosser had also served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. He graduated with a journalism degree from St. Bonaventure University in Olean, N.Y.

THE VICTIM; His Friends Are Asking: Why Thomas Mosser?

Source: The New York Times, December 13, 1994, Section B, Page 8 of the National edition. <nytimes.com/1994/12/13/nyregion/bombing-in-new-jersey-the-victim-his-friends-are-asking-why-thomas-mosser.html>

Author: Stuart Elliott

Date: Dec. 13, 1994

Co-workers, competitors and friends of Thomas J. Mosser spent yesterday puzzling over his life, and the few details of his death, wondering what might have made him the target of a mail bomb.

"We're all perplexed," said Kathy Hyett, a senior vice president for marketing at the Hill & Knowlton public relations agency in New York, who worked with Mr. Mosser at the Burson-Marsteller public relations agency from 1983 to 1991. "Why? Why?"

Early this year, Mr. Mosser (pronounced MOE-ser) left Burson-Marsteller, the world's largest public relations agency, after nearly 25 years. He joined Burson-Marsteller's parent, the giant Young & Rubicam advertising and communications company, as an executive vice president. On Dec. 1, nine days before he died in the explosion at his home in North Caldwell, N.J., Mr. Mosser was promoted to general manager at Y.& R., the world's sixth largest advertising agency.

Speculation continued yesterday about whether any of the clients or accounts for which Mr. Mosser worked at Burson-Marsteller or at Y.& R. might have attracted the attention of the same bomber whose past attacks included people associated with airlines, the computer industry and academia.

One of Mr. Mosser's specialties at Burson-Marsteller was crisis communications, counseling corporations at times of particular ferment, danger or controversy.

He was "very much a voice of calm in chaos," Ms. Hyett said, "so he was able to provide structure and sense in crisis situations." He also worked for clients like AT&T, managing a promotion during the 1984 Summer Olympics called the AT&T Olympic Torch Relay, and Black & Decker, helping that company successfully absorb the housewares division of the General Electric Company.

For the last four years, the "New York Public Relations Directory," published by the J. R. O'Dwyer Company lists no airline clients for Burson-Marsteller. Y.& R. has had no airline advertising client in this country since October 1990, when it resigned the Trans World Airlines account, although the agency handles advertising overseas for Lufthansa, the German airline.

Ms. Hyett said she recalled that the Digital Equipment Corporation and the International Business Machines Corporation were among Burson-Marsteller's clients during Mr. Mosser's years there; I.B.M. continues as a client, according to the O'Dwyer directory.

Although unsure whether Mr. Mosser had worked directly on those accounts, Ms. Hyett said, "When you're a very senior person in a huge agency, you have your hand in a little bit of everything."

Y.& R. was awarded Digital's personal computer business unit advertising account in November 1993; late last month, days before Mr. Mosser's promotion, two Y.& R. subsidiaries in London and Zurich were awarded the unit's advertising account in Europe.

Richard McGowan, senior vice president and corporate communications director for Y.& R. in New York, who is serving as the agency's spokesman, said that there was no suggestion the mail bomb was related to Mr. Mosser's work at Y.& R. or to any agency clients.

But Jim Freeman, the F.B.I. agent in charge of the investigation in San Francisco, said that a link between the bombing and the agency had not been ruled out.

Jack O'Dwyer, the publisher of the directory that bears his name, praised Mr. Mosser as "a standup man, upfront, on the level, always straight, who didn't give you the Madison Avenue mumbo jumbo."

"His Navy background was written all over him," Mr. O'Dwyer said, referring to Mr. Mosser's four years of service as a Naval officer during the Vietnam War. "He always impressed me as an archetypal top executive, very bright, above-board, which Y.& R. no doubt saw.

"Y.& R.'s gain was a huge loss for Burson-Marsteller," Mr. O'Dwyer said. "Now it's a huge loss for everyone."

And Anthony Cardinale, who attended St. Bonaventure University with Mr. Mosser, graduating in 1964, a year ahead of Mr. Mosser, said, "I suppose Madison Avenue is a symbol of the 'establishment' as much as the computer industry or Academe."

"He had great leadership qualities from the very beginning," Mr. Cardinale said. "And he always maintained his integrity over the years."

Another former St. Bonaventure student, John Hanchette, a national correspondent for the Gannett News Service in Arlington, Va., said: "The idea of Tom's death this way is so foreign to me that I thought, 'It must be another Tom Mosser.'"

"Nobody could be angry at that guy."

The Ted K Archive

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