

Oklahoma Tragedy Spawns Many Heroes

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destruction he has ever seen was in Vietnam until Wednesday, April 19, 1995.

Boykin, who was riding near downtown with his daughter Brenda Palmer and grandson Richard C. Palmer IV, reached the site of the federal building just 15 minutes after the blast. Boykin, said he knew instinctively from the smell and from the looks of the crumbling building that hundreds of pounds of explosives had been used. Boykin said the building smelled of a bomb that had to be made with plastic explosives and toxic fumes. He guessed that 1200-1500 pounds of explosives had been used to cause such destruction. "But the building was well constructed. We could see the pillars firmly standing, although nothing else was, and that helped us find many in those initial

moments," Boykin said.

As Boykin's daughter drove by, they saw the huge black smoke billowing up from downtown and rushed to the scene where they immediately saw a dazed man walking not far from the federal building located at 200 NW 5th Street. Boykin told Brenda to stop so they could render assistance. The dazed man told them of the blast and by then they could see the building. Boykin told his daughter to help the man, kissed his grandson goodbye and headed off to help anyway he could.

Brenda said she started crying when her father said he was going in the crumbling building. However a friend of Boykin, also on the scene, comforted Brenda by saying her father was a brave man and would be okay.

In addition to his distinguished 23 plus years military career, Boykin served an addi-

tional 20 years in the Justice Department, primarily at the federal prison in El Reno as a Physicians' Assistant. While Brenda called the dazed man's wife to let her know he was okay, Boykin had arrived on the scene and identified himself to officials as a Physicians' Assistant and immediately went to work trying to find survivors, a job for this 65-year-old man that would last from shortly after 9 a.m. until after 5 p.m., that day.

When he walked in, Boykin said he could see that the first floor of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building had totally collapsed and he knew that bodies were trapped underneath. "People were walking around in a daze. Just a shell of the building was left," said Boykin, describing the scene he viewed as he took those first steps inside. "It was like the side was cut out (like a claw reached in and

pulled a huge chunk out) and the part of the structure left was sliding down into a heap of rubble." Boykin who entered the building on the south side described how in those initial moments he could already see parts of bodies scattered and some of the workers crushed at their desks, dead."

It was shortly after that he saw one of his friends, Susie (Boykin couldn't remember her last name), who worked in the credit union. Susie told Boykin that at least eight people were in the credit union at the time, she and another person were standing off to the side when the roof caved in killing the other six. She was one of the lucky ones, who with the assistance of Boykin, made it to a stretcher and was taken to a nearby hospital.

Boykin said he worked all day, stopping only when the rescue workers were evacuated

from fear of additional explosives detonating and drinking only a little bit of water on the breaks. "People were walking wounded," said Boykin, who personally aided at least six of the victims.

Yes, he felt angry. "But people who do stuff like this don't have any feeling," he said. Boykin said late Wednesday night that he was sure the parts of a vehicle (a wheel and part of a running board) found by a law enforcement officials would surely lead to the arrests of the criminals who caused the blast.

What impressed Boykin the most and kept him going that day were people, parents waiting and praying, looking for any sign of their children. Within 30 minutes of the blast, parents had made it to the scene and lined the street along with others silently awaiting any news. Others joined the volunteers, who

also started immediately gathering, rendering aid to people escaping from the federal building and surrounding structures nearby that were severely damaged.

Why did he do it? "It is no more than right to do it since the government gave me my training and education. I'm too old to go into combat, but I'm still willing to help," Boykin said.

Lizzie E. Boykin, James Boykin's wife of 30 years, said the entire family thinks of him as a hero. "We all think he's a hero because he just ran into the building and started rescuing those who were able to get out of the building," said Mrs. Boykin.

Boykin just brushed off all the talk of being a hero by saying he did what he had to do and there were many others pitching in every way they could to help.

Watt Discusses Congressional Issues at Town Meeting

By VERONICA CLEMONS
Chronicle Staff Writer

Congressman Mel Watt said he has not voted in the majority lately, and he wanted to tell his constituents why.

"I don't like being against the tide, but I can't support what's been transpiring in the first 100 days of Congress," he told about 30 people who attended a town meeting at Winston-Salem State University last week.

Watt said out of 33 bills that have come before him, he has voted yes for only five. The reason for him supporting so few of the proposed bills by the majority Republican House of Representatives is they hurt the poor and help the wealthy.

Many of the bills will bring certain doom to many programs and drastically cut others, but Watt said since many of the bills have only

passed in the House there is still time to talk to senators representatives and express concerns.

One bill Watt voted against is the recisions bill in which Congress makes cuts in existing governmental programs to offset the debt the government has incurred for disaster relief.

Watt said the House went far beyond the amount that needed to be cut to offset the \$5 billion spent in disaster relief. It has proposed cuts totaling \$17.4 billion, most of which does damage to many programs to help needy people.

"I would have no problem if the cuts were done systematically and on a reasonable basis," Watt said. "But of those recessions, 66 percent came out of programs that benefit the poor and middle income families."

Watt also has a problem with the welfare reform bill. One reason is because the bill will make welfare no

longer an entitlement program and proposes to give the issue to the states.

"As much as I'd like to reform welfare, this bill does nothing to create jobs," He said. "It reduces funding, puts it into block grants and says 'here states it's your problem.'"

Watt called the proposed bills that Republicans claim will bring tax benefits another version of "trickle down economics." Watt said the theory of cutting taxes for the rich in hopes that they would invest it to create new jobs didn't work. "Unemployment rose and the budget become further from being balanced, he said

Watt also said all of these proposed bills will have a great impact on his constituents of the 12 district, the second poorest in North Carolina. However, he said there is not enough noise or outrage coming from his dis-

trict and others who will be adversely affected by numerous bills that may ultimately be passed in the Senate.

Our nation is headed in the wrong direction," he said, "and these bills are pushing us farther and faster down the wrong road. We need to turn up the volume and say to the U.S. Congress that this kind of policy making is unacceptable."

Watt encouraged those present at the meeting to share the information with neighbors, churches and community groups.



Congressman Mel Watt

Watt Promises

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that light is taken away they go back to their old styles."

Several postal workers, black and white, told the Chronicle stories of mistreatment from postal management. Employees said the source of the problems at the post office is Postmaster Mark Matics. They complained that Matics' management style is abusive and intimidating. Some called for his resignation.

After several attempts by Watt representatives, post office officials in Greensboro finally met with the Congressman. Management sent a closed-ended questionnaire to employees who complained still because they said it did not allow for feedback.

Watt said complaints about the postal service in all areas of the 12th district is high. However the situation in Winston-Salem is unique and more difficult because while there are laws dealing with race discrimination there are none that deal with insensitive management.

The Congressman also said that his office will continue to try and work with the system possibly setting up some sensitivity training.

Paul Robeson Students Learn Who They Are

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"Seldom are speakers so dynamic that they keep me still, spell bound with my mouth open," she said.

Smith said listening to Johnson and watching the video of his school which showed an example of first-grade African American males computing math equations without pencil or paper convinced her even more of the necessity of such a school in the city.

"I'm more convinced now that we won't stop until we get it," she said. "I don't see how we can afford not to have it."

Johnson said students perform better when they have a positive sense of self that comes from knowing their history. Students in the Academy, he said, understand their history as it relates to the subjects they study.

"When young people believe they are the descendants of kings

and queens they won't act like slaves," he said.

Martin said he has had discussion with Coalition members about seeking grant funds that will allow school board members, administrators and some community members to visit some models of the Afrocentric school.

Smith said she believes Johnson's visit to Winston-Salem did a lot to boost the Afrocentric school concept with the school system. His presentation answered many questions and took away some worry.

"I feel his message will dispel any myth about an Afrikan centered school," she said. "I think his visit will take some of the anxiety out of it, some of the fear out of it and the intimidation out of it." The achievements of students at the Academy, Johnson said, proves children can learn regardless of whether they are poor or come from single headed households.

What helps these students he said is building their self-esteem through the power of words. Labels, Johnson said, do much to damage a student's self esteem and their feelings of self worth. He knows. Because of a speech impediment he bore the label of LD (Learning Disabled.)

It's important, he added, for administrators to play a significant role in helping their teachers understand the power of words and "program young people for excellence." An even greater asset is the concept of listening, he said. The Afrikan centered perspective, Johnson said, draws from rituals and ceremonies for listening.

Smith said she does not see it being a problem with an Afrocentric model coming to Winston-Salem. "If they are experimenting with the magnet school concept," she said, "they should be able to put in place an African centered school."

Eversley Visits Three Afrocentric Schools

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"The children are highly motivated and they feel special," he said. "They get nurturing and cultural clarity and sensitivity that they don't get in 'regular school.'"

"Children are better educated, write better, speak better, compute better and also have some sense of who they are as black people," he said of the students he observed.

Eversley said he also talked to administrators about discipline. Only once in 20 years has Watoto asked anyone to leave. Discipline problems, he said, are handled creatively.

These three schools, he added, also dispel the myth that Afrocentric is a new concept and an unknown term.

People have been at this work of Afrocentric schooling for 20 years or more," he said.

a private institution for grades pre-K through 12 is 20 years old. All students wear African attire.

African Peoples Action School is also private and students wear uniforms.

Children's Village is public and exists as a school within a school for grades 1,2 and 3.

All of the institutions, Eversley said, have various similarities such as the unity circle where there are opening and closing rituals. The three schools also adhere to the basic philosophy of the Council of Independent Black Institutions, of which they are a member.

Founded in 1972, CIBI, is an umbrella organization for independent Afrikan-centered schools and advocates for those type schools. CIBI activities include bi-annual conventions, annual teacher training institutes and a semi-annual of a newsletter and annual Science Expositions. There are about 50 members in

the organization from the U.S., West Africa and the United Kingdom.

Eversley said he hopes everything works to allow others to do what he has done.

"Clearly, I want other people to have the experience I've had," he said. His trip, he added, will help prepare others to go.

Although the Coalition has made no deadlines for the school board, members are anxious to have them to respond to the proposal. Eversley said he sees no reason why an Afrocentric model could not be included in the first quadrant that will test the magnet zone concept.

An Afrocentric school here, Eversley said, would show students far exceeding state standards as they do in the cities he visited. "We don't want to just meet the state standards, we want to exceed them," he said. "The state standards are much too low."

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