

U.S. Fire Administration/Technical Report Series

The Grems Case: How an Arson Case Was Solved and Prosecuted in Colorado

USFA-TR-047/August 1986



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U.S. Fire Administration Fire Investigations Program

The U.S. Fire Administration develops reports on selected major fires throughout the country. The fires usually involve multiple deaths or a large loss of property. But the primary criterion for deciding to do a report is whether it will result in significant “lessons learned.” In some cases these lessons bring to light new knowledge about fire--the effect of building construction or contents, human behavior in fire, etc. In other cases, the lessons are not new but are serious enough to highlight once again, with yet another fire tragedy report. In some cases, special reports are developed to discuss events, drills, or new technologies which are of interest to the fire service.

The reports are sent to fire magazines and are distributed at National and Regional fire meetings. The International Association of Fire Chiefs assists the USFA in disseminating the findings throughout the fire service. On a continuing basis the reports are available on request from the USFA; announcements of their availability are published widely in fire journals and newsletters.

This body of work provides detailed information on the nature of the fire problem for policymakers who must decide on allocations of resources between fire and other pressing problems, and within the fire service to improve codes and code enforcement, training, public fire education, building technology, and other related areas.

The Fire Administration, which has no regulatory authority, sends an experienced fire investigator into a community after a major incident only after having conferred with the local fire authorities to insure that the assistance and presence of the USFA would be supportive and would in no way interfere with any review of the incident they are themselves conducting. The intent is not to arrive during the event or even immediately after, but rather after the dust settles, so that a complete and objective review of all the important aspects of the incident can be made. Local authorities review the USFA’s report while it is in draft. The USFA investigator or team is available to local authorities should they wish to request technical assistance for their own investigation.

This report and its recommendations were developed by USFA staff and by TriData Corporation, Arlington, Virginia, its staff and consultants, who are under contract to assist the USFA in carrying out the Fire Reports Program.

The USFA wishes to acknowledge the support and cooperation of the Aurora, Colorado, Fire Department who alerted us to this interesting and informative case. In particular we wish to acknowledge the cooperation of Aurora Fire Chief John Speed and Lieutenant Marty LaRusso, Supervisor of Aurora’s Fire Investigation Bureau.

For additional copies of this report write to the U.S. Fire Administration, 16825 South Seton Avenue, Emmitsburg, Maryland 21727. The report is available on the Administration’s Web site at <http://www.usfa.dhs.gov/>

The Grems Case: How an Arson Case Was Solved and Prosecuted in Colorado

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This is Report 047 of the Major Fires Investigation Project conducted by TriData Corporation under contract EMW-90-C-3338 to the United States Fire Administration, Federal Emergency Management Agency.



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Department of Homeland Security
United States Fire Administration
National Fire Data Center

U.S. Fire Administration
Mission Statement

As an entity of the Department of Homeland Security, the mission of the USFA is to reduce life and economic losses due to fire and related emergencies, through leadership, advocacy, coordination, and support. We serve the Nation independently, in coordination with other Federal agencies, and in partnership with fire protection and emergency service communities. With a commitment to excellence, we provide public education, training, technology, and data initiatives.



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The Grems Case: How an Arson Case Was Solved and Prosecuted in Colorado

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FOREWORD

For many years, the USFA has been making available to practitioners, researchers, and students of fire protection, timely reports on our Nation's most critical fires and hazardous materials incidents. It is under the Major Fires Investigation Report Series that important lessons are documented and shared with the fire service so that we all can learn the best approaches for controlling fire loss and for enhancing firefighter health and safety.

This report was researched and prepared for inclusion in the Fire Investigations Report Series because of USFA's concern over the ominous trends in our country's arson experience. Those trends include an increase in the percentage of residential fire deaths caused by arson, the growing problem of juveniles and their proportionate overrepresentation among arsonists, the use of explosives in set fires, and the ongoing struggle to coordinate investigation duties between police and fire agencies. Any fire investigation unit which has recently completed and closed a particularly noteworthy arson case

is encouraged to notify the USFA by contacting the Major Fires Project Officer at (301) 447-1271. Here the development of the arson case is what is of interest (more than the magnitude of the fire) including investigation approaches, interagency coordination, prosecutor support, and the specifics that led to the final outcome of the case.

CASE CAPSULE

Three juveniles, friends since childhood, stole explosives from a mine; blew up part of a high school, three vehicles, and a gas station; and set four elementary school fires while eluding fire and police personnel from a region in Colorado for two years. Nicknaming themselves “Grems” after the movie Gremlins, the three often donned camouflage or military fatigues while carrying out their planned “missions.” Evidence sent to the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF) lab in San Francisco, California, and a taped interview of a juvenile who identified his acquaintances and their crimes, and the sharing of information among fire investigation agencies combined to give officials a break in the case, and ultimately led to unusually stiff sentences for the threesome.

YOUTHFUL MISCHIEF TURNS TO SERIOUS CRIMES

Joel, Chuck, and Gary¹ were above-average-in-intelligence boys who spent much of their free time together. As kids, they planned war games and acted out super hero roles. Later in their teens, they went camping, sometimes near the site of the John Jay² mine above Boulder, Colorado, that was owned and operated by Gary’s father. Using a duplicate key he had made from his father’s key, Gary would gain access to the explosives bunker and, together with his friends, would steal explosives. At first they experimented by blowing up rocks and ant hills. Soon they graduated to real property, thus crossing the line from mischief to felony.

In the summer of 1986, the three boys went joyriding and broke some windows in a Westminster, Colorado, elementary school. They left the scene, drank beer, and drove back to the school where they then threw lighted Molotov cocktails through the broken windows. Over the course of the summer, Chuck, Joel, and Gary repeated this pattern of arson bombings in two other elementary schools; they also returned to the original school and ignited it a second time. The three boys began calling their planned firesetting “missions” and donned camouflage clothing before embarking on their sprees. They agreed to wear tennis shoes instead of Army boots, however, to keep down the “clumping” noise that would be associated with heavy boots.

A year passed. During the summer of 1987, the three boys again made plans to steal and use explosives. They bombed a high school in Arapahoe County. A gas station in Boulder County was another target. Also in Boulder, two of them, Gary and Joel, blew up a Ford Mustang and a Ford pickup truck. A 1966 Mustang parked in a townhouse complex in Aurora was bombed too.

Following is a synopsis of the investigation of each incident. A map depicting the location of these incidents and of their proximity to the mine is presented in the appendix.

¹ Names have changed for the sake of this report.

² Name suppressed for this report (not “John Jay”)

SYNOPSIS OF INCIDENT INVESTIGATIONS

Incident #1 -- Boulder County Vehicle Bombings, May 17, 1987

At 0240 hours on May 17, 1987, the Boulder Regional Communications Center (dispatch) of the Boulder County Sheriff's Department received numerous telephone calls from citizens reporting an explosion in the area of the Habitat Apartment Complex at 6255 Habitat Drive, Boulder County. Boulder Sheriff's Lieutenant Philip West arrived at the Habitat Complex at 0250 hours with units from the Boulder Rural Volunteer Fire Department. Lieutenant West observed a crowd of people near the southeastern parking lot where two cars had exploded.

The exploded vehicles were subsequently identified as a brown 1979 Ford XLT truck with Colorado license plate 008ILU and a silver 1977 Ford Mustang with Colorado license plate FND911.

Witnesses interviewed by the officers and by fire department personnel at the Habitat Complex stated they heard two or three explosions. Some witnesses reported smelling something like burned gunpowder or burned firecrackers following the explosions, and of seeing flashes.

On May 19, 1987, and on June 1, 1987, Boulder Sheriff's Detective Phil Raznick and Sergeant Dale Goetz interviewed the owners of the vehicles. The owners stated that they moved to the apartment on March 16, 1987, and they had no problems with anyone before or since moving. They knew no motive for their vehicles being bombed.

Sergeant Goetz, who responded to the bombing scene, stated in his written report that from the direction and pattern of the explosion it appeared one bomb was placed under the left corner of the Mustang, and another bomb was placed on the passenger side of the pickup truck. He found six strands of orange safety fuse -- three to the Mustang, two to the pickup truck, and one adjacent to the vehicles in the grass. Sergeant Goetz and Detectives Phil Raznick and Rick Ferguson collected evidence from the cars and the bombing scene for laboratory processing.

On June 2, 1987, Sergeant Goetz shipped the following evidence from the Habitat bombing to the Federal ATF laboratory in California requesting analysis including the identity of the fuse manufacturer and the manufacturer of the blasting cap and the type of explosive: 1) length of woven fabric sheath; 2) unburned safety fuse; 3) burned safety fuse; 4) vehicle components; and 5) metal, paper, and foil fragments.

Incident #2 -- Boulder County Gas Station Bombing, June 2, 1987

At 0237 hours on June 2, 1987, the Boulder Regional Communications Center received numerous phone calls reporting explosions in the area of Arapahoe and 55th Streets, Boulder County. Investigating Sheriff's officers found that the A&A Amoco service station, closed for the night, at 1595 Arapahoe Street was damaged by multiple explosions. Boulder Sheriff's officers interviewed witnesses who stated they heard from two to ten explosions, saw flashes and smoke, and smelled smoke.

The A&A Amoco owner told the detective the only possible motive he could offer was a recently terminated employee. Another Amoco employee, who had worked at the station until 0015 hours on June 2, reported to Detective Rasnick that he knew of no motive and that there were no problems at the station that night.

Sheriff's Sergeant Dale Goetz came to the bombing scene and directed the collection of evidence at the station. He detailed in his written reports that one explosion occurred at the base of the diesel pump, one explosion at a premium gasoline pump, one explosion at the base of the pump west of the premium gasoline pump, one explosion at the base of an unleaded gasoline pump, two detonations on one propane tank, one explosion near the second propane tank, and one explosion next to the small building adjacent to the main station. Expended orange safety fuse was found all around the scene. Sergeant Goetz found one unexploded cartridge of Dupont Tovex explosive next to the small building. He reported that the blasting cap fell out of the cartridge and failed to cause the Tovex to explode.

The small building, the gasoline pumps, and the one propane tank were damaged to the extent that they required removal or replacement.

The unexploded Tovex cartridge displayed a date ship code of 85AP20X which was relayed to the ATF agent Roland Gilbert on June 2, 1987, to initiate a records search to determine who purchased Tovex with that code number. Agent Gilbert reported to Sergeant Goetz that 99 cases of DuPont Tovex with that date ship code were sold by DuPont Chemical Company to the Buckley Powder Company of Grants, New Mexico. The Buckley Powder Company sold thirty of the 99 cases to Fatima Minerals, Inc. (owner of the John Jay Mine) of Jamestown, Colorado, on June 26, 1985.

Three days later Sergeant Goetz shipped the following evidence from the Amoco station bombing to the ATF laboratory in California, requesting analysis including the identity of the fuse manufacturer, the manufacturer of the blasting cap, and a comparison of these materials with the evidence from the Habitat Apartment Complex bombing: 1) burned safety fuse; 2) debris from gas pumps; 3) piece of a blasting cap; and 4) debris from the propane tanks.

On June 9, 1987, authorities from Boulder County met with the manager of the John Jay Mine, Tim Hurtle.³ Mr. Hurtle showed them the powder magazine in which the Tovex was stored. They observed Tovex with the date ship code of 85AP20X in 19 sealed cases, one unsealed case containing 50 tubes, and 23 tubes in a bucket. Fuse type blasting caps were at the mine, and Mr. Hurtle said those were no longer used. He showed them the log in which explosives' use was documented. Detective Matthews found the log to be very inaccurate and to be a record from which it was impossible to compute inventory. He said that as many as 49 sticks of Tovex were unaccounted for.

Mr. Hurtle told authorities that since August 1985, no Tovex had been used in the mine. He said locks to the powder magazine were changed two years prior and that only he and his partner had keys. He stated that no keys were kept at the mine.

On September 17, 1987, approximately three months after evidence from the vehicle bombings and the gas station bombings was sent to ATF, reports of the chemical tests showed the presence of "major constituents of DuPont Tovex water-gel explosives." The lab further identified the fuse as "similar in construction to Apache (Coast Fuse) Orange Sequoia fuse." Two weeks later in a written report, ATF concluded that "the materials involved in this investigation are properly identified as explosive bombs."

³ Name has been changed for the sake of this report.

Incident #3 -- Aurora Car Bombing, August 8, 1987

On August 8, 1987, at approximately 0114 hours, the Aurora Fire Department responded to 3765 South Danube Circle in the City of Aurora (County of Arapahoe), Colorado, regarding an explosion of a 1966 Ford Mustang. Investigator William Jones of the Aurora Fire Department's Fire Investigation Bureau responded to the scene, along with police officers and fire crews from the City of Aurora. Investigator Jones arrived at the scene and observed the following:

- An intentional explosive was placed in the rear of a 1966 Ford Mustang convertible. The vehicle was parked directly in front of 3765 South Danube Circle and was white in color with a black convertible top.
- The vehicle sustained total damage to the rear half with fragments of the car found in excess of 240 feet away.
- The explosive forces from the device that was placed in the Mustang also damaged two neighboring vehicles. The damage to the two neighboring vehicles, a 1965 Volkswagen and a 1985 Honda Civic, consisted of scrap metal scraping the vehicles and broken glass.
- The explosion site was located in a townhouse type complex. Occupants were in the 3765 South Danube Circle address, located approximately 25 feet away from the front of the Mustang.
- Investigator William Jones contacted the Fire/Explosion Bureau supervisor, Lieutenant Douglas McBee, who responded to the scene and assisted Investigator Jones in assessing the explosion damage to the Mustang.
- Lieutenant McBee and Investigator Jones utilized their past experience and training in the area of explosive scenes, and readily identified that a high order explosive (i.e., dynamite, Tovex, military explosives, etc.) was used on the Mustang. This was determined by examining the metal which had been ripped and torn away from the Mustang and scattered over the 240-foot radius from the car. This type of explosion rips and tears metal, blowing it over a wide area, in contrast to a low order explosive which generally "pushes" the metal but rarely rips or shrapnels it in the area of the explosion.
- Lieutenant McBee and Investigator Jones requested assistance from the Denver Police Bomb Squad in the investigation of the explosion scene. Detective David Haley of the Denver Police Bomb Squad arrived and confirmed that a high order explosive indeed was used on the Mustang and agreed with Lieutenant McBee's findings.

One of the officers at the scene canvassed the area and spoke to witnesses. One witness had observed two males running away from the explosion site; another had come close to being hit on his bicycle as a vehicle leaving the area of the explosion raced away. That same car was observed by a battalion chief while responding to the scene.

The Mustang was placed into police impound and towed to the Aurora Police Evidence Bay. On August 9, Lieutenant McBee, Investigator Martin LaRusso (Aurora Fire Investigations Bureau) along with Investigator Dempsey (Arapahoe County Bomb Squad) began an indepth investigative analysis of the vehicle. Swabs were taken from the torn metal areas for analysis by the ATF lab in California. A section of time fuse was analyzed and found to be orange in color. It also was sent to the lab.

Lab results later showed the following:

“That a high order explosive was used to blow up the Ford Mustang and that the explosive was identified as Tovex. This particular type of explosive is sealed within a plastic type sack and is in a gelled compound. The explosive has the appearance of a sausage and is generally white in color and has to have a blasting cap to detonate it. A fuse was used with the explosive thereby revealing that possibly a non-electric type blasting cap was used to initiate the detonation.”

Incident #4 -- Arapahoe County High School Bombing, August 30, 1987

Arapahoe County dispatch notified Deputy County Sheriff Dempsey to respond to a suspicious explosion at Eagle Crest High School. It was 0230 hours on August 30, 1987. When he arrived at the school, Investigator Dempsey spoke with an investigator from Cunningham Fire Protection District and an investigator and senior service person from Public Service Company. The three individuals expressed concern to Dempsey over damage to a 3-inch gas pipe that came from an emergency generator inside the high school. They agreed that damage was not consistent with a natural gas explosion.

Dempsey observed that an 18- by 20-inch hole was blown into the wall. He found a section of orange time fuse eight feet from the hole. The section of pipe remaining in the wall had jagged, sharp edges, consistent with a high explosive charge being placed close to the top of the pipe.

At that point, Dempsey called additional personnel to the scene from the Denver Police Bomb Squad, the Aurora Fire Department, and the Arapahoe County Sheriff's Department. The call to Aurora was made specifically so that their investigator could compare this explosion to the bombing of the 1966 Mustang three weeks earlier.

The investigators and detective divided investigation tasks among themselves: evidence collection, scene sketching, debris analysis, and photographing the scene. They agreed that a high order charge had been placed on top of the gas line closest to the building. The lit fuse detonated the main charge and the resulting explosion damaged the gas pipe, ultimately causing \$10,000-\$15,000 in damage. They noted that the blast residue had a sweet odor.

Investigator Dempsey placed samples from the scene into evidence and submitted the samples to the California ATF lab. Five months later, an ATF report dated January 29, 1988, identified the fuse as “similar in construction to Apache (Coast Fuse) Orange Sequoia safety fuse....” The report went on to list the chemical components of the sample, concluding that “these are the major components of DuPont Tovex water gel explosives.” A metal fragment was found to be of aluminum, consistent with a blasting cap shell.

The day after the high school bombing Investigator Dempsey received a call from the Boulder Sheriff's Department informing him that Boulder County had experienced four high order explosions recently. The Sheriff's Department noted the car bombings and the gas station explosion where they found orange time fuse and unexploded Tovex 220. Two other minor explosions also had indications of a high order explosion. They discussed the following similarities among the Arapahoe County, Aurora, and Boulder County explosions.

COMMON FACTORS

- Orange time fuse was found at all four sites.
- All of the explosions occurred after midnight in the early morning hours.
- The explosions involved non-electric type blasting caps, initiated by orange time fuse.
- Placement of the explosives indicated a similar modus operandi -- an attempt to get a flammable vapor boost from the explosion to help create a large fireball.
- Masking tape or duct tape was found at all four scenes.
- The explosive used was Tovex.

INFORMANTS PROVIDE CRITICAL BREAK

For approximately one year there were few new developments in the cases. One unrelated incident, however, ultimately led to key testimony in the "Grem's" case. A number of juveniles who attended Smokey Hill High School took up the hobby of manufacturing pipe bombs. One of the youths, Sheldon,⁴ was caught with homemade devices in the trunk of his car. Since it was a first offense and the youth appeared truly contrite, Aurora Fire Investigator Marty LaRusso requested leniency for Sheldon in the juvenile courts. In return, Sheldon agreed to be the departments' eyes and ears on the street and to report any information about actual bombings or arson fires.

Sheldon was as good as his word. Early in the evening of January 4, 1989, he contacted Investigator LaRusso explaining that he knew who was responsible for bombing the high school in Arapahoe County and the gas station in Boulder.

Aurora investigators contacted Boulder and Arapahoe County investigators to assist in the interview of Sheldon. This was done specifically to have the agencies verify facts only known to them about their cases.

Three hours later Sheldon and a friend of his were relating valuable information to Aurora fire investigators and to an investigator from the Arapahoe County Bomb Squad. Sheldon's friend told of seeing explosives in Chuck's possession in the summer of 1987; and related that Chuck had bragged about "blowing up" the high school, going on missions in Boulder with Gary and Joel, burning four schools in Westminster, and stealing explosives from a mine near Boulder. Both Sheldon and his friend were able to provide details about the crime scenes that were not public knowledge.

Lieutenant LaRusso contacted the ATF on January 5 and related what had transpired the prior evening. Aurora's investigator requested that ATF conduct a name search of the employees of the Fatima mine -- the mine to which unexploded Tovex from the gas station bombing had been traced. The name search revealed the identity of the owner whom the Aurora investigator and a ATF Special Agent interviewed the following day. When asked if he knew the three suspects, the owner admitted that one of them was his son Gary, who was in the U.S. Navy stationed in port at Norfolk, Virginia, and that the other two were longtime friends of his son. Later that same day investigators interviewed yet another informant who corroborated the earlier reports and elaborated on the description of the explosives. He also provided details on the cases based on what one of the suspects had told to him.

⁴ Name has been changed for the sake of this report.

THE ARRESTS

A few hours after midnight, on January 7, authorities from the cities of Denver and Aurora and from Arapahoe County took Chuck into custody from his residence in Denver. He was later released on bail. Later that morning Joel was awakened at his home in Westminster and questioned by officials from Aurora and Boulder County. He admitted to helping steal Tovex and to participating in missions. Joel told investigators that he got nosebleeds whenever he entered the mine or touched the explosives. He also acknowledged that he helped bomb the high school, the gas station, and vehicles; and that he was involved in setting fires in four elementary schools.

Over the next few days, Joel cooperated with authorities, making further statements and filling in many details about the bombing and arson incidents. With his attorney's assistance, Joel then turned himself in to the Arapahoe County Jail and Justice Center, and he was placed in jail.

The U.S. Navy was informed that an affidavit of arrest awaited Gary in Colorado. He was held for extradition in Norfolk until arrangements could be made to turn him over to authorities in Colorado. He too was placed in jail.

THE ROLE OF INFORMATION SHARING

The initial sharing of information occurred as part of a conversation between two investigators from different jurisdictions who compared notes on recent cases and found the similarities with the Grem's incidents. In a short time, investigators were personally helping each other on several of the scenes suspected to be linked to the same perpetrators.

It is often pointed out that arsonists do not necessarily limit themselves to the particular boundaries of a single jurisdiction. The Grem's case is a perfect example of how criminals repeat the same crime in neighboring communities. The initiative taken by a few investigators to communicate with their colleagues and with ATF about the explosion and the lab results was critical to putting together the related pieces of solving the cases. It is for this very reason that county-wide or regional arson task forces are so often a sensible approach.

While a formal task force was not operating at the time of this case, the investigators from at least four different agencies established a network of communication and in some cases assisted each other with the preliminary scene investigation. At least one investigator from the agencies of Aurora, Arapahoe, Westminster, or Boulder was involved with interviewing the informant and suspects. This assisted the investigation process by having the scene investigators ask questions specifically known to them and strengthened cooperation among agencies. Reports were required to be turned into the Aurora Fire Investigations office and were redistributed as an overall case summary.

In a similar fashion, the prosecutors from the three counties involved (Adams, Arapahoe, and Boulder) had to cooperate in order for the cases to be tied together and prosecuted in one county. This was done under a plea bargain arrangement, whereby secondary charges were dropped (burglary, trespass) with the stipulation that the trio plead guilty on the remaining charges in Arapahoe County courts.

(During the investigation, the three juveniles also admitted to setting fire to several residences that summer. Interestingly, when their confessions were checked out, it was discovered that all of these residential fires were indeed on the records, but that each one had been "determined" to be accidental.)

STIFF PENALTIES

The Grems case had an unusual conclusion. It was unusual because the court system and the judge took the bombings and arson fires quite seriously. Even though the band of three had not caused any casualties, their actions did jeopardize the safety of people living within the immediate vicinity of the vehicle bombings and the damaged buildings and cars. Nevertheless, given the lack of casualties, few would have expected the young men to receive much more than a slap on the wrist.

The State of Colorado recognizes mandatory sentencing. Anyone convicted of three or more Class 4 or higher felonies is considered to be a “habitual” offender and the rules of mandatory sentencing are applied. The three young men admitted to committing at least three crimes rated Class 4 or higher. In return for agreeing to a mandatory, fixed jail time, a plea bargain was constructed that contained these provisions:

- Immunity from prosecution if found to be involved in any other fires over the same time period.
- Requirement that they identify the location of any other explosives that they had stolen. They would then be provided with immunity from prosecution if connected to any other explosion in the same time period.
- Requirement that they cooperate with authorities after sentencing to show how they carried out their crimes, for the sake of training purposes.

Chuck, the youngest, was tried as a juvenile and received the maximum term for juveniles: incarcerated for 18 months plus five years probation. He has since served that time and is now serving his probationary period. Joel received a jail sentence of eight years; he will serve half that time if he demonstrates good behavior. Since his incarceration he has been a model prisoner and has earned the right to weekend leaves. Gary became verbally abusive with the judge and with one of the Aurora investigators; he was sentenced to 18 years in jail, nine of which will be served. Currently he is serving his time at a medium security penitentiary. All three are responsible for restitution.

LESSONS LEARNED

The Grems case provides several lessons on fire investigation and arson.

1. **Be aware of people observing the scene, near the scene, or fleeing from it. If possible, take pictures or videotape the spectators.**

Firesetters often want to watch the results of their efforts and to observe public safety officers working at the scene. The “Grems” watched each bombing and each arson fire from spots near the crime scene. In the case of the gas station bombing, they drove to a small hill overlooking the gas station to get a good view of the explosion and of arriving police and fire equipment. While they were there, a police officer stopped her vehicle near to them, got out of the car, opened the trunk to remove binoculars, and watched the scene using the binoculars. She noticed the three juveniles dressed in camouflage and their car, advised them not to loiter, and continued to observe the scene looking for clues!

A battalion chief en route to the Aurora car bombing observed the defendant’s car speeding away near the site. His observation later contributed to the case against Gary, Joel, and Chuck.

2. Inter-jurisdictional information sharing is extremely valuable in identifying any common modus operandis and targets.

Because there was inter-jurisdictional information sharing, not only were investigators able to help each other but also when the case went to prosecution, prosecutors had the overall picture of the seriousness of the crime spree. The cases against the Grems would have been weaker had the incidents been divided and tried separately. Separate cases (without benefit of outside agency reports) would have probably diminished the sentences.

3. Informants often are a critical factor in identifying suspects.

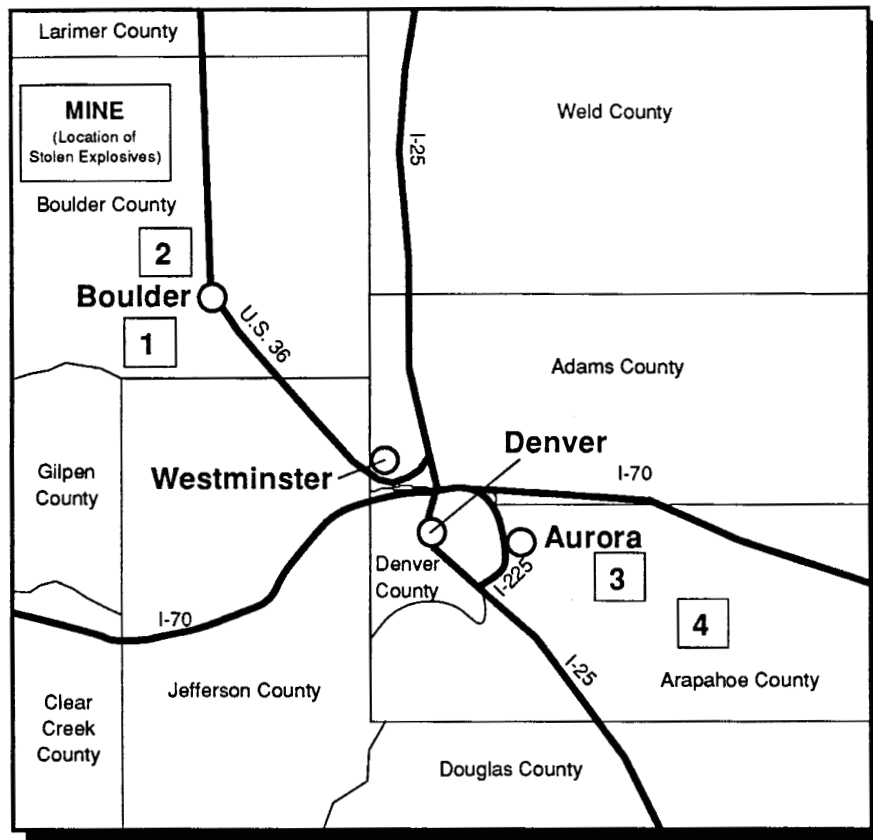
In this case Sheldon's information was the break in the case that authorities needed to connect the crimes to the perpetrators. It was not until authorities questioned Gary's father (the owner of the mine) a second time and could name actual suspects that they were able to deduce that the owner of the mine was also Gary's father. It was the informant who provided these names and the information that the boys were stealing their explosives from the Boulder-area mine.

4. Planning and cooperation between agencies were the keys in a timely cohesive investigation.

The investigators who were regularly briefed during the investigation kept all agencies updated with the information that was received. Reports written from the interviews were centrally received and redistributed in case summary "packets" so that all prosecutors had the full picture.

APPENDIX

Location of GREMS' Incidents



LEGEND

- 1 Boulder County Vehicle Bombings
- 2 Boulder County Gas Station Bombing
- 3 Aurora Car Bombing
- 4 Arapahoe County High School Bombing