

Karleton Armstrong recalls

MAY 18 1986

bombing

Associated Press

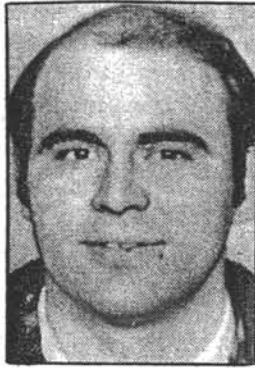
Karleton Armstrong, convicted of masterminding a 1970 anti-war bombing that killed a UW-Madison researcher, felt he had reached a point of no return by the time he noticed lights on and vehicles parked outside his target: the Army Math Research Center at the UW-Madison, a published report says.

"At that point there was no turning back," Armstrong said. "It was that night or never. I had this stolen truck loaded with explosives. I couldn't have backed out of there if I wanted to."

Armstrong and his brother, Dwight, were quoted in a copyright story by Madison free-lance writer Michael Fellner that was published in Sunday's edition of the Milwaukee Journal.

The story said interviews given by the brothers marked their first public account of events leading up to the bombing, which occurred Aug. 24, 1970, at the height of campus activities against U.S. involvement in the Vietnam War.

Robert Fassnacht, 33, a physics researcher working in Sterling Hall where the Army Math Research Center was located, died in the blast, and



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two other people were injured.

The story describes Karleton Armstrong as startling his younger brother when he told him how he fire-bombed a campus ROTC building Dec. 28, 1969, and planned to take an airplane on a bombing run over the Badger Army Ammunition Plant at nearby Baraboo.

"B-52s were bombing the Vietnamese," Karleton Armstrong said. "People were talking about bringing the war home, so I thought the symbolism of bombing an ammunition plant in the heartland of the U.S. would be

impossible for the policymakers in Washington to ignore."

According to the story, he convinced his brother, who was a student pilot, to take a Cessna from the private airport where he worked and fly the plane over the Baraboo plant on New Year's Eve of 1969.

Karleton said he tossed three mayonnaise jars filled with a homemade fertilizer-and-fuel-oil mixture onto the plant. None exploded, but an underground newspaper reported the attempt and referred to the bombers as the "New Year's Eve Gang."

Other bombings in ensuing months were targeted at an Army ROTC installation, a Selective Service headquarters and a Wisconsin Power and Light substation in Prairie du Sac, the story said.

As the May 1970 shooting deaths of anti-war protesters at Kent State University in Ohio fueled more campus unrest, Karleton Armstrong concluded that "Army Math has to go," the story said.

"Army Math was always the ultimate target in Madison," he said. "To bring the war home, we had to make a dent in the war machine."

The story said materials for Arm-

strong's fertilizer-and-fuel-oil bomb, contained in 55-gallon drums, cost less than \$200 to make and was brought to the bombing site in a stolen van.

After lighting the fuse and locking the van, Karleton Armstrong peered into the building, prepared to break the window if he saw anyone inside, but, seeing no one, ran and signaled his brother to make a warning telephone call to police that the bomb would go off in five minutes, the story said.

They had driven only a block away in a car when the blast went off and the shock wave hit both their vehicle and a police car at the same intersection, the story said.

Then "you could hear the chain reaction of glass just dropping down on the sidewalk all the way down University Avenue, two blocks away," Karleton Armstrong said.

Karleton Armstrong, 22 years old at the time of the bombing, was arrested in Canada in February 1972 and, after unsuccessfully fighting extradition, pleaded guilty to charges of second-degree murder and arson. His sentence of 23 years was later reduced to 14, and he was released on parole in February 1980.

Dwight Armstrong, who was 18 at the time of the blast, was arrested in Toronto in April 1977. Plea bargaining resulted in a seven-year prison term, and he was paroled in 1980.

David Fine, a 17-year-old student when the bombing occurred, was captured in San Rafael, Calif., in January 1976, and served three years of a seven-year prison term.

A fourth person sought in the bombing, UW student Leo Burt, has never been found.

The Armstrongs, according to the story, said they have never seen or talked with Fine or Burt since Aug. 25, 1970.