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Former Lecturer Defends Oklahoma Bombing Suspect

Michael E. Tigar, a former visiting lecturer at UB Law School, is the defense attorney for Terry L. Nichols, one of two men charged in the Oklahoma City bombing case. Nichols is charged with helping the chief suspect, Pendleton, N.Y., native Timothy McVeigh, obtain explosives that were used in the bombing that destroyed a federal office building and killed at least 167 people.

Tigar, 54, taught criminal procedure at UB Law in 1976-77. He is a current professor at the University of Texas Law School and a former chairman of the American Bar Association's litigation section. Tigar won five of the six cases he has argued in front of the U.S. Supreme Court. The author of several books and numerous articles for legal magazines, he has written three plays about the law.

Several Buffalo attorneys who took courses from Tigar recalls him as a colorful and effective instructor.

"He was a lively, interesting teacher," said U.S. Attorney Patrick H. NeMoyer. NeMoyer heads the Western

New York investigation into the Oklahoma bombing but says he does not begrudge Tigar for representing Nichols.

"He is a believer that whether you're a right-wing Nazi or a left-wing radical, you deserve the right to legal representation," Nemoyer said. "And I think he's following that practice now in his defense of Mr. Nichols."

Nichols is among a long list of controversial clients for Tigar, including John Demjanjuk, accused of being the death camp guard "Ivan the Terrible;" Angela Davis, 1960s activist; and the "Weathermen" terrorist group.

Paul M. Moskal, spokesman and legal counsel for the Buffalo office of the FBI, said, "He was this flamboyant guy from Texas. I remember staring at his cowboy boots. But he also made a big impression on me because of his outgoing nature and his great mind."

Regarding Tigar's latest client, "The right to a defense is what makes our system unique and makes our system work. We should be proud of it," Moskal said. "I visited Haiti a few months ago, and I visited a prison

where people have no constitutional rights, no right to a defense. They have an inquisition system there. I prefer ours."

Tigar has already generated some controversy in Nichols' case. During a hearing before a federal magistrate in Oklahoma, Tigar quoted the Bible in saying his client is a victim of guilt by association because he has some anti-government views. He suggested that because Nichols voluntarily surrendered to federal agents, he must be innocent.

According to Dominic Gentile, a Las Vegas attorney and close friend of Tigar's, "Mike is a giant among defense lawyers in this country. I have never seen him represent a defendant he didn't believe in..."

"Mike is a firm believer that the only thing that separates our society from anarchy and the lynch-mob mentality is due process, the protection of the legal system. He's the best lawyer I've ever seen." ■

—Excerpted from an article in *The Buffalo News*.