Cult survivors return to ruins

Davidians recall really wo violent ending to eir class a complex standoff

WACO — David Thibodeau rememers listening to the radio while others read the Bible as tanks smashed the walls f their home and fired tear gas inside.

But within hours, he was crawling through smoke and flames as the walls crumbled around him. Thibodeau and eight other Branch Davidians survived, but religious leader David Koresh and 78 followers died a year ago Tuesday in a fiery mass death.

"It was terrifying, I thought I was going to die any minute," Thibodeau said Sunday as he stood near the ruins fter each of Mt. Carmel, the Davidians' rural complex near Waco. Thibodeau and two other survivors returned to the site Sunday; three of the survivors remain in jail and the two others did return Sunday.

A vicious gunfight with federal agents and an ensuing siege grabbed the world's attention last year, but the most horrifying image is the deadly fire on April 19, 1993.

After waiting in vain for a surrender, FBI agents tried to force an end to the

51-day standoff by assaulting the com-

pound with tear gas.

Inside, Thibodeau said everyone just donned their gas masks and waited for the attack to stop.

"Everyone was so composed. They were reading the Bible," Thibodeau said. Outside, there was an air of anticipation among those who had felt suspended in time for weeks

If the FBI's plan worked, the Davidians would be driven from their fortress and the world would at last meet Koresh, the elusive rock-n-roll religious zealot who preached of the coming Apocalypse.

Instead, it was more like Armageddon as an inferno erupted and consumed the sprawling compound in a matter of minutes.

Shortly before the fire, Thibodeau said, he had lost hope for a peaceful end when he heard FBI officials say the Da-

vidians were shooting at the tanks.

Thibodeau said he didn't hear any gunfire, and he believes the FBI lied to justify its actions. It is just one instance

where the Davidians' version totally contradicts the government's account.

'I could see the writing on the wall. I knew they were setting America up for a disaster," he said.

As smoke filled the compound, Thibodeau said, he ripped off his gas mask and ran to a stairway. But the tanks had smashed some of the surrounding

walls, blocking the passageway.
In his frantic search for another exit, he opened a door and "a wall of flames came down the hallway.

He got out through a hole in a burning wall. Clive Doyle followed him, smothering a fire on his own arm as he

People just couldn't get out. ... I didn't even think Clive would make it out behind me," Thibodeau said.

Several of the other survivors jumped from the roof while others made their own way out.

Doyle returned to the site Sunday for the first time since the fire. He said he was appalled by the damage to the compound, which now is just piles of dirt and debris.

"There's still a lot of emotion. keep it bottled up inside," Doyle said.

Federal Reserve increases rates for third time this year

The Associated Press

WASHINGTON - The Federal Reserve nudged interest rates up for the third time this year on Monday and for the third time financial markets showed their displeasure.

Long-term interest rates surged to their highest levels of the Clinton presidency while stock prices fell. The Dow Jones industrial average lost 41.05 points, to 3620.42

All the commotion was caused by another small, quarter-point increase in the federal funds rate. The Fed signaled it had pushed this key short-term rate to 3.75 percent. Analysts predicted this would send a variety of consumer and business rates up as well.

Many economists had expected the Fed would wait until May 17, the next scheduled meeting of the Federal Open Market Committee, the group that sets interest

rate policies Fed officials said that Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan decided to act

after consulting other members of the committee by telephone Monday morning. As with the moves on Feb. 4 and March

22, the decision was announced immediately in a statement from Greenspan, who said the change should result in a "small increase in short-term money rates." The central bank has been under pressure from Congress to be more open in its conduct of

monetary policy.

While the Clinton administration has refused to criticize the central bank, many Democrats in Congress have complained that Greenspan is overly concerned about inflation at a time when there are no signs that price pressures are getting out of control.

Laura Tyson, chairman of the president's Council of Economic Advisers, insisted that while economic growth has been stronger than expected so far this year, inflation has remained docile

"We believe that the prospects for sustained economic growth with low inflation remain better than they have been for a ery long time," she said.

She conceded that the Fed's rate increases are running ahead of the forecast the administration used in making its budget estimates.

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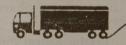
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