

Bombing in New Jersey: The Victim

Executive Had Vaulted To No. 2 Post at Agency

Stuart Elliott

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On Dec. 1, Thomas J. Mosser was promoted to a position that was likely to be the pinnacle of his 25-year career in public relations and advertising. Nine days later, he was dead, the victim of a powerful mail bomb that exploded in his home in North Caldwell, N.J.

Since early this year, Mr. Mosser, 50, had served as executive vice president at Young & Rubicam, the giant worldwide advertising and communications company based in New York, as well as a member of its powerful operations committee. His duties included corporate projects and initiatives for clients including the Philip Morris Companies, the nation's second-largest advertiser. With his recent promotion he also became the general manager of Y.& R.

Before that, Mr. Mosser spent almost a quarter century at Burson-Marsteller, Y.& R.'s wholly owned public relations subsidiary.

Colleagues and competitors remembered Mr. Mosser yesterday as someone who was far different from the stereotype of the glad-handing, smooth-talking public relations practitioner. Rather, they described him as a low-key, thoughtful, deliberate man, more of a counselor than a hail-fellow-well-met.

A former co-worker of Mr. Mosser's at Burson-Marsteller, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of concerns about the bombing, described Mr. Mosser as the type of person who, "when he spoke, everyone listened; he was more pensive, erudite."

Robert L. Dilenschneider, chief executive at the Dilenschneider Group, a New York public relations agency, said: "I've known him on and off for 20 years. He was a very fair, honest, ethical competitor, a real all-American."

Mr. Mosser "wasn't the kind of person who lit up the room," Mr. Dilenschneider said, "but he was the kind of person you could always count on, a very solid guy."

Neighbors on the hilly cul-de-sac where Mr. Mosser lived with his wife, Susan, and daughters Kim, 13, and Kelly, 15 months, said they did not know him very well, because of the long hours he spent at his job.

Neighbors said he also had a daughter and son, both college age, from a previous marriage. The son lives in Maryland, and the daughter lives in New Jersey, they said.

Mr. Mosser built the house, at 15 Aspen Drive, about four years ago, said Donald McKay, who lives nearby. Mr. Mosser and his family lived there about a year, Mr. McKay said, then moved to London, and had only been living in the house again for about a year.

Yesterday, windows on one side of the first floor of the house were covered with cardboard, and glass was strewn across the yard.

Some neighbors said yesterday that it was only luck that others were not injured by the bomb. Mr. McKay said that he held a party for the neighborhood on Friday night and that several children wandered from the party to the Mossers' house.

"They had half a dozen kids there with the bomb sitting on the table," Mr. McKay said. "His wife signed for the package on Friday and left it on the table."

Robin Sommese, 13, stayed over for the night and was in the house with the Mossers and their daughters when the explosion occurred. She said she took the Mossers' daughter Kelly next door after the blast.

A former newsman in the Philadelphia bureau of The Associated Press, Mr. Mosser had also served in the Navy during the Vietnam War. He graduated with a journalism degree from St. Bonaventure University in Olean, N.Y.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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