

Forensic Expert Who Worked the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Bombing Publishes Tribute Ahead of 30th Anniversary

New commentary honors Alice Hawthorne, Robert Sanderson, and Emily Lyons

BRIGHTON, MI, UNITED STATES, July 21, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- John Morrey Collins, a forensic scientist who worked on the investigation into the 1996 Centennial Olympic Park bombing and the related Atlanta Serial Bombings, has published a commentary marking the 30th anniversary of the attacks. The [essay](#) is titled "Thirty Years Later: Remembering What the Atlanta Bombings Took, and What They Taught."

The Centennial Olympic Park bombing occurred after midnight on July 27, 1996, during the Atlanta Summer Olympics, killing Alice Hawthorne and injuring more than 100 others. It was the first of four attacks carried out by Eric Rudolph over the following eighteen months, including the January 1998 bombing of a Birmingham, Alabama women's clinic that killed off-duty police officer Robert Sanderson and severely injured nurse Emily Lyons.

Collins was assigned to one of the ATF's technical units at its Atlanta forensic laboratory and spent the following eighteen months examining thousands of nails recovered from the bomb scenes as part of the investigation that ultimately linked Rudolph to the attacks. His commentary reflects on the victims, the toll the investigation took on the agents and scientists who worked it, and a lesson in scientific integrity that has shaped his career ever since.

"I did not know Alice Hawthorne. I did not know Robert Sanderson. I did not know Emily Lyons," Collins writes. "But the names of these victims were written on evidence labels that passed across my workbench, and in the strange intimacy of forensic work, that is its own kind of



The Quilt of Remembrance at Centennial Olympic Park, Atlanta — a memorial to Alice Hawthorne and the more than 100 others injured in the July 27, 1996 bombing.

knowing."

For reporters covering the anniversary, Collins can speak to the forensic science behind the investigation, the pressures law enforcement faces during an internationally watched manhunt, and the lasting lessons the case offers about scientific integrity and investigative urgency in high-profile cases. Interview requests can be directed to the contact information provided.

ABOUT JOHN MORREY COLLINS

John Morrey Collins is an author, speaker, instructor, and professional coach specializing in authoritative occupations, with a focus on forensic science, policing, and law. He spent 20 years in forensic science, including service as Director of Forensic Science for the State of Michigan, before launching his coaching practice in 2013. Collins is the author of several books, including *The New Superior: A Better Way to Be the One in Charge*, and hosts the podcast *Crime and the Courtroom*. He has trained forensic professionals and expert witnesses across 46 states and several countries.

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