

A caring way to mark private pain

Anita Creamer

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The slightest tinge of North Carolina has crept into Barbara Murray's voice as a result of living for the past 18 years in a small town where the Blue Ridge Mountains meet the Great Smoky range. And so I can hear a lilt softening her words over the long-distance line as she tells me:

"There's no way to prepare for the shock you feel when you see your brother's picture on the TV or in the newspaper. It's hard enough to lose a relative, but to lose someone on such a worldly scale is overwhelming.

"It's been my prayer all along that my brother would be the last."

No one should ever have to endure what the Murray family has endured.

Last April 24, Gilbert Murray was killed when he opened a mail bomb sent to the California Forestry Association's Sacramento offices on I Street — the third fatality in the Unabomber's almost 18-year series of attacks.

With the arrest a week ago in Montana of Unabom suspect Theodore Kaczynski, Barbara Murray's prayer may be answered.

"At first," she says, "I was numb, not knowing how to feel. Then I was in pain for my family. Because I'm on the other side of the continent, their pain is so much greater than mine.

"My feelings also went out to this man's family. It seems he's caused many people great pain. Shame on him."

Later in our conversation, she says: "This was anticipated to be a difficult month for all of us. So the capture of this man has been bittersweet."

I understand. It's not a time for rejoicing.

Gilbert Murray's widow, Connie, an elementary school teacher, lives in Roseville with their two teenage sons. Theirs has been a private grief, in large part sheltered from the public eye, moving in its restraint. It's not my intention to add to their burden.

"What a great opportunity for you to say my brother had a very private family, and they prefer their privacy be respected for their grieving," says Barbara Murray, 43. "It would be a blessing to utilize the press to help them maintain their privacy."

We've learned more in the past week about the man suspected of being the Unabomber than we've learned in the past year about the Murrays.

But we know this: In the passing of a second, the Unabomber stole from them their hearts. He stole their security of leading quiet lives marked by only the expected amount of drama and grief. He stole the future they had every right to anticipate together.

In North Carolina, Barbara Murray tries to make her own peace with the events of the past year. A few months ago, you may recall reading about her: A registered nurse and cookbook author, she had fasted for 10 days during the Christmas season.

"I was so eaten up with rage that I needed to calm myself down," she says. "My prayer was for peace for my family and for containment for the Unabomber."

Also in December, she re-released her 1989 crock-pot cookbook, which her brother had lent her money to produce. To honor his memory, she expanded her "Crock-It"

cookbook dedication to him. To honor his family, she included information on the trust fund set up in his name.

This is the casual cruelty of the world we inhabit: In Montana, a volunteer fire department has printed Unabomber T-shirts and is selling them for \$20 apiece.

I have no problem letting you know that a contribution to the Gilbert Murray Memorial Trust Fund (P.O. Box 624, Sacramento, 95812), or even the purchase of Barbara Murray's cookbook (800-859-3324), is a much more respectful gesture, a caring way to remember a caring man.

"I'd like to say my brother was a man of great integrity and high moral character," Barbara Murray tells me. "There should be more people like him in the world."

ANITA CREAMER's column appears Monday, Thursday and Friday in Scene. Write her at P.O. Box 15779, Sacramento CA 95852, or call (916) 321-1136.

The Ted K Archive

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