

Behind Bars With The Unabomber

Prisoner Ted Kaczynski copes with milk, mail, water woes

Oct. 27, 2003

OCTOBER 27—Five years into a life sentence, Ted Kaczynski is proving to be a model prisoner at the country's "supermax" federal penitentiary. He keeps a tidy cell, has a clean conduct record, and maintains a "positive rapport" with staff.

But the Unabomber's stay behind bars is not without its frustrations, including noisy neighbors, commissary miscues, and mail problems galore for a man who once relied on the U.S. Postal Service to deliver his deadly packages.

Bureau of Prisons documents obtained by The Smoking Gun offer the first glimpse at Kaczynski's life in the federal lockup in Florence, Colorado, where his fellow inmates include shoe bomber Richard Reid, Latin Kings boss Luis Felipe, and terrorists like Ramzi Yousef and Sheik Omar Abdel-Rahman. Kaczynski's routine is filled with the kind of banalities that leave a guy obsessing about the small things, from a balky faucet to getting shorted eight ounces of milk.

Kaczynski is also vexed by Florence's mail system, which never seems to pick up his outgoing parcels in a timely fashion, loses mail addressed to him, and delivers items meant for other prisoners. At the conclusion of one four-page memo to Florence's warden, Kaczynski helpfully included a neatly rendered drawing showing how inmates are supposed to leave items for mailroom staff (see image above).

Kaczynski has memorialized his beefs in Bureau of Prison inmate request forms (known colloquially as "cop-outs"), carbon copies of which he kept. The documents and other material relating to Kaczynski's prison years have been donated by the convicted killer to the University of Michigan's Special Collections Library. At the request of TSG, library officials provided copies of Kaczynski's cop-outs and many other Bureau of Prison records, including annual progress reports, letters from female lonelyhearts, and recent media interview requests (click here to read previous journalist pitch letters).

Included in the material Kaczynski has sent to Michigan's library are certificates he was awarded for completing three independent study courses—conducted via closed circuit television—involving the textbook "A History of Modern Psychology." As part of his study program, Kaczynski submitted a rather strange six-page "book report," complete with one very bizarre footnote. Kaczynski's opinion of psychiatry is well known: he once refused to be examined by government shrinks because he feared being labeled "sick" and has acknowledged dreaming about killing psychiatrists.

Kaczynski's progress reports describe him as a model prisoner who is not permitted to work "due to his medical condition." That classification seems to puzzle Kaczynski, according to a notation, dated May 3, 2003, he made on one report. "I have no idea what this 'medical condition' could be. I run 5 miles a day, 4 or 5 days a week, so I ought to be fit to work," wrote Kaczynski. "But if they don't want me to work that's fine with me since I have too much to keep me busy as it is."

Below you'll find a representative sampling of Bureau of Prisons documents chronicling Kaczynski's life at Florence, where the mundanity and isolation are likely not unfamiliar to the former Montana hermit.

Ted: Deliver the letter, the sooner the better. (4 pages)

Got half a pint of milk? (3 pages)
When it rains, it pours. (2 pages)
Unabomber is given the business. (1 page)
A bizarre book report. (6 pages)
Certificates suitable for framing. (3 pages)
Prison brass gives killer good grades. (3 pages)
Journal, CBS, Post angle for interview. (3 pages)
Noisy screws mar sleep time. (1 page)
Stamps of disapproval. (1 page)

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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