

Chomsky and Me (Preview)

A Memoir

Bev Boisseau Stohl

2023

"A beautiful, tender and profound book about one of the most important thinkers of our time, by one of the people who know him best." —JOHANN HARI

GHOMSKY

a memoir & Me



Ben Boisseau Stahl

Chapter 4: The Unabomber, Rage, and Bad Religion: 1995–1996

Morris's advice comes to life and Bev gets down on a dusty floor to gather cool Mom points.

During the Unabomber's campaign, I joked with Noam that we should give each piece of mail a vigorous shake to listen for loose parts, but he warned me to take the situation seriously, since he could indeed be targeted. I nevertheless thought the chances of that were slim— until a large suitcase arrived sealed in packing tape and addressed to “Professor Chomsky” with no return address. After an hour of alarm, campus police took it away, though they found its contents innocuous.

However, when we learned that some bomb recipients had worked with Kaczynski in the past, Noam warned me to forward even vaguely threatening mail to campus police. In 1996 Ted Kaczynski's brother turned him in, and Noam's writings were found taped to his cabin walls. They had briefly crossed paths at Berkeley in the mid sixties, when Noam was visiting faculty, a fact he revealed to me when an FBI agent questioned me, looking for ties between Noam and Ted. I suppose Noam had kept this quiet as a way to protect me. A decade later, a friend of Kaczynski's activist mother asked Noam to call her on her eighty-ninth birthday. During the call, I was witness to Noam's empathy and kindness.

—Excerpted from *Chomsky and Me* by Bev Boisseau Stohl, published by OR Books.

The Ted K Archive

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