

Bomb Suspect Is Invited to Write a Column

Aug. 3, 1995

Bob Guccione, the publisher of Penthouse, has offered the space in his magazine for a monthly column by the serial killer in the Unabom case. In a letter, being published today in a full-page advertisement on page D26 of The New York Times, Mr. Guccione also reminded the bomber that Penthouse was willing to print his lengthy manifesto.

Courting the bomber like an editor trying to lure a coveted writer, Mr. Guccione wrote of the magazine's journalistic awards and said the offer of at least one unedited page a month would allow the bomber to "continue to proffer your revolutionary philosophy, answer critics and generally interact with the public."

He closed the letter by saying: "In return I am asking you to put an end to all terrorist activities now and forever. I'm still the only friend you have in the media."

The bomber, who has killed 3 people and injured 23 since 1978, threatened in April to continue the killings unless The New York Times or The Washington Post published his 35,000-word manifesto by Sept. 29. Penthouse immediately said that it would be willing to publish the entire document.

Excerpts of the manifesto, titled "Industrial Society and Its Future," appeared in both The Times and The Post yesterday as part of a news report about the Federal investigation of the case, but neither newspaper has yet announced whether it will publish the full document.

Appendix

AN OPEN LETTER TO THE UNABOMBER FROM BOB GUCCIONE.

I am a little miffed and a whole lot disappointed by your recent communication. In your first letter to the New York Times, received April 24, you categorically undertook to "desist from all terrorist activities" if the Times or "some other nationally distributed periodical" agreed to publish your manifesto. Well...I agreed! I agreed immediately and without reservation. Within 24 hours of your letter appearing in the New York Times, I put out a press release saying that I believed your offer was genuine and that on the basis of that belief, I was prepared to publish you fully and without censorship in the next available issue of Penthouse.

Not everyone in the media agrees with that position. Many think that any attempt to strike a deal with you is journalistically unethical and contrary to the proposition that government, big business and the press do not negotiate with terrorists. I answered those and other accusations in the following manner:

1. You held no individual newspaper or other periodical hostage. You did not insist on publication in any one particular forum failing which you would continue to kill. Had you done so, the New York Times would have turned its back and so would I.

2. I disagreed with the popular belief that you are a serial killer and should be treated like one. I pointed out that serial killers derive the whole of their satisfaction from the act of killing that killing was an end in itself. In your case, I suggested that killing was merely a *means* to the end. Your objectives are much bolder and infinitely more elaborate. You want to change the world! Killing people was your way of attracting attention to a personal philosophical doctrine with vast socio-political change at its center.
3. I further held that anyone who has taken the trouble to write a literate, 37,000 word, philosophical manifesto and who set about killing people to get it published, is most unlikely to destroy the credibility of his thesis by publicly going back on his word. For this reason alone, I do not believe that you would kill again.

In your recent, personal letter to me, however, you have already begun to change the rules. You now say that simple publication in the New York Times or the Washington Post is no longer enough to stay the killings. You are asking for the additional publication of three new statements or “up-dates” annually for three successive years. A commitment to publish something, sight unseen, well into the future is unlikely win favor at either the Times or the Post. Nor would anyone in our industry blame them!

Furthermore, if both the Times and the Post eventually decline to publish you and the rights fall to Penthouse, you will permit publication in these pages but you will penalize us all by taking one more life. That, you say, is the price of appearing in a somewhat less than “respectable” periodical.

You are wrong! Over the years, Penthouse has won just about every distinguished, journalistic award a magazine could win. It has attacked and exposed elements of every, well entrenched power base in the country from government and religion to big business and organized crime. Our weapons are truth, dedication and an utterly fearless disregard for retaliation. I have been featured on presidential “hit-lists”; I’ve been the object of retaliatory, I.R.S. audits; I’ve been bugged, sued, pursued and shot at, but I haven’t killed anybody yet!

The demographic mix of our audience is virtually the same as that of the New York Times and the Washington Post, but our total readership is many millions more than the total readership of the Times and the Post *combined*.

Penthouse is one of the biggest and most quoted magazines in the history of our industry. For 25 years it was and continues to be the single, biggest selling magazine in the Pentagon. If it’s attention you want, you’d be hard pressed to do better.

To further tempt you from extracting one additional “penalty” should publication fall to me, I propose to offer you one or more unedited pages in Penthouse every single month for an indefinite period of time. Consider it a regular column in which you may continue to proffer your revolutionary philosophy, answer critics and generally interact with the public. Surely this would be preferable to the three annual updates you are requesting from the New York Times, et al.

In return, I am asking you to put an end to all terrorist activities now and forever. I'm still the only friend you have in the media. Don't let my willingness to publish you make fools of us both!

[signed]

BOB GUCCIONE

PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE

A DIVISION OF GENERAL MEDIA INTERNATIONAL

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Furthermore, if both the Times and the Post eventually decline to publish you in full and the rights fall to Penthouse, you will permit publication in these pages but you will penalize us all by taking one more life. That, you say, is the price of appearing in a somewhat less than "respectable" periodical.

I cannot accept that, nor can I accept your characterization that Penthouse is strictly an entertainment magazine and, therefore, any serious, non-sex related editorial is read as "entertainment".

You are wrong! Over the years, Penthouse has won just about every distinguished, journalistic award a magazine could win. It has attacked and exposed elements of every, well entrenched power base in the country from government and religion to big business and organized crime. Our weapons are truth, dedication and an utterly fearless disregard for retaliation. I have been featured on presidential "hit-lists"; I've been the object of retaliatory I.R.S. audits; I've been bugged, sued, pursued and shot at, but I haven't killed anybody...yet!

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BOB GUCCIONE
PENTHOUSE MAGAZINE
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The Ted K Archive

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The New York Times Archives, August 3, 1995, Section B, Page 10. <<https://www.nytimes.com/1995/08/03/us/bomb-suspect-is-invited-to-write-a-column.html>>

www.thetedkarchive.com