

United States v. Kaczynski

The FBI finds a wealth of new evidence that suggests a
strange loner is the Unabomber

Brian Duffy

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The latest loopy loner to capture the nation's attention is really in a league of his own. Waco's David Koresh went in for Bible scholarship, rock music and gun collecting. Suspected Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh seems to have gone in only for the guns, although he professed himself appalled at Koresh's immolation in the matchstick collection of buildings called Ranch Apocalypse.

But in the accused Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski, a nation increasingly inured to the mumblings and maunderings of the lunatic fringe finally has a character worthy of Dostoevsky. And a plot to boot. There is the brother angle, of course, the soft-spoken younger sibling informing on the elder Theodore to the feds. Expand that to the entire family, and the plot, as they say, really thickens.

Working-class intellectuals of a decidedly liberal bent, Theodore Sr. and his wife, Wanda, sent two handsome young sons off to Ivy League schools, but instead of following the American-dream scenario of conventional fiction, both dropped out, big time. Back in the 1970s, it was hardly unusual for a family to claim a ski bum, commune dweller or general layabout among its members, but the Kaczynski clan was two for two with Theodore and David. And the dropping out was unusual, to say the least: David lived literally in a hole in the Chalk Mountains of the Big Bend in Texas, while Theodore amused himself tinkering with bombs and stalking snowshoe hares in the wilds of Montana.

Strange days. This is Dostoevsky material, to be sure, but it gets richer. Enter one Juan Sanchez Arreola, seen first hobbling down an empty highway with a leg broken from a pickup truck accident. A kindly David Kaczynski offers the elderly Mexican farmhand a lift, and before long a friendship develops. And then something rather like a spiritual relationship, the wise Sanchez instructing David in the art of writing love letters while counseling Theodore not to be so aloof from his parents.

Theodore, of course, responds true to form, which is to say, weirdly. Signing his letters to Sanchez "Teodoro," writing from his "casita," or little house, he replies in wooden but meticulous, book-learned Spanish, inquiring of Sanchez — about Pancho Villa. Clearly, there is much to be examined here, and examined it will be for sure, with two quickie Unabomber books due out in a few weeks and others no doubt hard on their heels. The made-for-television movie cannot be far behind.

For all the peculiarities of the Unabomber's strange tale, the evil for which he was responsible is not lost on the 23 people he maimed and injured, or on the families of the three who died as a result of his bombs. Those attacks will form the spine of the criminal case federal prosecutors have already begun assembling against Kaczynski.

The case appears to be airtight. U.S. News has learned that FBI agents last week recovered the original copy of the Unabomber manifesto from the cramped storage loft in Kaczynski's tiny cabin. The document was found near where Kaczynski had concealed a third typewriter, which FBI agents discovered early last week after finding two other typewriters in the downstairs living area of the cabin.

A senior law enforcement official told the magazine that an FBI laboratory analysis of the third typewriter has identified it conclusively as the machine on which the

Unabomber typed not only his manifesto but also a letter to the New York Times demanding that the manifesto be published, as well as mailing labels and other typed material recovered from six Unabomber crime scenes. “We went after the typewriter first,” the official said, explaining that it was the first piece of evidence to be thoroughly tested at the FBI lab. “We hoped that would be our ace in the hole.”

The government’s strategy. U.S. News has learned additional details of the Justice Department’s strategy for prosecuting the Unabomber. Federal prosecutors in Salt Lake City have already obtained two sealed indictments from a federal grand jury there charging “John Doe,” also known as “FC,” with delivering two explosive devices attributed to the Unabomber. FC was the signature the Unabomber affixed to his explosive devices; investigators believe it stands for “freedom club.” The indictments relate to two incidents in which a bomb was defused successfully: one in 1981, the other in 1987, when a computer-store clerk received minor injuries. A Justice Department official says prosecutors will seek superseding indictments converting the charges against John DoeFC to Theodore Kaczynski.

More serious charges will come later. After a meeting last week with Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick, senior prosecutors assigned to a “Unabomber suspect team” agreed to allow Kaczynski to be tried in Montana on the single criminal charge already filed against him there.

The charge, possession of an unregistered firearm — a bomb — carries a maximum penalty of 10 years. Gorelick and a top aide, Merrick Garland, may allow other Unabomber charges to be filed and prosecuted in Montana, a knowledgeable official told U.S. News, but they have agreed in principle to allow separate prosecutions in California, New Jersey and on the charges already filed in Salt Lake City.

The prosecution in New Jersey, for a 1994 mail bombing that killed advertising executive Thomas Mosser, could result in the death penalty. So could one of the California prosecutions, for an April 1995 mail bombing that killed forestry-industry lobbyist Gilbert Murray.

Nothing is known about how Kaczynski intends to defend himself. But if FBI scientists can obtain definitive matches on evidence taken from Kaczynski’s cabin, Robert Cleary, the highly regarded federal prosecutor appointed to direct the Unabomber criminal case, would appear to have little trouble obtaining a conviction.

For the moment, Kaczynski himself appears to have little interest in the case, padding around his jail cell (heated, with running water) and perusing the newspapers. Prosecutors assigned to the Unabomber inquiry say they expect the various criminal cases to go to trial without undue delay. They do not expect Kaczynski or his attorney to attempt an insanity defense. “I don’t think you’d ever get Ted Kaczynski to say he’s insane,” a senior Justice

Department official says, “because I think he thinks he is saner than the rest of us.”

The Ted K Archive

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