

# Unabomber's Victims Fear He Could Post Writings

David Lohr

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(Sept. 15) – It has been nearly 15 years since the arrest of Ted Kaczynski, aka the “Unabomber,” and yet his ability to terrorize the public persists.

Now, survivors of his mail-bomb attacks and victims’ families are haunted by the fear that the Harvard-educated mathematician might upload 40,000 pages of his writings and other documents to the Internet.

“My primary concern is privacy for everybody,” Gary Wright, a victim of one of Kaczynski’s terrorist attacks, told AOL News. “Nobody’s personal information [should go] out there.”

The controversy surrounding the release of the documents began in August 2006, when U.S. District Court Judge Garland Burrell ordered the U.S. Marshals Service to auction off Kaczynski’s personal property, including redacted writings, typewriters, jackets and several other items. Burrell ordered all proceeds of the auction to go to the victims of Kaczynski’s 17-year reign of terror.

Victims of Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, seen here in 1999 at the federal ADX Supermax prison in Florence, Colo., worry that he will upload 40,000 pages of his writings and other documents to the Internet.

Kaczynski was unhappy with the ruling and filed suit to try to stop the sale of his possessions, but in 2009, the decision was affirmed by an appeals court. Burrell directed prosecutors to provide Kaczynski with an unredacted copy of his documents in advance of their sale, The Smoking Gun reported.

Ever since that ruling, the FBI has been painstakingly scanning all of the 40,000 pages of documents for Kaczynski.

The decision to provide Kaczynski with unredacted copies of his writings has upset many of his victims, who are afraid he will have the documents uploaded to the Internet.

“Giving Kaczynski an electronic copy will thoroughly undermine the purpose of the court’s redaction plan, as it will allow Kaczynski, in a manner of minutes, to upload to the Internet a complete and unredacted set of his writings, rife with details of the victims’ identities and injuries and his systematic efforts to harm them,” says a recent court filing by an attorney representing a group of the victims.

The attorney is requesting that Kaczynski be provided with “physical copies” of the documents, rather than electronic versions.

A number of the victims are also opposed to a motion Kaczynski has filed requesting the auction be postponed until federal officials provide him with his copy of the documents.

“I was one of the victims that had applied for restitution through the court,” Wright said. “There was a number of victims that had applied and a number who did not. In my personal case, insurance didn’t pay for any injuries. I fully believe in restitution, so I say maximize it for whatever it is worth. If it’s worth nothing, great, but if [there is] monetary value there, I would love to be compensated for the expenses I had to incur.”

Wright was walking through the parking lot of his Salt Lake City computer store on Feb. 20, 1987, when he noticed something out of place.

"It looked like two 2-by-4s that were nailed together, like when you are extending a piece of wood at a construction site," Wright said. "It looked about 13 inches long and had four nails sticking out of it."

When Wright bent down and picked up the wood, he unknowingly triggered a homemade bomb that had been hidden inside of it. The blast severed the nerves in his left arm and propelled hundreds of pieces of shrapnel into his body.

"There is still some permanent [damage] and I don't [have any feeling] in my pinkie or ring finger, but what am I going to complain about?" Wright said. "It [did] not kill me. I just find different ways to do things."

For years after the blast, Wright says he was constantly vigilant, always looking over his shoulder. He wondered if the person who had tried to kill him was going to return to finish the job. That fear finally ended on April 3, 1996, when Kaczynski was arrested in a remote cabin outside of Lincoln, Mont.

Authorities accused Kaczynski of being the domestic terrorist responsible for more than a dozen bomb attacks in multiple states between 1978 and 1995 that killed three people and injured 23 others. The attacker, who called for the "destruction of the worldwide industrial system," was dubbed the Unabomber because many of his early targets worked at universities and airlines.

The 10- by 12-foot cabin where Kaczynski lived and was eventually arrested in rural Montana as seen on June 17, 2008, at the Newseum in Washington, D.C., as part of the "G-Men and Journalists" exhibition.

Investigators zeroed in on Kaczynski after his brother, David Kaczynski, contacted the FBI and informed them that a manifesto attributed to the Unabomber appearing in The New York Times and The Washington Post was similar to papers his brother had written.

"The whole thing is an enormous tragedy, but what my wife and I did really had to be done," David Kaczynski told AOL News. "You know you can't let a family member hurt people."

Ted Kaczynski was ultimately sentenced to life in prison without the possibility of parole.

"I [spoke] directly at him at the sentencing hearing," Wright said. "[This] is just paraphrasing, but I said, 'Ted, I don't hate you. I forgave you a long time ago because if I hadn't, I would have just been kindling to your cause no matter what that was. ... How many people was it going to take to get the end result you were looking for?' When I said that, it was really kind of remarkable. He just ... looked up at me. We locked [eyes for] several seconds and for me it was just the transference of ownership. There was nothing else that needed to be said."

Whether or not Wright or any of the other victims receive any compensation for their injuries is yet to be seen. It all depends on whether anyone purchases the items

and how much money they bring. But, according to one expert, they should fetch a pretty penny.

“Any items owned by [Kaczynski] or created by him will be the items bidders will be looking for,” said Texas-based crime-victim advocate Andy Kahan. “To collectors of those items, he is a big kahuna – a prized entity. Any items they can secure from him would be like owning a Rembrandt to art dealers.”

Jessica Gein, co-owner of Serial Killers Ink, one of the top-selling murderabilia outlets on the Internet, says her company would be highly interested in picking up items belonging to the Unabomber.

“[We don’t] currently have any Kaczynski items for sale,” Gein told AOL News. “This would be the perfect opportunity to obtain some of his things.”

Kahan and Gein are well known to each other and have been on opposite sides of the fence for nearly a decade. Gein and her husband, Eric, are both advocates for the freedom to sell items that once belonged to some of the world’s most notorious killers. Kahan, on the other hand, is one of the staunchest opponents of crime memorabilia and has been working diligently to pass federal legislation to quash the sale of items owned by convicted murderers, serial killers and other criminals.

This time, however, neither opponent is against the sale of Kaczynski’s personal effects.

“If any monies are to be made of the sale of so-called murderabilia, than it should go to the victims’ families,” Kahan said. “It’s a catch-22, because from some perspectives it’s going to be looked at as blood money and from others it will be looked at as restitution.”

Kahan added: “My only concern is that whoever is the winning bidder of such items does not turn around and try to peddle it through murderabilia dealers.”

Gein’s take is somewhat similar, although she says she finds it odd that the families are not bothered by the sale of the items.

“We don’t have a problem with the courts attempting to sell Ted Kaczynski’s writings. It would be kind of hypocritical to say it’s OK for us to do, but not OK for them,” Gein said. “The victims’ families are the ones that take offense to websites like ours housing these items. I’m not quite sure why they aren’t bothered by the courts selling [them] when they have no idea who could end up with them.”

For now, it remains unclear when the auction will be held. According to the U.S. Attorney’s Office in California, the FBI is still redacting the documents. “As far as I know, it’s still pending,” spokeswoman Lauren Horwood told AOL News.

The FBI office in Washington, the division responsible for redacting the documents, did not return calls or e-mails requesting comment.

According to a May 10 status report filed in U.S. District Court that was obtained by The Smoking Gun, the FBI’s Civil Discovery Review Unit has spent more than 600 hours reviewing the documents and has gone through 12,199 pages.

In an effort to avoid any liability, the FBI decided to remove information pertaining to the victims, their families and bomb-making techniques by manually cutting out

those references with an X-Acto knife. The process was expected to take several months to complete.

Kaczynski himself has yet to comment on the latest developments in the case. According to his brother, he won't respond to any of his letters.

"Mom and I continue to write to him," David Kaczynski said. "[Our] mother is 93 now. There really has never been a response since the arrest, so the way we look at it, he really is in two prisons. One, of course, the physical prison where he will be for the rest of his life, but the other is a prison of mental illness."

Despite his own personal heartache, Wright agrees with David Kaczynski. The two have become close friends in recent years.

"[Ted Kaczynski] is an interesting cat," Wright said. "It's like I tell people, it is really too bad [his] mind ... got messed up with schizophrenia and all the bad mental health stuff. ... I guess [it's] like they say, 'Sometimes there is just such a fine line between brilliance and insanity.'"

The Ted K Archive

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