

Childhood Friend Recalls Explosions

A Dartmouth professor who grew up with the suspected Unabomber recalls they experimented with homemade bombs in the 1950s.

David Moore
Associated Press

HANOVER, N.H. — A Dartmouth professor who said as a child he helped the man accused of being the Unabomber explode small bombs in a field refused to say anything further about his boyhood friend yesterday as a security guard kept watch over his lectures.

Dale Eickelman yesterday rebuffed a multitude of requests from reporters for details on Theodore John Kaczynski, who is being held as a suspect in the deadly Unabomber attacks that have baffled authorities for 18 years.

A written statement from the college said Eickelman had not seen Kaczynski since 1959, and that Eickelman is willing to cooperate with authorities.

“Professor Eickelman does not at this time plan to make any statement,” Roland Adams, director of the Dartmouth College News Service, said yesterday afternoon.

“We’ve had calls from news organizations across the country non-stop since the start of the day and they’re still coming in,” he said.

Telephone calls to Eickelman’s office were immediately transferred to Adams, and a uniformed security guard at the building where Eickelman was teaching anthropology classes directed reporters to the news service.

Shortly after Kaczynski’s arrest in Montana Wednesday, Eickelman, 53, told the Daily Southtown in Chicago that he remembered Kaczynski as being good at chemistry and said the two of them used to experiment with small explosives.

“We would go out to an open field, and I remember Ted had the know-how of putting together things like batteries, wire leads, potassium nitrate and whatever, and creating explosions,” said Eickelman, who went to junior high school with Kaczynski.

“We would just blow up weeds, nothing more,” he said. “Once we created an explosion in a metal garbage can. Nothing much happened.”

A day after taking Kaczynski, 53, into custody so they could search his 10-by-12-foot mountain cabin in Montana, federal authorities charged him with possessing the components of a bomb found inside. The initial charge made no mention of the Unabomber’s string of attacks that killed three people and injured 23 others over an 18-years span.

Eickelman said he saw his friend only once after Kaczynski left high school for Harvard. Kaczynski graduated from Harvard when he was barely 20.

“I remember Ted was very good at chemistry. And we would do the things that kids do when they’re learning about chemicals and what they can do,” said Eickelman, an anthropology and human relations professor.

“We would go to the hardware store, use household products and make things you might call bombs,” he said.

Eickelman said he and Kaczynski were closest in the mid-1950s, when the pair were in their early teens. Though Kaczynski was quiet and somewhat of a loner, Eickelman did not consider him antisocial.

“He wasn’t exactly gregarious, but he was extremely articulate,” Eickelman said. “He impressed me as being a fragile person.”

Eickelman said there was nothing in his friends actions that were indicative of a future Unabomber.

“We were just bright kids who read a lot of science books and experimented as bright kids did during that era,” he said.

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The Ted K Archive

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