

# **New Portrait of Unabomber**

**Environmental Saboteur Around Montana Village for 20  
Years**

James Brooke

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Theodore J. Kaczynski won notoriety as the Unabomber, the evil genius who mailed deadly pipe bombs to scientists and corporate targets from California to New Jersey.

But in this mountain village nestled in pine forests below the Continental Divide, new detective work is giving Mr. Kaczynski a new notoriety: as a pioneer for environmental sabotage. Starting in 1975, a decade before Earth First made “monkey-wrenching” a household term for sabotage, Mr. Kaczynski opened a local front in his one-man war against what he called the octopus of technology.

Roaming on foot and on bicycle in a 25-mile radius from his cabin here, Lincoln’s environmental radical, according to several sources, booby-trapped motorcycle trails with wires strung between trees, sabotaged mining machinery with sand, burned logging equipment, poured sugar into snowmobile gas tanks and destroyed hunting and mining camps and vacation cabins with ax blows.

The account of this 20-year trail of sabotage comes from two letters Mr. Kaczynski wrote from prison in January, an inquiry by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and a new book by a longtime neighbor who read part of the hermit’s diaries.

In one of the recent letters from prison, where he is serving a life sentence for bombings that killed 3 people and wounded 22, Mr. Kaczynski took credit for “monkey-wrenching” and for shooting a dog to death, writing, “Shoot, shovel, and shut up.” The neighbor, Chris Waits, said Mr. Kaczynski killed nine of his dogs over a decade, largely by poisoning with strychnine oats. Mr. Waits said he had heard Mr. Kaczynski cursing the dogs, whose barking may have betrayed his location in the woods.

Starting in the summer of 1975 and ending with his arrest here in April 1996, the vandalism campaign caused hundreds of thousands of dollars in property damage, but apparently no human injuries. Mr. Kaczynski avoided suspicion by varying his targets and locations, by shunning confrontations with people and by suspending attacks in the winter, when snow would capture footprints.

The vandalism prompted the only known law-enforcement contact with Mr. Kaczynski before his arrest for the Unabom crimes. In the fall of 1982, according to a diary entry in Mr. Waits’s book, Mr. Kaczynski chopped his way into a vacation home nearly a mile from his cabin, “smashed up the interior pretty thoroughly,” and “thoroughly smashed” a motorcycle and four snowmobiles.

One week later, two deputy sheriffs investigating the incident knocked on his cabin door and stood face to face with a man who was wanted nationwide for seven bomb attacks. So far the bombings had wounded but not killed people.

“I was so cool and collected in answering cops’ questions,” Mr. Kaczynski boasted in a numerical code entry decoded 14 years later by the F.B.I. Noting that the police never returned – and that his terrorized neighbors did not resume snowmobiling that winter – he wrote: “Who says crime doesn’t pay? I feel very good about this.”

In Lincoln, the vandalism was not seen as a one-man crime wave, in part because of a lack of communication between summer people and year-round residents, and in part because of turnover of local law-enforcement personnel, said Mr. Waits, one of

a handful of current residents who were here in 1971, when Mr. Kaczynski and his brother, David, bought a 1.4-acre lot east of town.

“When a lot of these things happened, we thought it was kids out on a weekend rampage,” said Mr. Waits, who wrote his book, “Unabomber: The Secret Life of Ted Kaczynski,” with Dave Shors, an editor at The Independent Record of Helena.

“I did do some monkey-wrenching in the Lincoln area,” Mr. Kaczynski wrote the Helena newspaper in January. “I did, for example, attempt to injure trailbikers by setting traps for those who took their motorcycles off the road and back into the hills.”

The book describes about 25 incidents of vandalism. Mr. Waits, who worked closely with F.B.I. investigators here and said he read “at least 1,000 pages” of the journals, calculates that there were more than 50 attacks.

In Lincoln, Mr. Kaczynski concentrated his attacks on loggers, miners and recreationists who used motorized vehicles. To him, motorcycles, snowmobiles and “evil jet planes” were tips of a technological “octopus” reaching into the wilderness.

“I cut the fan belt, cut some tubes, put dirt in the place where oil goes in,” Mr. Kaczynski wrote in his journal on Oct. 23, 1979, after attacking a mining camp. “There was a nice new pickup down by the road, I think belonging to some of these mining-fools, and I smashed the windshield and cut some belts and tubes on it.”

Although Mr. Kaczynski called himself “a primitive hunter-gatherer” and fed himself by poaching, he despised other hunters. In his diaries, he wrote of attacking empty hunting camps or cabins. Angry after hearing shots during the hunting season in 1975, he wrote: “Makes me about ready to join the ban-hunting crowd, just to keep these disgusting twerps out of the woods. Of course I’d hunt anyway.”

At Garland’s Town and Country, where goods and local news cross the counter daily, book sales have been brisk. “I had a man in here the other day, looking at the pictures, and he said, ‘Look at that bulldozer burned up – that was mine,’ “ said Teresa Garland, the proprietor.

Noting that another patron had said Mr. Kaczynski “sugared” his snowmobile gas tanks in the mid-1980’s, Ms. Garland added, “It is clearing up some of those unsolved deals.”

The Ted K Archive

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