

The Brothers Kaczynski: How 2 Paths Diverged

James Brooke with David Barboza

April 12, 1996

He was a bearded nature lover, living in a tiny wilderness cabin, traveling by bicycle and shunning electricity, telephones, and running water.

A decade ago, the description could have equally fit either of the Kaczynski brothers — Theodore, who had taken to a solitary refuge in the wilderness forests of Montana, or his younger sibling David, who back then lived here, in the sun-baked wastes of the Chihuahuah Desert.

For 15 years, starting in the early 1980's, David has been a well-known, well-liked fixture in this remote part of Texas. But then, in October 1990, around the time of his father's death back home in Chicago, David suddenly emerged from his self-imposed desert exile, cut his hair, shaved his beard and got married to his old high school girlfriend.

But Theodore remained in his cabin in the Rockies, refusing even to attend the funeral of his father and namesake, Theodore R. Kaczynski. His long isolation ended only last week, when the F.B.I. arrested him on explosives charges, the first step in an investigation that Federal agents believe will prove the 53-year-old former mathematics professor to be the man they call the Unabomber.

As investigators work to connect the life of Theodore Kaczynski to what they know of serial bombings that claimed the lives of 3 people and wounded 23, they have also traced the parallels and intersections in two brothers' lives.

While their lives crucially diverged in the 1980's — indeed, the brothers have not even seen one another since 1990 — the separate courses chosen by the two men were to come together once again within the last year. It was last summer that David first began to suspect that his brother, whom he had helped support in Montana with contributions of cash, might be the nation's most hunted man.

Ultimately, it was the information from David Kaczynski, seven years younger than his brother, that led the F.B.I. to make the arrest last week.

About 25 miles from the nearest paved road, David Kaczynski's 8-by-24 foot cabin seems to be a West Texas copy of his older brother's 10-by-20 foot Rocky Mountain abode.

In this austere land of cactus, mesquite thorns and the rare dusty flower, David's life here in the mid-1980's seemed to emulate his older brother's ideals. He lived a textbook example of a life advocated a decade later by the Unabomber in a 35,000 word "manifesto:" a return to a life amid "WILD nature."

Moving to the largest county in Texas, Brewster, David chose a desolate area that Spanish conquistadors once labeled "despoblado" — or unpopulated. Today, beyond the county seat of Alpine, Brewster has less than one person for every two square miles.

One of the nation's remotest regions, Terlingua Ranch, where David gradually built a 30-acre landholding in the 1980's, is 250 miles south of Midland, the nearest city with commercial air service.

Living at opposite ends of the nation, each brother hiked extensively through their wilderness worlds: the Christmas Mountains of Texas and the Rocky Mountains of Montana. On trips to town, they pedaled battered bicycles.

Soon after buying his first plot of land here in 1984, David dug a hole in the dry desert soil, partly covered it with metal sheets — and called it home. No houses were visible for miles around. The nearest store was 35 miles away.

“David wanted to be next to nature,” recalled Mary Ann Dunn, a neighbor who has known the younger Kaczynski since he first came here as a backpacker in 1980. “During bad weather he’d come and stay at our bunk house.”

“David gave me a picture of his brother’s cabin,” she said. “I’m sure he was pretty fond of his brother.”

Separated by 1,400 miles, the two brothers seem to live symmetrical lives. But there were crucial differences over their attitudes about violence and over their relationships to society.

Last fall, Theodore wrote a page-long treatise on the art of stalking and killing rabbits for winter sustenance. In contrast, David shuns guns, is a vegetarian and enjoys discussing the ideas of Mohandas K. Gandhi.

“David is what we call around here ‘a bunny hugger,’ “ chuckled Connally Wendt, a neighbor who often has had David and his wife, Linda, over for dinner.

Like other young people in the 1960’s and early 1970’s, David handpainted a flying fish on the side of an old camper van he used to drive here from Chicago.

While Federal agents say his brother was writing his manifesto on a society warped by technology, David wrote Western novels and short stories while staying at his cabin in the Christmas Mountains. “No politics, no anger,” Mrs. Dunn recalled.

Romanticizing his own life experiences in and around the sere mountains of Big Bend National Park, he described a man’s confrontation with a cougar, and a friendship between an American and a Mexican.

Except for brief intervals, including a period in 1978 when he lived in Chicago, Theodore Kaczynski spent almost a quarter of a century in his Montana cabin. But David, more sociable than his older brother, was sensitive to the feelings of others.

In 1987, Wanda and Theodore Kaczynski traveled here from Chicago to visit their younger son’s wilderness hideaway. Driving into the desert hills, they found David — with a beard, long hair and living in his hole. The elder Mr. Kaczynski, a 75-year-old retired manufacturing engineer, decided to check into a motel.

“The mama and papa told him he was loco,” recalled Juan Sanchez Arreola, a Mexican laborer, who witnessed the encounter. In contrast, Theodore is believed to have cut himself off from his parents in the 1980’s.

Mr. Sanchez, who maintained a seven-year correspondence with Theodore Kaczynski recalled David Kaczynski saying last year that his brother had been “on bad terms” with his parents and “didn’t want to have anything to do with them.”

“David once told me that Teodoro called his mother a dog,” Mr. Sanchez, whispered Wednesday in shocked tones. “It is very sad when someone doesn’t love his parents.”

For Mr. Sanchez, a family friend for about a decade, another turning point for David came around 1988 when he was refused service at a store here because of his unkempt appearance.

While Theodore confided in a letter to Mr. Sanchez that he longed to find a wife, David took action. Under the bright stars of the high desert nights, Mrs. Dunn gave him dancing lessons. The long hair and beard ended up on a cutting room floor.

"I taught him how to write a love letter," Mr. Sanchez recalled proudly. "He translated it into English."

In 1991, a few months after his father's death, David married his high school sweetheart, Linda Patrik. High on the hillside here, he expanded his tin-roofed cottage and brought in electricity so his new wife could use a computer. In the fresh cement of the cabin's foundation, the couple etched a heart and their initials: L.P. and D.K.

Busy with a new life as a social worker in Albany, David Kaczynski now only returns to his mountain cabin here when he and his wife, a college philosophy professor, can schedule joint vacations.

For the intensely shy Theodore, repeatedly luckless in love, the marriage of his younger brother was a burning irritation. "When David married, the problem between the two brothers became more serious," Mr. Sanchez recalled.

Communication between the two brothers trailed off to terse requests for money.

After David sent his older brother \$3,000 in less than a year, Theodore took a move that was probably an effort to insure partial repayment. On March 27, 1995, he instructed the Lewis and Clark County Assessor to register David as half-owner of the Montana cabin and the surrounding 1.4-acre lot. The total assessed value of the Montana property is \$4,500, about \$500 more than the value of David's counterpart property in the desert here.

This week, David has shown no interest in receiving the \$1 million award offered by the Government for turning in the Unabomber.

On Sunday, David called from upstate New York to talk Mrs. Dunn, his oldest friend in Terlingua. Talking about his older brother, David confided: "I love him. And I can't help but love him. But I can't condone what he did."

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The New York Times, April 12, 1996, Section A, Page 20

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