

# Did Trump's uncle teach the Unabomber? No. Here's what really happened

Trump falsely claims Unabomber Ted Kaczynski was taught by his uncle, MIT professor John Trump

James Liddell & Andrew Feinberg

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At an energy and innovation summit in Pittsburgh on Tuesday, President Donald Trump insisted that his uncle, Dr. John Trump, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had once taught a “seriously good” student named Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski.

“He’d go around correcting everybody,” Trump boasted. “It didn’t work out too well for him... but it’s interesting in life.”

During his winding 30-minute speech at the inaugural “Energy and Innovation” summit at Carnegie Mellon University, Trump elaborated on the story, suggesting that the student was the domestic terrorist and mathematician known as the Unabomber.

After invoking his late paternal uncle, whom he falsely described as MIT’s “longest-serving professor,” Trump continued his implausible anecdote.

“Kaczynski was one of his students,” he continued. “Do you know who Kaczynski was? There’s very little difference between a madman and a genius.”

The crowd showed little reaction to the story, and it was unclear if the president was confusing Kaczynski, who died by suicide in a federal prison in 2023, with someone else.

The bizarre claim is not only highly unlikely, it is practically impossible.

Kaczynski attacked academics, businessmen, and random civilians with homemade bombs between 1978 and 1995, as part of a campaign aimed at collapsing modern society. He killed three people and injured 23.

Before being recognized as the Unabomber, Kaczynski earned an undergraduate degree from Harvard in 1962, having entered at the age of 16, and Master’s and Doctoral degrees in mathematics from the University of Michigan by 1967.

Kaczynski taught as an assistant professor at the University of California at Berkeley, until 1969, before making a deliberate shift away from academic life and mainstream society, living in a remote cabin near Lincoln, Montana.

Despite Trump’s statements, Kaczynski never attended MIT. There is no record of him ever visiting or lecturing at the university either.

Meanwhile, Prof. Trump, a cancer research pioneer who received the National Medal of Science, taught at MIT for approximately four decades before his death in 1985 at the age of 78.

He focused on high-voltage phenomena, electron acceleration, and the interaction of radiation with both living and non-living matter, including the design of X-ray generators for cancer therapy.

His expertise has been repeatedly vaunted by his nephew, who on Tuesday described him as a “smart man.”

Unlike Kaczynski, John Trump was not a mathematician; he was a professor of electrical engineering and physics.

Even if the renowned physicist did cross paths with the infamous serial killer, he could not have known that Kaczynski was linked to the Unabomber attacks.

The alleged conversation would have taken place more than a decade before the FBI identified Kaczynski as the Unabomber in April 1996 after his brother, David Kaczynski, turned him in after reading his manifesto, *Industrial Society and Its Future*.

The manifesto makes no mention of Prof. Trump, MIT, or any figures associated with that institution.

His autobiography and prison interviews also contain detailed recollections of his education and professors, with no mention of Trump's uncle or his time at MIT.

While MIT geneticist Phillip Sharp received a threatening letter from Kaczynski before his arrest, no one from or affiliated with the technical college was physically attacked or injured.

*The Independent* has contacted the White House for more information.

## The Ted K Archive

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