

Unabomber Book Blows Up

Judy Quinn

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DON'T EXPECT that Unabomber book in the mail.

On November 4, Context Books publisher Beau Friedlander canceled publication of Ted Kaczynski's *Truth Versus Lies*, the New York City start-up's much-publicized acquisition that at one point was to have been released last June. (See Book News, March 1.)

As in the case of SMP's recent recall of J.H. Hatfield's George W. Bush bio, *Fortunate Son*, concerns about the author's credibility prompted Friedlander, who paid no advance for the book, but has spent thousands in legal and production fees, to finally pull the plug.

"Kaczynski's recent letters forced a reevaluation of the book's editorial and legal status, and we decided that the book could no longer be considered a sound project," said Friedlander.

While Kaczynski had first submitted his manuscript to S&S (which passed on it) with the edict that it could not be edited, Friedlander said a legal review had always been part of his deal.

When Context lawyers asked for changes to the text, Kaczynski "was uncooperative and expressed himself in ways that made it impossible for the book to be published by Context or by anyone else," Friedlander said.

Despite a report in the New York Times, the book was not pulled off the press, but has been held up in film proofs since late September. Friedlander had hoped to release the book last month, and had received enough orders to justify a 15,000 first printing. Publication would have coincided with an article about Kaczynski and his brother, David, by Stephen Dubner, which attracted much buzz when it was dropped by Talk (rumored to also have asked for serial rights to *Truth Versus Lies*) and later picked up by Time magazine.

While author credibility in this case should have been questionable all along, Friedlander told PW that he believed the book could be valuable as "a historical document" that could provide more details to the Kaczynski story. Royalties from the book were to go to the families of Kaczynski's victims.

Context does have a related title, Michael Mello's *The United States of America Versus Theodore John Kaczynski: Ethics, Power and the Invention of the Unabomber*. The law professor's argument, released last May, that Kaczynski deserved an appeal has sold some 10,000 copies for Context—and likely provided context for Kaczynski's own subsequent successful petition for appeal.

Another Kaczynski manifesto may no longer have been in the author's interest, given his ongoing legal proceedings. In a statement about the cancellation, Friedlander acknowledged that Kaczynski had sought to dissolve the relationship first.

But Friedlander told PW the current fracas doesn't frighten him off from small press publishing. (he's exploring an alliance with another house to help expand his current base of titles, which are distributed by PGW). Next up, in February, Friedlander is releasing *The Ex-Files: New Stories About Old Flames*, with contributions by major literary authors, but not, of course, a certain incendiary ex-house author.

The Ted K Archive

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