

Kaczynski's Bitter Family Years (Preview)

Papers Show Rage Towards Parents

1996

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But Kaczynski's defense team may be barred from presenting this and other psychiatric evidence on his behalf because he has refused to submit to a court-ordered mental evaluation by two government psychiatrists.

Kaczynski's mother and brother, David, have declined interviews through their Washington, D.C., attorney Anthony Bisceglie.

"This is a difficult time for the family," he said.

However, their interviews with the FBI, government affidavits and other court documents, paint a picture of Theodore Kaczynski's family life — a collage of seemingly happy moments overshadowed by troubled times — and the conflicts that followed.

By the time FBI agents descended on Kaczynski's primitive Montana cabin in April 1996, he had virtually severed all ties with his family.

His arrest ended the longest manhunt in history for the elusive Unabomber, the serial bombing suspect believed to have killed three people and injured 23 others over an 18-year campaign of terror.

Kaczynski, the Harvard-educated mathematician and former UC-Berkeley professor turned hermit, awaits trial Nov. 12 in Sacramento.

He has pleaded not guilty to a 10-count federal indictment in the bombing deaths of two Sacramento residents, computer store owner Hugh Scrutton in 1985 and timber lobbyist Gilbert Murray in 1995. He is charged separately in the blast that killed New Jersey advertising executive Thomas Mosser.

In interviews with authorities, David Kaczynski said there were signs early on that his brother was disturbed and harbored feelings of animosity.

The pattern, he said, emerged in childhood with flashes of hostility and withdrawal.

It later turned to accusatory, rambling missives — scores of scrawled and typewritten letters, that repeatedly accused his parents of "ruining his life."

David Kaczynski recalled an incident at the family dinner table when Kaczynski was about 12 or 13. Their mother was carrying a dish of hot food to the table when Kaczynski stood up and drew her chair out for her in a gentlemanly manner. She smiled and began to sit down, but Kaczynski jerked the chair out from under her and she fell to the floor, the dish spilling onto the table.

His mother "began screaming" at Kaczynski while he stood there laughing, his brother said. Their father, Turk, ordered Kaczynski to his room in the attic, and he left, still laughing.

David Kaczynski said nobody talked about or apologized for incidents like this. They simply were not mentioned again even after everyone "simmered down."

Later, however, Theodore Kaczynski's letters would be filled with references to old wounds, including the time his father told him in anger that he had "the mind of a 2-year-old."

Yet there were times when his relationship with his parents seemed more cordial.

By most accounts, Kaczynski appeared to have a normal childhood with his Polish immigrant parents, who lived in a working-class Chicago neighborhood. As a child, he went on family outings to the woods, the prairie and to campsites with his father and brother.

"They played music together, discussed politics and nature," said family lawyer Bisceglie.

Kaczynski was described by his mother as a precocious child, a voracious reader who sometimes slipped in and out of his own world.

There were times he would retreat to his attic room and not want to be disturbed. Other times, he seemed to be in a trance, Wanda Kaczynski told authorities, as if a veil would descend and he would shut others out as if in a catatonic state.

He later developed austere personal habits, his brother recalled. He never drank alcohol, coffee or tea, since he deplored the consumption of substances that have mind-altering qualities.

David Kaczynski described his brother as "brilliant" while referring to himself as "smart."

Kaczynski, with a genius IQ of 170, graduated from high school at 16 and snagged a scholarship to Harvard. He later earned a doctorate degree from the University of Michigan.

Kaczynski's letters to his family were generally warm and friendly while he was at Harvard in the early 1960s and later while he taught math at UC-Berkeley from 1968 to 1969.

In 1971, before he retreated to his cabin in the remote wilderness of Montana, he wrote a parting note describing his mother and father as "the best parents anyone could ever have."

Wanda Kaczynski, in interviews with the FBI, said she and her husband used to visit their son regularly at his cabin each September until the mid-'80s.

Kaczynski built the cabin, about 10 by 12 feet, and all its furnishings. The shack sat on about 100 rugged acres he bought jointly with his brother for \$2,100.

It was a Spartan existence, with no electricity or running water. There was a small platform bed, a small table and chair, a storage loft and, at the center, a wood-burning stove that spewed so much ash it often gave Kaczynski's letters a distinct, smoky odor.

The family's last trip there was the most wonderful visit, Kaczynski's mother recalled, saying she thought it was in 1985. Kaczynski took them to see flowers in the meadow and they "generally had a great time."

However, shortly after they returned to their home, then in a Chicago suburb, Kaczynski sent them a very angry letter saying he did not want to hear from them anymore.

But years before that, family members began noticing Kaczynski's increasingly hostile attitude and behavior.

In an undated letter to his brother, Kaczynski described feelings of anger and hatred of others.

"As you know, I have no respect for law or morality. Why have I never committed any crime? (Of course, I'm not talking about something like shooting a grouse out of season now and then. I mean felony type stuff — burglary, arson, murder, etc.) Lack of motive? Hardly. As you know, I have a good deal of anger in me and there are lots of people I'd like to hurt.

"Risk? In some cases, yes. But there are other cases in which I can figure out ways of doing naughty things so that the risk would be insignificant. I am forced to the humiliating confession that the reason I've never committed any crime is that I have been successfully brainwashed by society. On an intellectual level I have only contempt for authority, but on an animal level I have all too much respect for it.

"My training has been quite successful in this regard and the strength of my conditioned inhibitions is such that I don't ever believe I could ever commit a serious crime. Knowing my attitude toward psychological manipulation of the individual by society, you can imagine how humiliating it is for me to admit to myself that I have been successfully manipulated."

By the 1980s, Kaczynski's letters reflected a common theme of blame and resentment.

He bitterly blamed his parents for turning him into a social misfit. He accused them of being cruel and insensitive, of being the reason for his reclusive nature.

He even blamed them for his inability to make friends.

He used letters like weapons.

In one note to his mother in the summer of 1991, after his father's death, Kaczynski wrote, "This fear of rejection — based on bitter experience both at home and at school — has ruined my life, except for the few years that I spent alone in the woods, largely out of contact with people."

In another letter to his brother during roughly the same time period, Kaczynski wrote, "I have got to know, I have GOT TO, GOT TO, GOT TO know that every last tie joining me to this stinking family has been cut FOREVER and that I will never NEVER have to communicate with any of you again."

In the years that followed, Kaczynski's family would search for the cause of his anger and fear. The battle to understand him continues.

Wanda Kaczynski is plagued by guilt. She believes she's partly to blame, David Kaczynski said in a February 1996 FBI interview.

David Kaczynski said his mother "had concerns that certain actions she and her husband took during Ted's childhood must have been at least partly responsible for his lifelong problems and isolation."

◆ UNABOM from A-1

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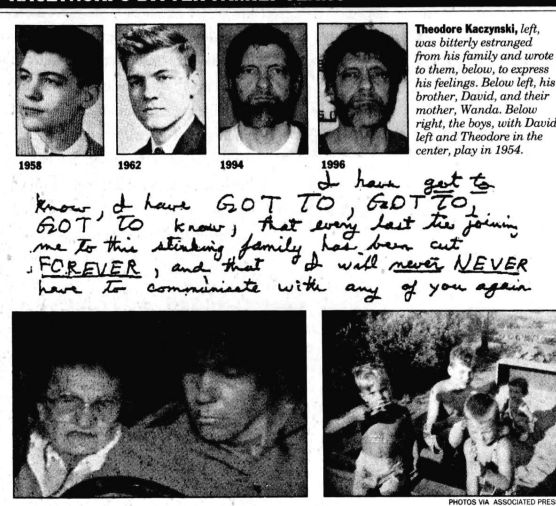
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PHOTOS VIA ASSOCIATED PRESS

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Theodore Kaczynski, left, was bitterly estranged from his family and wrote to them, below, to express his feelings. Below left, his brother, David, and their mother, Wanda. Below right, the boys, with David left and Theodore in the center, play in 1954.

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The Ted K Archive

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<www.archive.org/details/img-3999_202607>

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