

Sketch Artist Draws a Bead on High-profile Suspects

Linda Goldston

April 27, 1996

It was the face that taunted a nation: a mysterious killer hidden by a hood, disguised in dark aviator glasses.

A woman in Utah saw the Unabomber for an instant in 1987. Nearly eight years later, forensic artist Jeanne Boylan spent six hours trying to retrieve that memory.

Shortly after bombing suspect Theodore J. Kaczynski was arrested at his hermit's cabin in Montana on April 3, investigators realized Boylan had done it again. Compared with earlier photos of Kaczynski, her sketch was a dead ringer for the suspect: the same broad face, the same jutting jaw.

"She's terrific," said Rick Smith, recently retired spokesman for the FBI's San Francisco office. "She offers a unique expertise to interview witnesses, eliciting from them more information than they could provide on their own."

As she had done with the sketch of Richard Allen Davis, the admitted killer of Polly Klaas, the artist had put a face on crime – this time the most wanted serial killer in America.

"Sometimes I just step back and say, My God, did I do this?" said Boylan, 41, of Bend, Ore. "It's truly a gift and I feel blessed."

Law enforcement demand for the free-lance artist has been demonstrated by her involvement in three of the biggest cases in the country. The Unabomber, the Polly Klaas kidnapping in Petaluma, Calif., and the Oklahoma City bombing.

Boylan, who has worked on more than 7,000 cases, specializes in working with victims who have experienced intense trauma. The FBI called her to Oklahoma City to draw John Doe No. 2 after the first sketch led nowhere.

Rather than show victims or witnesses transparencies of eyes and noses or catalogs of faces, as many police artists do, Boylan works only with someone's memory, her sketch pad and pencils.

"It's really important to understand the malleability of eyewitnesses," she said. "In the Unabomber case, we had the added factor of the one and only witness {the woman in Utah} being fully aware of the magnitude of the information she had."

A different artist had worked with the woman to produce a sketch in 1987, but the witness kept complaining that the drawing wasn't quite right.

"Continuously expressing her discontent worked to my advantage," Boylan said. "That enabled her to retain some of her recall."

The importance of not contaminating the memories of witnesses also surfaced dramatically when Boylan was called in to sketch the kidnapper of Polly Klaas. The two 12-year-old friends who were with Polly when she was taken already had been subjected to numerous interviews and a session with a local artist that produced an incorrect composite on two counts: The other artist's sketch showed the suspect wearing a headband and listed his height as 6 feet 3 inches.

After interviewing the girls separately, Boylan learned the man seen by the young witnesses had not been wearing a headband and that his height was closer to 5 feet 10. The young witnesses, who testified at Davis's trial in San Jose, Calif., this week, were

shown pictures of headgear by the initial artist in Petaluma, even though neither girl had said anything about a headband.

"Not only can a good sketch save investigative hours, but if the person is apprehended sooner, there's the potential for fewer victims," Boylan said.

The Unabomber, named after his early attacks on universities and airlines, killed three people and injured 23 others over 18 years.

Boylan's now-famous sketch, which, like all her work, is copyrighted, has been such a hit after the arrest of Kaczynski that the likeness is being sold on everything from T-shirts and sweat pants to key chains and coffee mugs. And the artist thinks all the hype has gone too far.

"It's so wrong that we glorify and romanticize these images," Boylan said. "I get so close to these victims and this just isn't right." Earlier this week, she announced that she wants part of the profits from the unauthorized marketing of her Unabomber sketch to go to childrens' rights groups.

CAPTION: Artist Jeanne Boylan, center, seen visiting the site of the Oklahoma City bombing last April, drew a composite sketch of suspect John Doe No. 2.

CAPTION: Boylan's sketch of the Unabomber suspect has become famous.

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