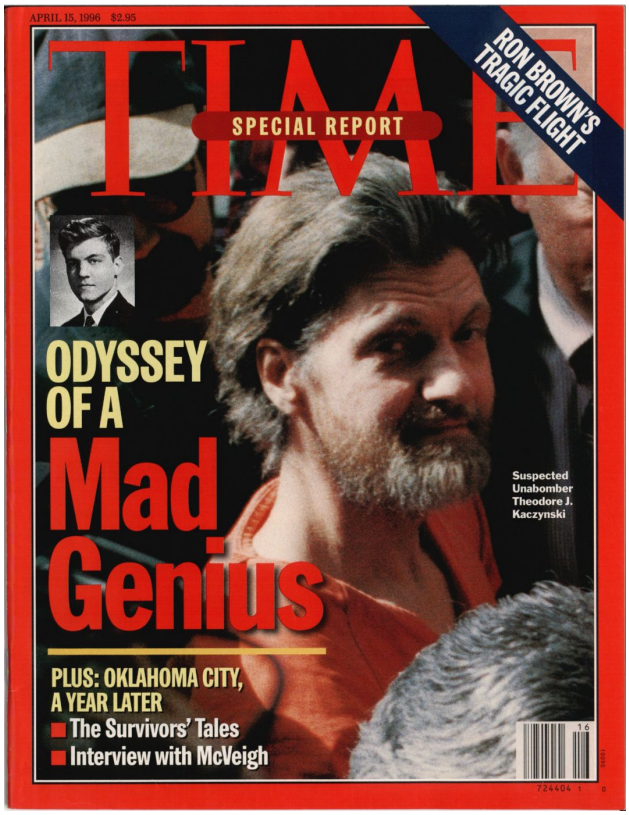
Tracking Down the Unabomber

The Harvard hermit discarded modern life 25 years ago; but after a long and obsessive manhunt, the feds are convinced they've finally got their mad bomber

Nancy Gibbs



Apr. 15, 1996

THE HUNTERS FOUND THEIR quarry right where he was meant to be, the place he had picked with the same care he brought to his other handiwork. Lincoln, Montana, sits as close as you can get to the spine of the western hemisphere and still have a post office and a library within walking distance. Theodore John Kaczynski lived at heaven's back door, just below the largest stretch of unbroken wilderness in the continental U.S. There are no cars, no roads, no buildings beyond a shelter or two, and on any given day more grizzly bears than people. This is America as the explorers found it, still sealed, unlit, unwired, resembling most perfectly the place the Unabomber wanted America to be.

Maybe it wasn't really so lonely at night in the woods at the edge of the Scapegoat Wilderness, where the trees sound like a crowd waiting for the curtain to rise. It is a place where a man who hates technology and progress and people would have plenty of time to practice what the Unabomber preaches. He could listen to the forest rustle and hum, the larches and ponderosa pines hundreds of years old, hundreds of feet high, the tamaracks and the lodgepoles that totter when the wind rubs up against the Continental Divide. What he didn't know was that for the past few weeks, the trees were listening back.

The agents were everywhere, disguised as lumberjacks and postal workers and mountain men. They had draped the forest with sensors and microphones, nestled snipers not far from the cabin, even summoned satellites to keep watch for a man practicing blowing things up. When they raided the mountain cabin last week, ending the longest, most expensive hunt for a serial killer in U.S. history, the agents finally got to look into the shaggy face of a man they had imagined and profiled and tracked like a grizzly for the past 18 years.

They restrained themselves from saying they had finally caught the Unabomber. After 200 suspects, thousands of interviews, visits with clairvoyants, 20,000 calls to 800-701-BOMB, the agents were not about to rush to judgment. But when they finally, carefully entered the cabin, fearing booby traps, they found a whole bomb factory, including a partially built pipe bomb, chemicals, wire, books on bombmaking and hand-drawn diagrams. The cache even included components bearing, a source told TIME, the unique signature of the Unabomber. (Every bombmaker, experts say, develops a hallmark: he may loop wires in a certain way, or set his switches at a certain angle or, in this case, create his contraptions out of wood.) On Friday, a law officer said, investigators defused a live bomb found in the cabin.

WITH A SUSPECT IN CUStody, the team of man hunters could fan out across the country, to universities, hotels, bus depots, trying to retrace his steps, reconstruct the past 18 years of his life and nail down the case against the man they believe is America's most wanted killer. They could also savor the vindication that he fit their expectations so uncannily. He was, as they had surmised, a white male, middle-aged, a loner whom no one would miss if he vanished for weeks at a time. An ideal neighbor who kept to himself–just as the entire town of Lincoln described "the hermit on the hill." The agents had expected a neat, meticulous man, someone who probably kept

careful notes and lists. And they found, amid his books, 10 three-ring notebooks full of data and diagrams and test results, the careful professor's lab report on the quest for the perfect bomb.

He had built his home of plywood, with an outhouse out back and a root cellar below and two walls filled floor to ceiling with Shakespeare and Thackeray and bomb manuals. Sometimes he would stay inside for weeks at a stretch. You could smell him coming, steeped in woodsmoke, dressed in black or sometimes fatigues, riding a one-speed bike cooked up out of spare parts. He wouldn't make small talk, often wouldn't even finish a sentence. The dogs figured him out long before the feds did. "All the dogs hated him," recalled Rick Christian, 48, a longtime local. "They'd chase him, bark at him, growl at him when he walked or rode his bike. I had to call them off him before."

Sometimes, when the weather was just too rough, Kaczynski would hitch a ride into town with the mailman. He would come into Lincoln to use the phone, or read endlessly at the library–Montana newspapers (the librarian did not subscribe to out-of-state papers), books in Spanish and German (usually borrowed from other libraries), issues of Scientific American and Omni. Once a month or so, he would visit the grocery store and load staples into his backpack: Spam and canned tuna and flour. He was strange, the townspeople said, but no stranger than others who had come to hide at the end of the world.

Kaczynski, who worked briefly at a neighbor's small sawmill a decade ago, wasn't especially handy, which may be an indication of how easy it is to assemble a mail bomb. "Ted was a hard worker," says his closest neighbor, Leland Mason, 57, "but he was not a smart worker. Short on common sense. He was not mechanically inclined. He had one old pickup truck one summer and drove it until it quit on him. It was just a minor thing that was wrong with the truck, but he didn't know how to fix it. He just let it sit up there, until somebody bought it from him. It only cost the new owner $25 for the part. Ted had a hard time with everyday mechanical things." He tried a chain saw for woodcutting for a while, but that experiment with technology too ended in frustration.

The bomb-squad cops had always said they were looking for a "junkyard bomber," because his inventions were patched together from lamp cords, bits of pipe, recycled screws and match heads. The first bomb went off at Northwestern University in 1978, bearing the name of a professor at the Technological Institute. A year later, a second bomb was left at the institute, injuring a graduate student who opened it. After that they came to an airline executive, the computer-science departments at Vanderbilt and Berkeley, a University of Michigan professor. He got better at it as he went along, a self-taught killer. The FBI shined him up with an '80s nickname–Unabom, for his favorite targets, universities and airlines. And as it became clear that all the attacks looked to be the work of one man, the Unabom task force was born.

They worked elbow to elbow inside the aging San Francisco federal building, agents from the FBI and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms and U.S. postal inspectors. They crunched and recrunched scraps of data through a massive parallel-

processing computer borrowed from the Pentagon, sifting through school lists, driver's-license registries, lists of people who had checked certain books out of libraries in California and the Middle West. "It was just an incredibly complicated jigsaw puzzle," says a former FBI agent who worked on the case.

Over mugs of coffee in the morning, pizza and beer at midnight, the task force obsessed about his contradictions. He scraped the labels off batteries so they could not be traced, used stamps long past their issue dates and wires that were out of production. He made his own explosives out of commonly available chemicals. He left no fingerprints. Yet he also used distinctive handmade components when store-bought parts would have worked better and been harder to trace. He made switches that he could have bought at Radio Shack. There were always clues and inside jokes, his trademark usually having something to do with wood. When he targeted the president of United Airlines, it was not lost on students of his obsessions that the man's name was Percy Wood, and the bomb came disguised in a book called Ice Brothers, published by Arbor House, whose symbol is a leaf. He polished and sometimes varnished his wood pieces, but it was clear, from the skewed corners and amateurish joints, that he was not a trained woodworker. "He's not a craftsman," Don Davis, a top postal inspector in San Francisco, said months ago. "His cuts aren't straight. They don't make right angles. He spends a lot of time; he does a lot of polishing and sanding to make it feel nice; but they don't look really craftsmanlike."

The agents imagined a smart, twisted man, carving and fiddling into the night. To kill three strangers and injure 22 others, he had to be powerfully angry. Yet he must have enormous patience to experiment with explosives and triggers and not blow his fingers off. "When you see this stuff, some of these components bear markings of having been put together and taken apart repeatedly," said Chris Ronay, the FBI's top bomb expert in the 1980s. "It's not just that he's creating something carefully. He's played with it for a while. He marks things with numbers so he can put them together again right. He's leaving a little of himself at each crime scene."

But in the end it was not his bombs, not his trademarks, not any sloppy mistake that gave him away. It may have been the Thackeray, the need to work serially and keep his audience in suspense. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, the Unabomber seemed to need to make it clear that those guys were amateurs and he was the pro. Somehow he needed to bring himself back onstage, to get credit for his masterpieces, and for his ability to elude a manhunt for so long. Seventeen years, and he hadn't been caught. Within five days, another deadly package was in the mail, this time to the president of the California Forestry Association–and the bomber immediately made it clear he was getting mad.

The Unabomber began the epistolary striptease that in the end brought him down. Using, as was his custom, the madman's we, he wrote to the New York Times, taunting his hunters. "It doesn't appear that the FBI is going to catch us anytime soon," the letter said. He wrote to an earlier victim, Yale professor David Gelernter, saying, "If you had any brains, you would have realized that there are a lot of people out there

who resent bitterly the way techno-nerds like you are changing the world, and you wouldn't have been dumb enough to open an unexpected package from an unknown source." Soon he was writing to the San Francisco Chronicle, threatening to blow up an airplane out of Los Angeles, which caused security to be tightened for several days. He promised to stop if the Times and the Washington Post would publish his magnum opus, a 35,000-word screed against industrial society and modern civilization. He said he was growing tired of making bombs. "Certainly his ending his level of seclusion to the point of submitting the manifesto and writing letters," says Ken Thompson, a domestic-terrorism specialist who retired from the FBI last year, "indicated someone at a point in his life where he wanted to gain the popularity of what he had done."

When Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director Louis Freeh consulted the publishers of the Post and the Times, they wrestled together over whether they should appear to give in to a terrorist in the hope of stopping the bombings–or worse, provoke him to greater violence by acceding to the demands. But the investigators wanted to take the gamble that some professor, some family member, someone who knew the killer would hear echoes of a friend or student or relative. They were hoping, in short, for David.

David Kaczynski was living in Schenectady, New York, working at a shelter for runaway children. Eight years younger than Ted, he had purchased the Montana land with his brother years before, and occasionally retreated to his own isolated cabin in East Texas that he bought more than 10 years ago. About five years ago, he moved to Schenectady to marry a high school sweetheart, Linda Patrik, an associate professor of philosophy at Union College. It is not clear how much contact he had in recent years with his hermit brother. If David was in touch with Ted, did he ever notice that bombs started going off when his brother went traveling?

Whatever doubts David had, whatever unholy fears, became impossible to ignore late last year when he went home to Chicago to help his mother Wanda move out of the small, gray house she had lived in for nearly 30 years. In sorting through their old boxes and trunks, David came upon some of Ted's journals and letters he had written to newspapers years earlier that suddenly sounded darkly familiar. Through a friend, a lawyer in Washington, David made tentative contact with the FBI, and an agent eventually persuaded him to come forward. When FBI agents searched a small shed behind the house, they found bombmaking materials. David pointed them to the Montana cabin, and they began the stakeout, which ended sooner than expected when news of the suspect leaked to a CBS reporter. Word of David's cooperation also leaked, despite assurances of anonymity from the FBI, and at week's end he and his mother Wanda were besieged by minicams at their Schenectady home, to the horror of their FBI handlers.

Ted Kaczynski, meanwhile, broke one or two sly smiles during his arraignment in Helena, Montana, but was otherwise docile and impassive. He had taken the cliche about serial killers–he was a quiet boy, never got in any trouble–and raised it to an

art form. He had cast no shadow, left no prints, made few friends, right up until the moment he vanished into the woods.

Born in Chicago in 1942, son of a Polish sausagemaker, Kaczynski was standout smart from childhood. His 89-year-old aunt told the Daily Southtown newspaper in Chicago that his parents were so intent on their son's academic success that they turned him into a "snob." Wanda would take her Theodore to Chicago art museums when he was a baby hoping to stimulate his intellect. "I used to tell her," the aunt said, "'Wanda, the boy is too young. He isn't learning anything.' Later she would tell me [when he was doing well in school], 'You see? He was listening.'"

He sprinted through high school in suburban Evergreen Park, not bothering with his junior year, and made only passing gestures at social contact. He did join the band for two years (he played the trombone) and the Coin Club, Biology Club, German Club and the Math Club, but he never stayed long and did not strike his classmates as weird or worrisome–unlike another student who wound up in jail. He did have one notable hobby, though: "I remember Ted had the know-how of putting together things like batteries, wire leads, potassium nitrate and whatever and creating explosions," recalls his boyhood friend Dale Eickelman, now a Dartmouth professor. The boys detonated explosives in fields or in a metal garbage can, using ingredients they could scrounge around the house or buy at the hardware store.

Off to Harvard at 16, Kaczynski managed to share a suite in preppy Eliot House with five fellow students without making much of an impression on any of them. "We had no interaction," says Michael Rohr, a philosophy professor at Rutgers. "I can't remember having a conversation with him." But N-43 was a strange suite, cobbled together out of converted servants' quarters in "the low-rent wing of Eliot House," as one roommate called it. The long corridor, with bedrooms branching off it, was where the college consigned its lone wolves. "We didn't choose to room together," Rohr says. "I was assigned to a suite of people without roommates. They were mostly loners. One of my suite mates, as I recall, seemed more interested in insects than people."

"Ted had a special talent for avoiding relationships by moving quickly past groups of people and slamming the door behind him," says Patrick McIntosh, another of the suite mates. Kaczynski's room was a swamp; the others finally called in the housemaster, the legendary Master of Eliot House John Finley, who was aghast. "I swear it was one or two feet deep in trash," McIntosh says. "It had an odor to it. Underneath it all were what smelled like unused cartons of milk."

Kaczynski had finished with Harvard by the time he was 20 and headed off into the cauldron of '60s campus radicalism, first at the University of Michigan, where he got his master's and Ph.D., then to the University of California, Berkeley, to teach. At Michigan he could be considered a rebel only because he wore a jacket and tie at just the moment when that was no longer done.

Like just about everything else during the antiwar years, mathematics had become politicized at Michigan, and Kaczynski's thesis adviser was among those who signed a manifesto urging peers to shun military contractors. Yet no one, either at Michigan or

Berkeley, remembers Ted's having any contact with the leftists he would later excoriate in his manifesto. "He did not go out of his way to make social contact," recalls his professor Peter Duren. "But he didn't strike me as being pathological. People in math are sometimes a bit strange. It goes with creativity." Despite almost five years' residency at the University of Michigan, he left no pictures, no yearbook entries–not even in 1964, when he got his master's degree, nor in 1967, when he received his Ph.D.

AT BERKELEY, AS AN ASSISTANT professor on a tenure track at the world's premier math department, Kaczynski seems to have lost his way. Again the radical politics of the antiwar movement were "in your face," recalls Robert Wold, 45, a Berkeley graduate from those years. "You had to choose. You were either part of it or you were against it." Again Ted hid in plain sight–no friends, no allies, no networking. When he suddenly resigned after teaching for two years, the department chair, John W. Addison Jr., tried and failed to talk him into staying. Not that dropping out was such a surprising move in that era. "It was not uncommon," recalls Addison, now professor emeritus of mathematics. "One of my advisees went and lived on a farm and did carpentry."

In 1971 Kaczynski set off for Montana, buying land and building his house and living on what he could grow or kill. He did odd jobs now and then but apparently got by on a few hundred dollars a year, with plenty of free time for his growing vocation: the disruption of the industrial society he had left behind. A fellow bank customer claims Kaczynski had some assets, yet six weeks ago he applied for a checkout clerk's job at Blackfoot market, which now sports a sign reading NO MEDIA, NO PRESS. Sherry Wood, the Lincoln librarian, is equally tight-lipped, though one of the library's unpaid volunteers has described his reading habits to the press. "I would go to jail before disclosing anything about my people," says Wood, who has nevertheless been grilled for several days by the FBI. She has also been offered bribes to talk about Kaczynski, but will publicly say only, "I like him."

On April 17 a federal grand jury will begin meeting in Great Falls to consider explosives charges against Kaczynski. If he is eventually charged for the Unabomber's spree, the case could be moved to San Francisco or some other jurisdiction where bombings occurred. Police and prosecutors from California to New Jersey are watching the mounting evidence and deciding whether to argue for the right to try him in their states. In the meantime, the investigators' job is not just to prove that Kaczynski looks, talks, walks and thinks like the Unabomber, but to show that he is the Unabomber. That means showing that he was in the right place at the right time to have concocted and delivered the bombs, that he never had an alibi, that he was never in jail or a mental hospital when a bombing occurred.

Already they have run down some bus tickets for trips out of Helena and identified the hotel he frequented there. Other agents last week were scouring hotels in Berkeley and Sacramento, California, showing clerks pictures of their suspect, hoping to place him in the city at the time when bombs were postmarked there. One of two typewriters found in the shack appears to match the one that produced the manifesto and will be subjected to comprehensive tests; the dna from saliva found on the stamps may

be compared to Kaczynski's. The most daunting task, and one that may never be complete, is to determine how he chose his victims–how, in his omnivorous reading of magazines, newspapers, journals and academic texts, particular names caught his attention and sparked his rage.

But Thursday night, dozens of FBI agents celebrated at the Seven-Up Guest Ranch a few miles from Lincoln–which has become their temporary headquarters. They are sure they have their man. They believe they have not only stopped an 18-year crime spree but also bagged an exceptional specimen: the brilliant sociopath who made himself virtually invisible. Says Ken Thompson: "The boys in the basement at Quantico are going to spend years studying this case."

–Reported by Sam Allis/Cambridge, Wendy Cole/Chicago, Pat Dawson/Lincoln, David S. Jackson/San Francisco and Elaine Shannon/Washington

SPECIAL REPORT UNABOMBER

TRACKING DOWN THE UNABOMBER

The Harvard Hermit discarded modern life 25 years ago; but after a long and obsessive manhunt, the feds are convinced they've finally got their mad bomber

By NANCY GIBBS

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Maybe it wasn't really so lonely at night in the woods at the edge of the Scapegoat Wilderness, where the trees sound like a crowd waiting for the curtain to rise. It is a place where a man who hates technology and progress and people would have plenty of time to practice what the Unabomber preaches. He could listen to the forest rustle and hum, the larches and ponderosa pines hundreds of years old, hundreds of feet high, the tamaracks and the lodgepoles that totter when the wind rubs up against the Continental Divide. What he didn't know was that for the past few weeks, the trees were listening back.

The agents were everywhere, disguised as lumberjacks and postal workers and mountain men. They had draped the forest with sensors and microphones, nestled snipers not far from the cabin, even summoned satellites to keep watch for a man practicing blowing things up. When they raided the mountain cabin last week, ending the longest, most expensive hunt for a serial killer in U.S. history, the agents

TED KACZYNSKI

The federal agents camped in the Montana snow for weeks, listening and waiting to pounce on their elusive suspect

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THEODORE KACZYNSKI: BRILLIANCE IN THE SHADOWS

MOTHER AND BROTHER

When mother Wanda and brother David began to clean out the family home in Lombard, Illinois, prior to selling it, they came upon Ted's letters and journals from years ago and heard echoes of the Unabomber's manifesto against industrial society

HIS HOUSE

Searching carefully for fear of booby traps, agents found bomb parts they think bear the Unabomber's unique signature—and a library and laboratory with chemicals, wire and hand-drawn diagrams

1958
HIGH SCHOOL

1962
HARVARD

Late 1960s
U.C., BERKELEY

1994
DRIVER'S LICENSE

1996
MUG SHOT

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They restrained themselves from saying they had finally caught the Unabomber. After 200 suspects, thousands of interviews, visits with clairvoyants, 20,000 calls to 800-701-BOMB, the agents were not about to rush to judgment. But when they finally, carefully entered the cabin, fearing booby traps, they found a whole bomb factory, including a partially built pipe bomb, chemicals, wire, books on bombmaking and hand-drawn diagrams. The cache even included components bearing, a source told TIME, the unique signature of the Unabomber. (Every bombmaker, experts say, develops a hallmark: he may loop wires in a certain way, or set his switches at a certain angle or, in this case, create his contraptions out of wood.) On Friday, a law officer said, investigators defused a live bomb found in the cabin.

With a suspect in custody, the team of man hunters could fan out across the country, to universities, hotels, bus depots, trying to retrace his steps, reconstruct the past 18 years of his life and nail down the case against the man they believe is America's most wanted killer. They could also savor the vindication that he fit their expectations so uncannily. He was, as they had surmised, a white male, middle-aged, a loner whom no one would miss if he vanished for weeks at a time. An ideal neighbor who kept to himself—just as the entire town of Lincoln described "the hermit on the hill." The agents had expected a neat, meticulous man, someone who probably kept careful notes and lists. And they found, amid his books, 10 three-ring notebooks full of data and diagrams and test results, the careful professor's lab report on the quest for the perfect bomb.

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THE MANIFESTO

The Oklahoma City bombing last April seemed to rustle the Unabomber out of the shadows; after years of silence, he began writing to victims and newspapers, making new threats and demands. By insisting on publication of his manifesto, he laid the trap that may ultimately have led to his capture

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But in the end it was not his bombs, not his trademarks, not any sloppy mistake that gave him away. It may have been the Thackeray, the need to work serially and keep his audience in suspense. In the wake of the Oklahoma City bombing, the Unabomber seemed to need to make it clear that those guys were amateurs and he was the pro. Somehow he needed to bring himself back onstage, to get credit for his masterpieces, and for his ability to elude a manhunt for so long. Seventeen years and he hadn't been caught. Within five days, another deadly package was in the mail, this time to the president of the California Forestry Association—and the bomber immediately made it clear he was getting mad.

The Unabomber began the epistolary striptease that in the end brought him down. Using, as was his custom, the madman's ace, he wrote to the New York *Times*, taunting his hunters. "It doesn't appear that the FBI is going to catch us anytime soon," the letter said. He wrote to an earlier victim, Yale professor David Gelernter, saying, "If you had any brains, you would have realized that there are a lot of people out there who resent bitterly the way techno-nerds like you are changing the world, and you wouldn't have been dumb enough to open an unexpected package from an unknown source." Soon he was writing to the San Francisco *Chronicle*, threatening to blow up an airplane out of Los Angeles, which caused security to be tightened for several days. He promised to stop if the *Times* and the Washington *Post* would publish his magnum opus, a 35,000-word screed against industrial society and modern civilization.

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When Attorney General Janet Reno and FBI Director Louis Freeh consulted the publishers of the *Post* and the *Times*, they wrestled together over whether they should appear to give in to a terrorist in the hope of stopping the bombings—or worse, provoke him to greater violence by acceding to the demands. But the investigators wanted to take the gamble that some professor, some family member, someone who knew the killer would hear echoes of a friend or student or relative. They were hoping, in short, for David.

David Kaczynski was living in Schenectady, New York, working at a shelter for runaway children. Eight years younger than Ted, he had purchased the Montana land with his brother years before, and occasionally retreated to his own isolated cabin in East Texas that he bought more than 10 years ago. About five years ago, he moved to Schenectady to marry a high school sweetheart, Linda Patrik, an associate professor of philosophy at Union College. It is not clear how much contact he had in recent years with his hermit brother. If David was in touch with Ted, did he ever notice that bombs started going off when his brother went traveling?

WHATEVER DOUBTS DAVID had, whatever unholy fears, became impossible to ignore late last year when he went home to Chicago to help his mother Wanda move out of the small, gray house she had lived in for nearly 30 years. In sorting through their old boxes and trunks, David came upon some of Ted's journals and letters he had written to newspapers years earlier that suddenly sounded darkly familiar. Through a friend, a lawyer in Washington, David made tentative contact with the FBI, and an agent eventually persuaded him to come forward. When FBI agents searched a small shed behind the house, they found bombmaking materials. David pointed them to the Montana cabin, and they began the stakeout, which ended sooner than expected when news of the suspect leaked to a CBS reporter. Word of David's cooperation also leaked, despite assurances of anonymity from the FBI, and at week's end he and his mother Wanda were besieged by minicams at their Schenectady home, to the horror of their FBI handlers.

Ted Kaczynski, meanwhile, broke one or two sly smiles during his arraignment in Helena, Montana, but was otherwise docile and impassive. He had taken the cliché about serial killers—he was a quiet boy, never got in any trouble—and raised it to an art form. He had cast no shadow, left no prints, made few friends, right up until the moment he vanished into the woods.

Born in Chicago in 1942, son of a Polish sausagemaker, Kaczynski was standout smart from childhood. His 89-year-old aunt told the *Daily Southtown* newspaper in Chicago that his parents were so intent on their son's academic success that they turned him into a "snob." Wanda would take her Theodore to Chicago art museums when he was a baby hoping to stimulate his intellect. "I used to tell her," the aunt said, "'Wanda, the boy is too young. He isn't learning anything.' Later she would tell me [when he was doing well in school], 'You see? He was listening.'"

He sprinted through high school in suburban Evergreen Park, not bothering with his junior year, and made only passing gestures at social contact. He did join the band for two years (he played the trombone) and the Coin Club, Biology Club, German Club and the Math Club, but he never stayed long and did not strike his classmates as weird or worrisome—unlike another student who wound up in jail. He did have one notable hobby, though: "I remember Ted had the know-how of putting together things like batteries, wire leads, potassium nitrate and whatever and creating explosions," recalls his boyhood friend Dale Eickelman, now a Dartmouth professor. The boys detonated explosives in fields or in a metal garbage can, using ingredients they could scrounge around the house or buy at the hardware store.

Off to Harvard at 16, Kaczynski managed to share a suite in preppy Eliot House with five fellow students without making much of an impression on any of them. "We had no interaction," says Michael Rohr, a philosophy professor at Rutgers. "I can't remember having a conversation with him." But N-43 was a strange suite, cobbled together out of converted servants' quarters in "the low-rent wing of Eliot House," as one roommate called it. The long corridor, with bedrooms branching off it, was where the college consigned its lone wolves. "We didn't choose to room together," Rohr says. "I was assigned to a suite of people without roommates. They were mostly loners. One of my suite mates, as I recall, seemed more interested in insects than people."

"Ted had a special talent for avoiding relationships by moving quickly past groups of people and slamming the door behind him," says Patrick McIntosh, another of the suite mates. Kaczynski's room was a swamp; the others finally called in the housemaster, the legendary Master of Eliot House John Finley, who was aghast. "I swear it was one or two feet deep in trash," McIntosh says. "It had an odor to it. Underneath it all were what smelled like unused cartons of milk."

Kaczynski had finished with Harvard by the time he was 20 and headed off into the cauldron of '60s campus radicalism, first at the University of Michigan, where he got his master's and Ph.D., then to the University of California, Berkeley, to teach. At Michigan he could be considered a rebel only because he wore a jacket and tie at just the moment when that was no longer done.

Like just about everything else during the antiwar years, mathematics had become politicized at Michigan, and Kaczynski's thesis adviser was among those who signed

A VICTIM REFLECTS ON THE "EVIL COWARD"

By DAVID GELERNTER

THE FIRST TIME I WAS HONORED BEYOND DESERVING WAS on a tour of a Hollywood studio as a child. For some reason, I was chosen to go onstage and pet a fake gorilla while it growled dramatically. I got a big hand. For several months after I was badly hurt by a mail bomb, it was the same story, roughly speaking: gratifying but undeserved applause. The public figured that computer technology had been (in some sense) the intended victim, and so I became Mr. Computer Science. I was proud to represent a field that has contributed so much in the way of knowledge, jobs, wealth and space-invader games over its brief history, but it was an honor I didn't deserve. There are computer scientists far more distinguished than I, and to tell the truth, I don't even like computers very much. They pose technical problems that are deep and engrossing, but when there is playing to be done, I'd much rather play with my young boys or my wife. I will make time to untangle the minor problems the boys' computer is prone to only when I am up against a wall and Prince of Persia has ground to a dead halt. I don't want any kidnapped princesses on my conscience.

I was especially unworthy to take on the role of representing computer science, because I had written pieces that many colleagues regarded as traitorous. The aspect of my first book, *Mirror Worlds*, that attracted the most attention was the debate between pro- and antitechnology alter egos; my skeptical side won. I'd also published attacks on the use of computers in school. Parents plead for a decent education in the basics, reading and writing and history and arithmetic, and too many teachers respond with vacuous fun and games with computers.

As for the suspect to whom (evidently) I owe the distinction, I will pass over in silence the fact that he is a Harvard man, and otherwise he doesn't interest me. The tendency among some intellectuals and journalists to dignify with analysis the thinking of violent criminals has always struck me as low and contemptible. I couldn't care less what the man's views on technology are or what message he intended to deliver; the message I got was that in any society, no matter how rich, just and free, you can rely on there being a certain number of evil cowards. I thank him for passing it along, but I knew that anyway.

When I made it back to my office several months after the explosion, it was immaculate for the first time in my career. There had been a fire and the sprinklers triggered, but my friends, colleagues and graduate students had lugged everything to a new office and set things up beautifully. At the bottom of one crate, I found my battered but legible copy of essays by E.B. White. I knew immediately what it was doing there and why it had survived the blast; it included a short piece called "What Do Our Hearts Treasure?" White tells in his unsentimental, concrete way about a Christmas he and his wife had to spend in Florida, about their vague unhappiness and forced cheer—and their pleasure when a box arrived from back home in Maine, out of the blue, and proved to be full of fir branches whose scent filled the room.

The bright side, so to speak, of grave injury, discomfort and nearness to death is that you emerge with a clear fix on what the heart treasures. Mostly I didn't learn anything new but had the satisfaction of having my hunches confirmed. I emerged knowing that, as I had always suspected, the time I spend with my wife and boys is all that matters in the end. I emerged as a practicing Jew. (Admittedly, I had always been one.) In the "miscellaneous" department, I emerged with great admiration for Senator Dole, whose battlefield injuries were a little like mine; I cribbed my leftie handshake from him, and his example cheered me when things were bad. I'd admired him anyway, but without any sense of personal connection.

JAMES KEYSER FOR TIME

David Gelernter is an author and computer scientist at Yale. On June 24, 1993, he received a package, presumed to be from the Unabomber, that exploded, severely wounding him in the abdomen, face, chest and hands

I emerged no longer diffident about lining up incorrectly with conventional career categories. By inclination I'm a writer and painter; I got into computer science because of the talmudic injunction to learn a useful trade and support your wife and family. Shoemaking was more what the rabbis had in mind, but I had never shown any aptitude for shoes and don't regret my choice. The explosion smashed my right hand, and for several months I was under the impression I would never paint again; I bitterly regretted the work I had never put down on canvas. But I learned to paint with my left hand, and will never again neglect my duties as a painter. By the same token, I'd been planning a book about the 1939 New York World's Fair. It was to be such an abnormal book—part history, part novel—that I figured it would be years before I worked up enough courage to write the thing. But when I got home from the hospital, it was clear that I ought just to sit down and do it. To my surprise it was a success; one critic who is quoted in praise of White's book on its cover is quoted on the cover of mine too—a thing the heart treasures. A number of people even bought copies.

And maybe in the end I might *not* have been a bad choice for Mr. Technology. It doesn't take a great scientist to embody the nobility of the basic enterprise; a man who doesn't see technology as the world's most important proposition and would rather be playing with his children than making discoveries might conceivably be a good representative of the whole quintessentially human quest, our continuing attempt to learn and build new things. My response to this week's arrest is to congratulate the FBI on its fine work, thank once again the many people who helped us generously when we needed it, remember and honor the men who were bestially murdered and drink *l'chaim*—to the life of mind, to the human enterprise that no bomb can touch. ■

BROTHER'S KEEPER

David, left, and Ted, center, in 1954; their mother used to read *Scientific American* aloud to her boys; it was David who ultimately turned his brother over to the FBI

a manifesto urging peers to shun military contractors. Yet no one, either at Michigan or Berkeley, remembers Ted's having any contact with the leftists he would later excoriate in his manifesto. "He did not go out of his way to make social contact," recalls his professor Peter Duren. "But he didn't strike me as being pathological. People in math are sometimes a bit strange. It goes with creativity." Despite almost five years' residency at the University of Michigan, he left no pictures, no yearbook entries—not even in 1964, when he got his master's degree, nor in 1967, when he received his Ph.D.

AT BERKELEY, AS AN ASSISTANT professor on a tenure track at the world's premier math department, Kaczynski seems to have lost his way. Again the radical politics of the antiwar movement were "in your face," recalls Robert Wold, 45, a Berkeley graduate from those years. "You had to choose. You were either part of it or you were against it." Again Ted hid in plain sight—no friends, no allies, no networking. When he suddenly resigned after teaching for two years, the department chair, John W. Addison Jr., tried and failed to talk him into staying. Not that dropping out was such a surprising move in that era. "It was not uncommon," recalls Addison, now professor emeritus of mathematics. "One of my advisees went and lived on a farm and did carpentry."

In 1971 Kaczynski set off for Montana, buying land and building his house and living on what he could grow or kill. He did odd jobs now and then but apparently got by on a few hundred dollars a year, with plenty of free time for his growing vocation: the disruption of the industrial society he had left behind. A fellow bank customer claims Kaczynski had some assets, yet six weeks ago he applied for a checkout clerk's job at Blackfoot market, which now sports a sign reading NO MEDIA, NO PRESS. Sherry Wood, the Lincoln librarian, is equally tight-lipped, though one of the library's unpaid volunteers has described his reading habits to the press. "I would go to jail before disclosing anything about my people," says Wood, who has nevertheless been grilled for several days by the FBI. She has also been offered bribes to talk about Kaczynski, but will publicly say only, "I like him."

On April 17 a federal grand jury will begin meeting in Great Falls to consider explosives charges against Kaczynski. If he is eventually charged for the Unabomber's spree, the case could be moved to San Francisco or some other jurisdiction where bombings occurred. Police and prosecutors from California to New Jersey are watching the mounting evidence and deciding whether to argue for the right to try him in their states. In the meantime, the investigators' job is not just to prove that Kaczynski looks, talks, walks and thinks like the Unabomber, but to show that he *is* the Unabomber. That means showing that he was in the right place at the right time to have concocted and delivered the bombs, that he never had an alibi, that he was never in jail or a mental hospital when a bombing occurred.

Already they have run down some bus tickets for trips out of Helena and identified the hotel he frequented there. Other agents last week were scouring hotels in Berkeley and Sacramento, California, showing clerks pictures of their suspect, hoping to place him in the city at the time when bombs were postmarked there. One of two typewriters found in the shack appears to match the one that produced the manifesto and will be subjected to comprehensive tests; the DNA from saliva found on the stamps may be compared to Kaczynski's. The most daunting task, and one that may never be complete, is to determine how he chose his victims—how, in his omnivorous reading of magazines, newspapers, journals and academic texts, particular names caught his attention and sparked his rage.

But Thursday night, dozens of FBI agents celebrated at the Seven-Up Guest Ranch a few miles from Lincoln—which has become their temporary headquarters. They are sure they have their man. They believe they have not only stopped an 18-year crime spree but also bagged an exceptional specimen: the brilliant sociopath who made himself virtually invisible. Says Ken Thompson: "The boys in the basement at Quantico are going to spend years studying this case." —***Reported by Sam Allis/Cambridge, Wendy Cole/Chicago, Pat Dawson/Lincoln, David S. Jackson/San Francisco and Elaine Shannon/Washington***

Nancy Gibbs

Tracking Down the Unabomber

The Harvard hermit discarded modern life 25 years ago; but after a long and obsessive manhunt, the feds are convinced they've finally got their mad bomber

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