

Where Is 'Unabomber' Ted Kaczynski Now?

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The domestic terrorist known as the “Unabomber” killed three people and injured more than 20 others during his 17-year mail-bombing campaign from 1978 to 1995. The infamous moniker comes from the FBI-led task force’s investigation code name for his university and passenger plane targets: **UNABOMB** (UNiversity and Airline BOMB).

Of the **16 bombs** he sent, the Unabomber’s most destructive were the **three fatal explosives** that killed Hugh Scrutton, a California computer store owner in 1985, Thomas Mosser, a New Jersey advertising executive in 1994 and Gilbert Murray, president of the California Forestry Association, in 1995.

It wasn’t until 1996 that the FBI arrested Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski, finally bringing an end to one of the longest and costliest FBI manhunts in U.S. history. At the time, he was living in a remote 10×14-foot Montana cabin he built with **no running water or electricity**.

Kaczynski’s Life Before His Arrest

Kaczynski was born in 1942 in a Chicago suburb to a sausage maker and a stay-at-home mother. His family called him **Teddy John**.

At nine months old, Kaczynski was hospitalized for an allergic rash covering his body. The hospital only allowed his parents to visit their infant son for a few hours every other day, which was standard practice in 1942. His mother, Wanda, eventually recounted how the future terrorist would **scream as he was taken from her** at the end of each visit, telling the FBI she believed this experience laid the foundation for the path that led to Kaczynski’s 1996 arrest.

Kaczynski, who was reported to have a genius-level IQ of 167 (his brother, David Kaczynski, has stated **it to be 165**), attended Harvard on scholarship starting at age 16. While there, Kaczynski was recruited for the **Murray Experiment**, which intended to create severe stress in subjects via psychological abuse and humiliation.

Kaczynski’s Self-isolation and Fear of Technology

After graduating at 20, Kaczynski earned his master’s degree and Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1967 before accepting an assistant math professor position at the University of California at Berkeley.

Kaczynski unexpectedly resigned in 1969. He gave no reason to the university, but according to an essay David Kaczynski wrote for *Psychology Today*, Ted Kaczynski told his family he was isolating himself from industrial society and severing familial ties.

The reason? He believed technology was destroying humanity and the environment.

Kaczynski eventually built a **primitive shack**, a cabin he lived in, on a 1.4-acre **parcel of land** in the woods of Lincoln, Montana.

The Unabomber’s Manifesto

In this cabin, Kaczynski wrote a 35,000-word **manifesto** ultimately published by both *The Washington Post* and *The New York Times* under threat of another bombing “with intent to kill.” (Both the then-serving attorney general and FBI director **reportedly recommended** the publication for “humanitarian reasons.”) When David Kaczynski and his wife Linda Patrik read the screed, they recognized Ted’s unhinged musings. FBI agents closed in on Ted after David **turned his brother in**.

“As much as I wanted to,” David Kaczynski wrote in his Psychology Today essay, “I couldn’t deny that it might be my brother’s writing.”

David Kaczynski would later publish *Every Last Tie: The Life of the Unabomber and His Family*.

The Arrest

FBI investigators knocked on Kaczynski’s cabin door on April 3, 1996, finding—among other evidence—40,000 handwritten journal pages describing bomb-making experiments. They also found a live bomb, ready for mailing.

One of the many journal entries provided a chilling glimpse into his mind. Upon learning that Scrutton, the computer store owner, had been “blown to bits,” **he wrote**: “Excellent! Humane way to eliminate someone. Probably never felt a thing.”

After Kaczynski’s arrest, his writings and **the cabin itself, were seized by the FBI**. (The cabin was reconstructed at the **FBI headquarters** in Washington D.C. in 2020.)

Kaczynski was arraigned in Sacramento, California and **charged with the three fatal bombings**. His lawyers wanted him to plead insanity, but he refused to. He attempted suicide while in jail in 1998 and was later diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. He asked to be able to defend himself, but that request was denied.

The Sentencing: Life Without Parole

After a **long-delayed trial**, Kaczynski confessed as part of a plea deal and pleaded guilty to 13 counts of transporting explosive devices with the intent to kill or maim.

He was sentenced on January 22, 1998 to **multiple life sentences without the possibility of parole** and fined more than \$15 million. Lead prosecutor Robert Cleary told reporters he felt “justice was done.”

One of Kaczynski’s surviving victims, a geneticist at the University of California, told the *Los Angeles Times*, “no punishment would be harsh enough,” referring to Kaczynski’s sentence as “imperfect justice.”

Where is Ted Kaczynski Now?

Kaczynski, who is now 80, has spent much of his sentence in an isolated cell at the high-security prison Supermax in Florence, Colorado. At that facility, he shared his one-hour of recreation time—which took place in individual 12×18 foot wire mesh cages—with Oklahoma City bomber **Timothy McVeigh** and **Ramzi Yousef**, the 1993 World Trade Center bomber who killed six people and injured more than 1,000

others, according to *Yahoo News*, which has published a series on **his publicly available letters and other writings**.

On December 14, 2021, Kaczynski was **transferred** to the Federal Medical Center (FMC) in Butner, North Carolina.

Kaczynski’s Life Behind Bars

FMC Butner is a federal prison that houses inmates of all security levels who have health issues. According to the **FMC Butner handbook**, the facility “provides extensive medical services and mental health care to the inmate population.”

“For safety and security reasons, we do not discuss the specific conditions of an inmate’s confinement,” a Bureau of Prisons spokesman Scott Taylor tells *A&E True Crime* when asked to confirm rumors, based on an unauthenticated letter to a pen pal that Kaczynski was battling terminal cancer.

Taylor says inmates at FMC Butner are provided daily with “heart-healthy” meals, including vegetables and fresh fruit.

FMC Butner inmates have access to a leisure and legal library six days a week. No specific details are publicly available about Kaczynski’s prison life, but recreational activities at the facility include crafts, pool tables and stationary bikes.

While he reportedly has cut off all ties with his family since learning his brother turned him in, Kaczynski has exchanged letters with hundreds of pen pals, even discussing marriage with one woman until she died of cancer in 2006. Those letters are part a larger collection of **Kaczynski’s papers** he donated to the University of Michigan Library’s **Labadie Collection**, which documents social protest history.

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