I Don’t Want To Live Long: Ted Kaczynski

I Would Rather Get The Death Penalty Than Spend The Rest Of My Life In Prison Ted Kaczynski talks about life in jail, his appeal plans and his brother David, who still struggles over the decision to turn in the Unabomber

Stephen J. Dubner

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There is probably never a good time to ask the question–Tell me, do you consider yourself insane?–but when the time comes, Ted Kaczynski responds without hesitation. ”I’m confident that I’m sane, personally,” he says. ”I don’t get delusions and so on and so forth...I mean, I had very serious problems with social adjustment in adolescence, and a lot of people would call this a sickness. But it would have to be distinguished between an organic illness, like schizophrenia or something like that.”

He is sitting on a concrete stool in a concrete booth with windows made of reinforced glass. When he was first led in, his wrists were handcuffed behind his back. Facing forward, he squatted down so a guard could remove his cuffs through a slot low in the door. This is how things are done at the federal ”Supermax” prison in Florence, Colo., where he has been since last spring and may well remain for the rest of his life.

His voice is nasal and singsongy, full of flat Chicago vowels. He is 57, his hair and beard trimmed close, and his upbeat manner hardly resembles that of the man who three years ago was marched out of his tiny Montana cabin and into infamy. He makes constant eye contact, laughs easily and often; when it’s time for a photograph, he jokingly pops out a fake front tooth, as if to parody the deranged mountain-man image he inhabits in the public’s mind. He is, for the most part, affable, polite and sincere. It would almost be easy to forget that he mailed or delivered at least 16 package bombs and then logged the results with the glee of a little boy tearing the wings off a fly. Over the course of 18 years, the Unabomber killed three people and wounded 23 more.

When he was arrested, Kaczynski was widely assumed to be insane. But he will not tolerate being called, as he puts it, ”a nut,” or ”a lunatic” or ”a sicko.” He says he pleaded guilty last year only to stop his lawyers from arguing he was a paranoid schizophrenic, as had been the diagnosis by court-appointed psychiatrists.

While the world might take some comfort in attributing Kaczynski’s deeds to illness rather than ill will, he is actively opposed to lending such comfort. He has written a book, Truth Versus Lies (to be published by Context Books in New York City), its chief aim is to assert his sanity. The book does not address the Unabomber crimes (nor does Kaczynski in person, for he is seeking a retrial and doesn’t wish to damage his slim chances), but it is the most thorough accounting of his life to date.

The book is also Kaczynski’s counterattack against his brother David. It was David, of course, who turned Ted in, at the urging of his wife, Linda Patrik, the woman who had come between them years earlier. After Ted’s arrest, David was instantly lauded as a sort of moral superhero for sacrificing his beloved if troubled brother. Not surprisingly, Ted finds fault with this scenario. David’s decision to turn him in, he says, was less a moral or lawful one than a way to settle a perversely complicated sibling rivalry. Beneath David’s love for him, he argues, lay ”a marked strain of resentment,” and ”jealousy over the fact that our parents valued me more highly.”

”It’s quite true that he is troubled by guilt over what he’s done,” Ted writes, ”but I think his sense of guilt is outweighed by his satisfaction at having finally gotten revenge on big brother.”

There is, it should be said, a certain lack of perspective in Ted's writing. After all, it was he, not David, who sent the bombs. Still, the original tale had been so much neater: the evil, deranged brother and the righteous, heartbroken brother who put a killer out of commission. As it turns out, the Kaczynski tragedy is more Greek than American, a morally complicated tale in which even the most righteous intentions have created shadows that will haunt all the players for the rest of their lives.

In the wake of the Unabomber's arrest, as David simultaneously lobbied for Ted's life and reached out to Ted's victims, he and Linda struck me as extraordinary. They seemed to have stumbled into an impossible situation and acted honorably at every turn. Several months ago, I contacted them to talk about the price of morality–that is, the cost they have paid for committing a deeply difficult act. Because they have sold the book and film rights to their story (the money, they say, will largely go to a fund for bombing victims), certain aspects of their lives are off limits, but otherwise they were forthcoming and frank.

As publication of Ted's book neared, however, what became even more intriguing than the consequences of their moral act were the motivations behind it. So in August, I wrote to Ted; I wanted his take on the tortured dynamic between the two brothers and the woman who has played such a catalytic, though overlooked, role in their story. (David and Linda were upset when the article shifted in this direction, and eventually stopped participating.)

Ted, as it turned out, was more than eager to talk about David. And about pretty much everything. The life of a notorious prisoner, he admits, has its advantages. He lives on "Celebrity Row," a group of eight cells protected from the prison's general population. His cell is equipped with a television set (he says he rarely watches) and a light switch, which allows him to stay up at night reading (he has gift subscriptions to the Los Angeles Times, the New York Review of Books, the New Yorker and National Geographic) or writing (answering letters or preparing legal papers). He goes to bed around 10 p.m. and wakes up before 6 a.m., when breakfast is delivered. "The food here, believe it or not, is pretty good," he says. He showers only every other day ("I have sensitive skin") and several days a week is allowed a 90-minute recreation period–the only time he has contact with the other "celebrity" prisoners. "These people are not what you would think of as criminal types," he says. "I mean, they don't seem to be very angry people. They're considerate of others. Some of them are quite intelligent."

Among them, he says, are Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, and Timothy McVeigh. One can only imagine this bombing trio's conversations. Kaczynski says McVeigh (who has recently been transferred to another prison) lent him one of the most interesting books he's read lately, Tainting Evidence: Inside the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab, by John F. Kelly and Phillip K. Wearne. "I mean, I knew from my own experience that they were crooked and incompetent," Kaczynski says, shaking his head and laughing. "But according to this book, they're even worse than what I thought."

Contacting the FBI, he says, was only the beginning of his brother's betrayal. By arguing that Ted should not be sentenced to death on account of mental illness, David committed a dual sin: labeling Ted crazy and dooming him to an utterly unnatural existence. "He knows very well that imprisonment is to me an unspeakable humiliation," Ted writes in Truth Versus Lies, "and that I would unhesitatingly choose death over incarceration."

At one point, I ask Ted what he would have done had their roles been reversed, had Ted suspected David of being the Unabomber.

"I would have kept it to myself," he says.

"Is that what you feel he should have done?"

"Yeah."

When I ask Ted what he would say to David if he were in the room now, he answers, "Nothing. I just wouldn't talk to him. I would just turn my back and wouldn't talk to him."

David, who lives in upstate New York and works as a counselor at a teenage-runaway shelter, says he still loves his brother. He has written him repeatedly, offering at least one apology, but Ted has not answered. In order to gain forgiveness, Ted writes, David must renounce the "lies" he has told about Ted, leave his wife and remove himself from modern society. "If he does not redeem himself," Ted adds, "then as far as I am concerned he is the lowest sort of scum, and the sooner he dies, the better."

It is as awkward to face the gulf between these two brothers as it is difficult to overestimate the depth of feeling that once passed between them. Ted's life was steeped in rejection, isolation and anger; through it all, his younger brother was the only person ever to connect with him.

David's feelings for Ted, in fact, bordered on worship. He was particularly smitten by Ted's belief that modern man was being corrupted by society in general and technology in particular. "Knowing him as I do," Ted writes, "I am certain that if Dave had known of the Unabomber before 1989"–the year David moved in with Linda Patrik–"he would have regarded him as a hero."

David adamantly disputes this–he deplores violence, he says–but he doesn't seem surprised to hear Ted say it. "I think every person is a mystery, and it's strange to me that a person I grew up with and was very close with remains one of the biggest mysteries of all." David's manner is as gentle as Ted's is brisk, and he speaks with a great earnestness. (The teenagers he counsels call him Mr. Rogers.) When he talks about his brother, however, his voice is full of resignation, the sort felt by someone who has watched a relationship curdle beyond recognition.

THE BOYS TOGETHER

Ted and David's parents, Wanda and Theodore R. Kaczynski, were atheists, working-class intellectuals who valued education and dearly wanted their sons to succeed on a higher plane.

Ted proved to be exceptionally bright from an early age. He was generally happy, he writes, until he was about 11. That was when he skipped the first of two grades in school, which led to his entering Harvard at the age of 16. At school he was painfully awkward around his older classmates. At home he sulked, and his parents, he says, railed against his antisocial behavior, calling him "sick" and "a creep." He began to despise them, especially Wanda, who he felt treated him more like a trophy than a son. "I hate you, and I will never forgive you, because the harm you did me can never be undone," he would write her more than 30 years later. (Through David, Wanda declined to be interviewed for this article.)

David Kaczynski, seven years younger, had an easier time of things. He too was bright–he would go on to study literature at Columbia University–and he was far more socially adept.

The brothers got along fairly well, although Ted admits to taking out his teenage frustrations on David. Nevertheless, it was Ted whom David most admired, especially as Ted began to speak about abandoning civilization to live in the wilderness. The boys' father often took them on hikes outside Chicago, and Ted read extensively about nature, wondering what it might be like to live beyond the reach of the modern world.

At Harvard, Ted felt socially isolated by other students. He recalls that "their speech, manners, and dress were so much more 'cultured' than mine." There was an even greater unease in Ted's life; he suffered from what he calls "acute sexual starvation." Sexual references run throughout his book, and although he never ties them into a knot, one cannot help wondering if sexual frustration was his main despair. As an adolescent, he recalls, "my attempts to make advances to girls had such humiliating results that for many years afterward, even until after the age of 30, I found it excruciatingly difficult–almost impossible–to make advances to women... At the age of 19 to 20, I had a girlfriend; the only one I ever had, I regret to say." According to a psychiatric report compiled before his trial, Ted, while in graduate school at the University of Michigan, experienced "several weeks of intense and persistent sexual excitement involving fantasies of being a female. During that time period, he became convinced that he should undergo sex-change surgery."

In the face of such constant sadness and humiliation, Ted Kaczynski eventually decided he would live out his life alone in the wilderness. His retreat to the Montana mountains could simply be viewed as an embrace of a desire he harbored much of his life. Or it could be viewed as a rejection of the world that had rejected him–a world full of purposeful academics and scientists, of happily married couples, of people who weren't humiliated by daily social interaction–and that would someday pay for its ease.

GROWING APART

When asked about the fondest memories he holds of David, Ted cites a day in the early 1970s in Great Falls, Mont. David had moved there first, after college, and was working as a copper smelter. Ted was building his cabin on land the brothers had bought together outside Lincoln. One day, Ted recalls, they took their baseball gloves to a park. ”We were as far apart as we could get and still reach each other with the ball,” Ted says, smiling, as if lost in the moment. ”We were throwing that ball as hard as we could, and as far as we could... And so we were making these running, leaping catches. We made more fantastic catches that day than I think we did in all the rest of our years together.”

Their bond now was perhaps as strong as it would ever be. They were a pair of anti-careerist Ivy League grads united by their love of the outdoors–and also, frankly, by their failure at romantic love. David had been only slightly more successful with women than Ted. He had already decided that there was only one woman he could ever love–her name was Linda Patrik–and though they had a few dates during college, things didn't work out.

In Great Falls, Ted often spent the night at David's apartment. One day, while David was not at home, Ted came across some letters from Linda, whom Ted had never heard David mention. ”They were in a drawer,” Ted writes, ”not lying out in the open, and I knew that he would not want me to read them, but I read them anyway... Why did I do it? I was full of contempt for him, and when you have contempt for someone you tend to be disregardful of his rights.”

Ted thrived on his brother's adulation but was also ”disgusted” by it, he writes. While they shared a disdain for materialism and an ”oversocialized” lifestyle, Ted considered David undisciplined, physically and intellectually lazy. He also felt David was prone to manipulation, especially by women–as Linda Patrik's letters seemed to illustrate. ”The letters were not very informative,” he writes, ”but they did make this much clear about Dave's relationship with Linda Patrik: He had a long-term crush on her; his relationship to her was servile.” Ted saw David, derisively, as more companion than mate to Linda, ”a shoulder for her to cry on.”

David and Linda had grown up together in Chicago, and he had never given up on her. They kept in touch while David lived in Montana, and throughout the 1970s, as he taught high school English in Iowa, wrote an unpublished novel and drove a commuter bus near Chicago. But Linda eventually married another man. Faced with this reality, David slipped off to the wilderness–interestingly, not to Ted's Montana mountain area but to the Big Bend desert region of western Texas. He had $40,000 in savings and, like Ted, a vague plan to spend the rest of his years alone.

He lived in a fortified hole in the ground called a pit house, with no plumbing or electricity. He kept writing but was mainly, according to a friend, ”a lost, searching, unhappy soul.” He and Ted wrote each other frequently, extremely tender at times but just as often engaged in brittle clashes of ego. ”If that story is typical of your previous

writing," Ted wrote after David sent him some of his fiction, "then it's obvious why no one wants to publish your stuff–it's just plain bad, by anyone's standard."

In 1982 Ted broke off communication with his parents. Given his brand of terrorism, the breakup's "proximate cause," as he puts it, was ironic: he was annoyed by the packages of food and reading material his mother mailed him.

For several years, David was Ted's only link to the family and seemingly the only person in a position to mediate his growing anger. Today David will not say when he began to suspect that Ted was mentally ill, only that "clearly he has had very serious mental and emotional problems."

In September 1989, David wrote Ted to say he was leaving the desert. Linda Patrik had divorced, and after she visited him in Texas, David decided to move with her to Schenectady, N.Y., where she taught philosophy at Union College.

Ted's response had the tone of a scorned lover, or a deposed guru. "If you don't irritate or disgust me in one way," he wrote, "then you do so in another... And now, to top off my disgust, you're going to leave the desert and shack up with this woman who's been keeping you on a string for the past 20 years." He continued, "I can pretty well guess who the dominant member of that couple is going to be. It's just disgusting. Let me know your neck size–I'd like to get you a dog collar next Christmas."

He added that he wanted nothing more to do with David, ever, then signed off with a typically manipulative flourish: "But remember–you still have my love and loyalty, and if you're ever in serious need of my help, you can call on me."

It is tempting to interpret Ted's anger as a reaction not specifically against Linda–he had never met her–but against his acolyte's attainment of something he had spent his life without: a woman.

The following summer, David and Linda were married in a Buddhist ceremony in their backyard. Ted did not attend. Two months later, David's father became ill with late-stage lung cancer. David returned to Chicago; driving home from the hospital after a radiation treatment, father and son had a long, cleansing talk. That night Theodore R. Kaczynski gave David his gold watch; the next day he shot himself.

Ted did not attend his father's funeral either. By this point, Linda Patrik, having read Ted's letters to David, recognized that her brother-in-law was trouble. According to the Journal of Family Life, a small Albany, N.Y., publication, Linda forbade David ever to let Ted into their house; she went so far as to warn her father in Chicago that if for some reason Ted were to come to his door, he was to be turned away. She took some of his letters to a psychiatrist, who judged Ted to be paranoid and possibly dangerous. She and David inquired about having him institutionalized, but were told that would be impossible unless Ted were to volunteer. Or unless he had committed acts of violence.

He had done so, of course, and would continue. But David had no inkling–and, as Ted's still reverent little brother, no desire to have an inkling–that Ted might be the Unabomber. It was Linda who first raised the possibility. In September 1995, when the Washington Post and the New York Times published the Unabomber's "manifesto," she

cajoled David into reading it. After negotiating with the FBI and deliberating with Linda (one keenly senses she herself might have turned Ted in, had David refused), David told the authorities where they would find his brother.

LIFE AFTER THE DECISION

Linda and David still live in Schenectady. They bought their handsome, low-ceilinged, blood-red house–built in 1720–just before the Unabomber was unveiled. Linda now wishes they could live outside the city, away from curiosity seekers who want to see the home of the Unabomber's brother. On the summer weekend I visited, most of their things were still in boxes. They had just returned from sabbatical and were soon heading out to a monthlong Buddhist seminar.

Linda, 49, and David, 50, have both gone gray since the 60 Minutes interview in which they pleaded that Ted's life be spared and announced they would take no money, reward or otherwise, generated by this case. Their marriage has grown stronger these past years, they both say, but when asked about Unabomber-induced tensions, Linda promptly ticks off items on her list. While she was the catalyst for capturing the Unabomber, for instance, most reporters wanted to speak only to David. "Then I get to feel envious," she says, "and David gets credit for turning in his brother, and I don't." She was also jealous of how some journalists, especially those young and female, regarded her husband, "gazing at him with puppy-dog eyes and hanging on every word." Did her philosophy students ever question her about the moral dimensions of her dilemma? "No, no, no. They come to me and say, 'Oh, your husband's so wonderful, you're so lucky to be married to such an ethical man.'" She sticks a finger down her throat and pretends to gag. David laughs uncomfortably. As she speaks, he listens, careful not to interrupt; when it is his turn, he seems to tread lightly.

I had expected, I must admit, a more united front. Only now do I realize their desire to turn Ted in may not have been unilateral: Linda was afraid of this man she had never met, while David loved at least a part of him. That their marriage could survive such pressure–even before the media wave–says a lot about it.

Alone, David is looser. He plays baseball in an over-30 league, and one morning he took me to his game. (He played first base and pitched, batting two for four.) Baseball, he says, is the one thing that allows him to forget the ordeal, if only for a few hours. On the drive home, he spoke passionately about his love of nature, literature and philosophy. Before long, though, his mind returned to the Unabomber. Soon after his brother's arrest, he says, "I had a depressive realization that I don't know if I'll ever really feel carefree again, ever come upon those moods where you just feel unalloyed delight and joy." Before his discovery that Ted was the Unabomber, he adds, "ethical questions weren't that important to me. I was more interested in trying to break through and find the transcendental. But now I have all kinds of questions about other things. I thought I knew the difference between right and wrong." Clearly, that

difference has been forever muddied–for his decision to turn in the Unabomber was the right thing to do, as wrong as it feels to have imprisoned his brother.

And now comes Ted's book, charging that David's decision was in some part based on resentment. "I think he's wrong there," David says, while acknowledging that "there have been times when I felt some resentment of Ted" and that Ted sometimes made him "very angry."

David, it seems likely, will forever wrestle with the horrible bind his murderous brother put him in. Balancing his devotion to Ted with a devotion to the aftermath of Ted's actions, he is the opposite of a kid who begs his parents for a puppy and then abandons all custodial duties. Last year, for instance, he spent months lobbying Congress (unsuccessfully) to exempt the Unabomber reward from taxes so the bulk of it could go to the victims' fund he and Linda established. Yet David's life, oddly, may be richer now than it has ever been. As a man who has long existed in the shadow of someone else–first his brother, then his wife–he at last finds himself at the center of things. There are humanitarian awards to accept, anti-death penalty interviews to give, victims'-rights speeches to deliver. He has even considered a lecture tour with one of Ted's victims.

Might he even leave his counseling job for a life of public speaking and advocacy? "Yes," he says, "but I'm leery of making money or celebrity out of this terrible tragedy. On the other hand, it's an amazing opportunity to be listened to... Obviously, I'm not immune to flattery, and it feels good to get those kinds of strokes from people."

Asked whether he feels guilty for having turned Ted in, David says, "Guilt suggests a very clear conviction of wrongdoing, and certainly I don't feel that I did wrong. On the other hand, there are tremendously complicated feelings not just about the decision itself but a lifetime of a relationship in which one brother failed to help protect another." Even now, he hopes Ted will one day agree to see him, but when asked whether he has envisioned their reconciliation, he grows quiet. "No, I don't think it would be helpful," he says after a time. "The future never meets us in the ways we imagine."

TED LOOKS TO THE FUTURE

Ted Kaczynski too enjoys a certain amount of attention these days. He receives mail from sympathizers and admirers. He has accepted an offer to donate his personal papers to a major university's library of anarchist materials. He wrote a parable for a literary magazine at another university. Speaking with him, one is struck not by the burning anger that characterized his Unabomber campaign but by a satisfaction that the world, at long last, is treating him like a valuable human being.

His spirits don't seem particularly low–not nearly as low as the relatives of his victims might like them to be. To me, in fact, he seems optimistic about life in general.

"Well, obviously I'm not optimistic about life in general," he says. "If I were, then maybe you would have a case for concluding that I was mentally ill.

”Let me try to explain it this way,” he continues. ”When I was living in the woods, there was sort of an undertone, an underlying feeling that things were basically right with my life. That is, I might have a bad day, I might screw something up, I might break my ax handle and do something else and everything would go wrong. But...I was able to fall back on the fact that I was a free man in the mountains, surrounded by forests and wild animals and so forth.

”Here it’s the other way around. I’m not depressed or downcast, and I have things I can do that I consider productive, like working on getting out this book. And yet the knowledge that I’m locked up here and likely to remain so for the rest of my life–it ruins it. And I don’t want to live long. I would rather get the death penalty than spend the rest of my life in prison.”

To get the death penalty, Kaczynski will first have to gain a retrial, which he knows is improbable. At a new trial, he would represent himself, but he won’t discuss the strategy he might employ.

What would seem most likely is for him to argue that, essentially, desperate disease requires a desperate cure. As the Unabomber manifesto put it, ”The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race.” In the Unabomber’s mind, society was in desperate need of a brave and brazen savior who wouldn’t let murder stand in his way. ”Well, let me put it this way,” Kaczynski says. ”I don’t know if violence is ever the best solution, but there are certain circumstances in which it may be the only solution.”

To anarchists who advocate violence, Kaczynski has become a hero. He is flattered but notes that ”a lot of these people are just irrational.” What Kaczynski wants is a true movement, ”people who are reasonably rational and self controlled and are seriously dedicated to getting rid of the technological system. And if I could be a catalyst for the formation of such a movement, I would like to do that.”

Ted Kaczynski, king of the anarchists. It is a measure of his self-importance–and cruelty–that he envisions such a role as his reward for blowing people up.

Toward the end of our interview, I ask Kaczynski what he would do if, against all odds, he should someday get out of prison. He mentions an anarchist in Oregon with whom he has corresponded. ”He has given some talks at colleges about technology and about the Unabomb case,” Kaczynski says, ”and he’s had a very positive response. And if he can get an audience, I could get one much more easily, now that I’ve been publicized.”

And what, I ask Kaczynski, would he tell people, so they wouldn’t worry about the Unabomber’s being at large?

He laughs at the question and shoots me a look: You just don’t get it, do you? ”Well, I don’t know that I would have to relax them,” he says. ”Just let them worry.”

Stephen J. Dubner is the author of Turbulent Souls, a family memoir

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NATION

"I DON'T WANT TO LIVE LONG. I WOULD RATHER GET THE DEATH PENALTY THAN SPEND THE REST OF MY LIFE IN PRISON"

Ted Kaczynski talks about life in jail, his appeal plans and his brother David, who still struggles over the decision to turn in the Unabomber

By STEPHEN J. DUBNER

THERE IS PROBABLY NEVER A GOOD TIME TO ASK THE QUESTION—*Tell me, do you consider yourself insane?*—but when the time comes, Ted Kaczynski responds without hesitation. "I'm confident that I'm sane, personally," he says. "I don't get delusions and so on and so forth ... I mean, I had very serious problems with social adjustment in adolescence, and a lot of people would call this a sickness. But it would have to be distinguished between an organic illness, like schizophrenia or something like that."

He is sitting on a concrete stool in a concrete booth with windows made of reinforced glass. When he was first led in, his wrists were handcuffed

CELEBRITY INMATE Ted Kaczynski, behind glass at the "Supermax" prison in Colorado

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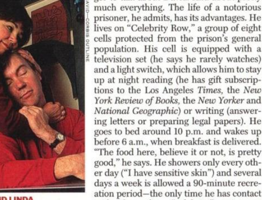
behind his back. Facing forward, he squatted down so a guard could remove his cuffs through a slot low in the door. This is how things are done at the federal "Supermax" prison in Florence, Colo., where he has been since last spring and may well remain for the rest of his life.

His voice is nasal and singsongy, full of flat Chicago vowels. He is 57, his hair and beard trimmed close, and his upbeat manner hardly resembles that of the man who three years ago was marched out of his tiny Montana cabin and into infamy. He makes constant eye contact, laughs easily and often; when it's time for a photograph, he jokingly pops out a fake front tooth, as if to parody the deranged mountain-man image he inhabits in the public's mind. He is, for the most part, affable, polite and sincere. It would almost be easy to forget that he mailed or delivered at least 16 package bombs and then logged the results with the glee of a little boy tearing the wings off a fly. Over the course of 18 years, the Unabomber killed three people and wounded 23 more.

When he was arrested, Kaczynski was widely assumed to be insane. But he will not tolerate being called, as he puts it, "a nut," or "a lunatic" or "a sicko." He says he pleaded guilty last year only to stop his lawyers from arguing he was a paranoid schizophrenic, as had been the diagnosis by court-appointed psychiatrists.

While the world might take some comfort in attributing Kaczynski's deeds to illness rather than ill will, he is actively opposed to lending such comfort. He has written a book, *Truth Versus Lies* (to be published by Context Books in New York City), its chief aim is to assert his sanity. The book does not address the Unabomber crimes (nor does Kaczynski in person, for he is seeking a retrial and doesn't wish to damage his slim chances), but it is the most thorough accounting of his life to date.



DAVID AND LINDA
With the decision, their marriage has undergone and survived great stresses

The book is also Kaczynski's counterattack against his brother David. It was David, of course, who turned Ted in, at the urging of his wife, Linda Patrik, the woman who had come between them years earlier. After Ted's arrest, David was instantly lauded as a sort of moral superhero for sacrificing his beloved if troubled brother. Not surprisingly, Ted finds fault with this scenario. David's decision to turn him in, he says, was less a moral or lawful one than a way to settle a perversely complicated sibling rivalry. Beneath David's love for him, he argues, lay "a marked strain of resentment," and "jealousy over the fact that our parents valued me more highly."

"It's quite true that he is troubled by guilt over what he's done," Ted writes, "but I think his sense of guilt is outweighed by his satisfaction at having finally gotten revenge on big brother."

THERE IS, IT SHOULD BE SAID, A CERTAIN LACK OF PERSPECTIVE IN Ted's writing. After all, it was he, not David, who sent the bombs. Still, the original tale had been so much neater: the evil, deranged brother and the righteous, heartbroken brother who put a killer out of commission. As it turns out, the Kaczynski tragedy is more Greek than American, a morally complicated tale in which even the most righteous intentions have created shadows that will haunt all the players for the rest of their lives.

In the wake of the Unabomber's arrest, as David simultaneously lobbied for Ted's life and reached out to Ted's victims, he and Linda struck me as extraordinary. They seemed to have stumbled into an impossible situation and acted honorably at every turn. Several months ago, I contacted them to talk about the price of morality—that is, the cost they have paid for committing a deeply difficult act. Because they have sold the book and film rights to their story (the money, they say, will largely go to a fund for bombing victims), certain aspects of their lives are off limits, but otherwise they were forthcoming and frank.

As publication of Ted's book neared, however, what became even more intriguing than the consequences of their moral act were the motivations behind it. So in August, I wrote to Ted; I wanted his take on the tortured dynamic between the two brothers and the woman who has played such a catalytic, though overlooked, role in their story. (David and Linda were upset when the article shifted in this direction, and eventually stopped participating.)

Ted, as it turned out, was more than eager to talk about David. And about pretty much everything. The life of a notorious prisoner, he admits, has its advantages. He lives on "Celebrity Row," a group of eight cells protected from the prison's general population. His cell is equipped with a television set (he says he rarely watches) and a light switch, which allows him to stay up at night reading (he has gift subscriptions to the Los Angeles *Times*, the *New York Review of Books*, the *New Yorker* and *National Geographic*) or writing (answering letters or preparing legal papers). He goes to bed around 10 p.m. and wakes up before 6 a.m., when breakfast is delivered. "The food here, believe it or not, is pretty good," he says. He showers only every other day ("I have sensitive skin") and several days a week is allowed a 90-minute recreation period—the only time he has contact with the other "celebrity" prisoners. "These people are not what you would think of as criminal types," he says. "I mean, they don't seem to be very angry people. They're considerate of others. Some of them are quite intelligent."

Among them, he says, are Ramzi Yousef, the mastermind of the World Trade Center bombing, and Timothy McVeigh. One can only imagine this bombing trio's conversations. Kaczynski says McVeigh (who has recently been transferred to another prison) lent him one of the most interesting books he's read lately, *Tainting Evidence: Inside the Scandals at the FBI Crime Lab*, by John F. Kelly and Phillip K. Wearne. "I mean, I knew from my own experience that they were crooked and incompetent," Kaczynski says, shaking his head and laughing. "But according to this book, they're even worse than what I thought."

Contacting the FBI, he says, was only the beginning of his brother's betrayal. By arguing that Ted should not be sentenced to death on account of mental illness, David committed a dual sin: labeling Ted crazy and dooming him to an utterly unnatural existence. "He knows very well that imprisonment is to me an unspeakable humiliation," Ted writes in *Truth Versus Lies*, "and that I would unhesitatingly choose death over incarceration."

At one point, I ask Ted what he would have done had their roles been reversed, had Ted suspected David of being the Unabomber.

"I would have kept it to myself," he says.

"Is that what you feel he should have done?"

"Yeah."

When I ask Ted what he would say to David if he were in the room now, he answers, "Nothing. I just wouldn't talk to him. I would just turn my back and wouldn't talk to him."

David, who lives in upstate New York and works as a counselor at a teenage-runaway shelter, says he still loves his brother. He has written him repeatedly, offering at least one apology, but Ted has not answered. In order to gain forgiveness, Ted writes, David must renounce the "lies" he has told about Ted, leave his wife and remove himself from modern society. "If he does not redeem himself," Ted adds, "then as far as I am concerned he is the lowest sort of scum, and the sooner he dies, the better."

It is as awkward to face the gulf between these two brothers as it is difficult to overestimate the depth of feeling that once passed between them. Ted's life was steeped in rejection, isolation and anger; through it all, his younger brother was the only person ever to connect with him.

David's feelings for Ted, in fact, bordered on worship. He was particularly smitten by Ted's belief that modern man was being corrupted by society in general and technology in particular. "Knowing him as I do," Ted writes, "I am certain that if Dave had known of the Unabomber before 1989"—the year David moved in with Linda Patrik—"he would have regarded him as a hero."

David adamantly disputes this—he deplores violence, he says—but he doesn't seem surprised to hear Ted say it. "I think every person is a mystery, and it's strange to me that a person I grew up with and was very close with remains one of the biggest mysteries of all." David's manner is as gentle as Ted's is brisk, and he speaks with a great earnestness. (The teenagers he counsels call him Mr. Rogers.) When he talks about his brother, however, his voice is full of resignation, the sort felt by someone who has watched a relationship curdle beyond recognition.

THE BOYS TOGETHER

TED AND DAVID'S PARENTS, WANDA AND THEODORE R. KACZYNSKI, were atheists, working-class intellectuals who valued education and dearly wanted their sons to succeed on a higher plane.

Ted proved to be exceptionally bright from an early age. He was generally happy, he writes, until he was about 11. That was when he skipped the first of two grades in school, which led to his entering Harvard at the age of 16. At school he was painfully awkward around his older classmates. At home he sulked, and his parents, he says, railed against his antisocial behavior, calling him "sick" and "a creep." He began to despise them, especially Wanda, who he felt treated him more like a trophy than a son. "I hate you, and I will never forgive you, because the harm you did me can never be undone," he would write her more than 30 years later. (Through David, Wanda declined to be interviewed for this article.)

David Kaczynski, seven years younger, had an easier time of things. He too was bright—he would go on to study literature at Columbia University—and he was far more socially adept.

The brothers got along fairly well, although Ted admits to taking out his teenage frustrations on David. Nevertheless, it was Ted whom David most admired, especially as Ted began to speak about abandoning civilization to live in the wilderness. The boys' father often took them on hikes outside Chicago, and Ted read extensively about nature, wondering what it might be like to live beyond the reach of the modern world.

At Harvard, Ted felt socially isolated by other students. He recalls that "their speech, manners, and dress were so much more 'cultured' than mine." There was an even greater unease in Ted's life; he suffered from what he calls "acute sexual starvation." Sexual references run throughout his book, and although he never ties them into a knot, one cannot help wondering if sexual frustration was his main despair. As an adolescent, he recalls, "my attempts to make advances to girls had such humiliating results that for many years afterward, even until after the age of 30, I found it excruciatingly difficult—almost impossible—to make advances to women ... At the age of 19 to 20, I had a girlfriend; the only one I ever had, I regret to say." According to a psychiatric report compiled before his trial, Ted, while in graduate school at the University of Michigan, experienced "several weeks of intense and persistent sexual excitement involving fantasies of being a female. During that time period, he became convinced that he should undergo sex-change surgery."

In the face of such constant sadness and humiliation, Ted Kaczynski eventually decided he would live out his life alone in the wilderness. His retreat to the Montana mountains could simply be viewed as an embrace of a desire he harbored much of his life. Or it could be viewed as a rejection of the world that had rejected him—a world full of purposeful academics and scientists, of happily married couples, of people who weren't humiliated by daily social interaction—and that would someday pay for its ease.

GROWING APART

WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE FONDEST MEMORIES HE HOLDS OF DAVID, Ted cites a day in the early 1970s in Great Falls, Mont. David had moved there first, after college, and was working as a copper smelter. Ted was building his cabin on land the brothers had bought together outside Lincoln. One day, Ted recalls, they took their baseball gloves to a park. "We were as far apart as we could get and still reach each other with the ball," Ted says, smiling, as if lost in the moment. "We were throwing that ball as hard as we could, and as far as we could ... And so we were making these running, leaping catches. We made more fantastic catches that day than I think we did in all the rest of our years together."

Their bond now was perhaps as strong as it would ever be. They were a pair of anti-careerist Ivy League grads united by their love of the outdoors—and also, frankly, by their failure at romantic love. David had been only slightly more successful with women than Ted. He had already decided that there was only one woman he could ever love—her name was Linda Patrik—and though they had a few dates during college, things didn't work out.

In Great Falls, Ted often spent the night at David's apartment. One day, while David was not at home, Ted came across some letters from Linda, whom Ted had never heard David mention. "They were in a drawer," Ted writes, "not lying out in the open, and I knew that he would not want me to read them, but I read them anyway ... Why did I do it? I was full of contempt for him, and when you have contempt for someone you tend to be disregardful of his rights."

Ted thrived on his brother's adulation but was also "disgusted" by it, he writes. While they shared a disdain for materialism and an "oversocialized" lifestyle, Ted considered David undisciplined, physically and intellectually lazy. He also felt David was prone to manipulation, especially by women—as Linda Patrik's letters seemed to illustrate. "The letters were not very informative," he writes, "but they did make this much clear about Dave's relationship with Linda Patrik: He had a long-term crush on her; his relationship to her was servile." Ted saw David, derisively, as more companion than mate to Linda, "a shoulder for her to cry on."

David and Linda had grown up together in Chicago, and he had never given up on her. They kept in touch while David lived in Montana, and throughout the 1970s, as he taught high school

English in Iowa, wrote an unpublished novel and drove a commuter bus near Chicago. But Linda eventually married another man. Faced with this reality, David slipped off to the wilderness—interestingly, not to Ted's Montana mountain area but to the Big Bend desert region of western Texas. He had $40,000 in savings and, like Ted, a vague plan to spend the rest of his years alone.

He lived in a fortified hole in the ground called a pit house, with no plumbing or electricity. He kept writing but was mainly, according to a friend, "a lost, searching, unhappy soul." He and Ted wrote each other frequently, extremely tender at times but just as often engaged in brittle clashes of ego. "If that story is typical of your previous writing," Ted wrote after David sent him some of his fiction, "then it's obvious why no one wants to publish your stuff—it's just plain bad, by anyone's standard."

In 1982 Ted broke off communication with his parents. Given his brand of terrorism, the breakup's "proximate cause," as he puts it, was ironic: he was annoyed by the packages of food and reading material his mother mailed him.

For several years, David was Ted's only link to the family and seemingly the only person in a position to mediate his growing anger. Today David will not say when he began to suspect that Ted was mentally ill, only that "clearly he has had very serious mental and emotional problems."

In September 1989, David wrote Ted to say he was leaving the desert. Linda Patrik had divorced, and after she visited him in Texas, David decided to move with her to Schenectady, N.Y., where she taught philosophy at Union College.

Ted's response had the tone of a scorned lover, or a deposed guru. "If you don't irritate or disgust me in one way," he wrote, "then you do so in another ... And now, to top off my disgust, you're going to leave the desert and shack up with this woman who's been keeping you on a string for the past 20 years." He continued, "I can pretty well guess who the dominant member of that couple is going to be. It's just disgusting. Let me know your neck size—I'd like to get you a dog collar next Christmas."

He added that he wanted nothing more to do with David, ever, then signed off with a typically manipulative flourish: "But remember—you still have my love and loyalty, and if you're ever in *serious* need of my help, you can call on me."

It is tempting to interpret Ted's anger as a reaction not specifically against Linda—he had never met her—but against his acolyte's attainment of something he had spent his life without: a woman.

MY BROTHER, THE ENEMY
Ted says David was motivated by a desire for revenge

THE FOLLOWING SUMMER, DAVID AND LINDA WERE MARRIED IN A Buddhist ceremony in their backyard. Ted did not attend. Two months later, David's father became ill with late-stage lung cancer. David returned to Chicago; driving home from the hospital after a radiation treatment, father and son had a long, cleansing talk. That night Theodore R. Kaczynski gave David his gold watch; the next day he shot himself.

Ted did not attend his father's funeral either. By this point, Linda Patrik, having read Ted's letters to David, recognized that her brother-in-law was trouble. According to the *Journal of Family Life*, a small Albany, N.Y., publication, Linda forbade David ever to let Ted into their house; she went so far as to warn her father in Chicago that if for some reason Ted were to come to his door, he was to be turned away. She took some of his letters to a psychiatrist, who judged Ted to be paranoid and possibly dangerous. She and David inquired about having him institutionalized, but were told that would be impossible unless Ted were to volunteer. Or unless he had committed acts of violence.

He had done so, of course, and would continue. But David had no inkling—and, as Ted's still reverent little brother, no desire to have an inkling—that Ted might be the Unabomber. It was Linda who first raised the possibility. In September 1995, when the Washington *Post* and the New York *Times* published the Unabomber's "manifesto," she cajoled David into reading it. After negotiating with the FBI and deliberating with Linda (one keenly senses she herself might have turned Ted in, had David refused), David told the authorities where they would find his brother.

LIFE AFTER THE DECISION

LINDA AND DAVID STILL LIVE IN SCHENECTADY. THEY BOUGHT their handsome, low-ceilinged, blood-red house—built in 1720—just before the Unabomber was unveiled. Linda now wishes they could live outside the city, away from curiosity seekers who want to see the home of the Unabomber's brother. On the summer weekend I visited, most of their things were still in boxes. They had just returned from sabbatical and were soon heading out to a monthlong Buddhist seminar.

Linda, 49, and David, 50, have both gone gray since the *60 Minutes* interview in which they pleaded that Ted's life be spared and announced they would take no money, reward or otherwise, generated by this case. Their marriage has grown stronger these past years, they both say, but when asked about Unabomber-induced tensions, Linda promptly ticks off items on her list. While she was the catalyst for capturing the Unabomber, for instance, most reporters wanted to speak only to David. "Then I get to feel envious," she says, "and David gets credit for turning in his brother, and I don't." She was also jealous of how some journalists, especially those young and female, regarded her husband, "gazing at him with puppy-dog eyes and hanging on every word." Did her philosophy students ever question her about the moral dimensions of her dilemma? "No, no, no. They come to me and say, 'Oh, your husband's so wonderful, you're so lucky to be married to such an ethical man.'" She sticks a finger down her throat and pretends to gag. David laughs uncomfortably. As she speaks, he listens, careful not to interrupt; when it is his turn, he seems to tread lightly.

I had expected, I must admit, a more united front. Only now do I realize their desire to turn Ted in may not have been unilateral: Linda was afraid of this man she had never met, while David loved at least a part of him. That their marriage could survive such pressure—even before the media wave—says a lot about it.

Alone, David is looser. He plays baseball in an over-30 league, and one morning he took me to his game. (He played first base and pitched, batting two for four.) Baseball, he says, is the one thing that allows him to forget the ordeal, if only for a few hours. On the drive home, he spoke passionately about his love of nature, literature and philosophy. Before long, though, his mind returned

The Ted K Archive

Stephen J. Dubner
I Don't Want To Live Long: Ted Kaczynski
I Would Rather Get The Death Penalty Than Spend The Rest Of My Life In Prison
Ted Kaczynski talks about life in jail, his appeal plans and his brother David, who still struggles over the decision to turn in the Unabomber
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