

Unabomber's Psychiatric Profile Reveals Gender-identity Struggle

Suzanne Marmion

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SACRAMENTO — A federal judge Friday unsealed a psychiatric profile of convicted Unabomber Theodore Kaczynski that contains details of a personal struggle with his gender identity.

The 47-page report, made public in spite of appeals by his defense lawyer, provides intimate revelations from Kaczynski about the family he says psychologically abused him. The report attempted to sketch the psychological history of the reclusive serial bomber who quit a budding career as a mathematics professor to live in Montana's Scapegoat Wilderness.

Kaczynski submitted to the psychiatric examination during his federal trial last January in Sacramento. The resulting document contains the results of several standard diagnostic tests for paranoid schizophrenia, including one filled out in Kaczynski's spidery handwriting and another consisting of his drawing of a man picking an apple from a thick tree with a brilliant sun shining from behind.

During nearly 22 hours of interviews with a psychiatrist appointed by the judge, Kaczynski talked about his childhood, growing up moderately poor and feeling out of place with other children in his suburban Chicago neighborhood. Brilliant in school, he skipped to 7th grade from the 5th, which he claimed stunted development of his social skills.

"By the time I left high school," Kaczynski told Dr. Sally Johnson, "I was definitely regarded as a freak by a large segment of the student body." His childhood frustration took the form of misbehavior in the classroom, he said, including building a pipe bomb one day in chemistry class which earned him notoriety from fellow students.

Johnson said Kaczynski attributed his lifelong inability to establish deep friendships, particularly with women, to "extreme psychological verbal abuse by his parents" while he was growing up.

Kaczynski cited an example of his mother scolding him for not putting his dirty socks in the laundry hamper, an incident for which he railed against his mother in a letter 20 years later. The report concluded that hypersensitivity and irrational rage at his family are symptoms of Kaczynski's underlying mental illness.

Based on the interviews and test results, Johnson determined that Kaczynski, 56, has suffered from paranoid schizophrenia since his early 20s.

A significant mental shift took place in graduate school, Kaczynski reported, during a period when he considered having a sex-change operation.

He said he recalled setting up an appointment at the University of Michigan's health center after weeks of fantasizing about becoming a female. By the time of his consultation, however, he lost his nerve and lied to the psychiatrist. Leaving the building in shame, Kaczynski said, he developed a violent hatred for the psychiatrist.

"Just then there came a major turning point in my life," Kaczynski said. "Like a Phoenix, I burst from the ashes of my despair to a glorious new hope. I thought I wanted to kill that psychiatrist because the future looked utterly empty to me."

"What was entirely new," Kaczynski concluded, "was the fact that I really felt I could kill someone."

At that moment, Kaczynski said, he began his plan to escape to the wilderness, where he waged an 18-year bombing spree that killed three people and injured more than two dozen victims.

Dr. Paul Mattiuzzi, a criminal forensic psychologist, said it is unlikely anybody could have clearly recognized Kaczynski's mental problems and intervened sooner. "We value individual rights highly and therefore unless you have somebody who is willing and interested in obtaining treatment, it's oftentimes hard to give it to them," Mattiuzzi said.

Kaczynski is serving a life sentence in a maximum-security federal prison in Colorado. He struck a plea bargain with government prosecutors after they received his psychiatric profile in January.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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