

Halls of Ivy to Mountain Cabin

The Associated Press

Apr 4, 1996

He was a diligent student who excelled in math, solving problems that baffled even his college professors. His flair for numbers took him to the nation's most elite schools, but he chose instead a hermit's life.

Theodore John Kaczynski, 53, a former University of California-Berkeley mathematics professor, was taken into custody yesterday in his cabin in the Montana mountains and questioned in connection with the Unabomber case.

Former classmates and teachers say Kaczynski first showed signs of his academic and analytic skills as a teenager when he attended Evergreen Park High School, south of Chicago.

He was a National Merit scholarship finalist, a member of the German, math and coin clubs and a band member in high school. Classmates said they remembered little of him, though.

"Isn't he the profile? The quiet kid that you never know what he's thinking?" said Donna Bergeron, one of 181 students in the class of '58.

After finishing high school in three years, he attended Harvard University, graduating in 1962.

He then went to the University of Michigan, where he received a master's degree in 1964 and a doctorate in 1967, both in mathematics.

<p style="text-align: center;">THEODORE JOHN KACZYNSKI</p> <p>Born: May 22, 1942 in Chicago, Ill. Prepared at Evergreen Park H.S., Evergreen Park, Ill. Home Address: 9209 Lawndale, Evergreen Park, Ill. Field of Concentration: Mathematics. Scholarships and Prizes: Harvard College Scholarship.</p>	
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AP Photo

The 1962 Harvard yearbook shows Theodore John Kaczynski as he looked when he was 20.

George Piranian, a Michigan mathematics professor emeritus who taught Kaczynski, said he was "a very serious student. Very able."

“I respected him very highly,” said Piranian, 81, who hasn’t talked to Kaczynski since 1967. Piranian said Kaczynski once solved a problem that had stymied him and a colleague.

Peter Duren, a math professor at the university, recalled Kaczynski: as an excellent student, independent and full of promise.

“He was very impressive. We were all expecting wonderful things from him,” Duren said in a telephone interview last night.

Duren said Kaczynski was “very meticulous in everything” and that he had precise handwriting.

He recalled that Kaczynski preferred working alone while most graduate students seek consultations with their professors. “He was a private person; I don’t think anyone was really close to him,” Duren said.

After leaving Michigan, Kaczynski became an assistant professor of mathematics at the University of California at Berkeley in the 1967–68 school year. He resigned in 1969.

For at least the past 10 years, Kaczynski has apparently lived in the Montana cabin near the town of Lincoln, population 1,000.

“He was kind of a recluse — he kept to himself, never bothered anyone,” neighbor Dick Lundberg said. “He never did say anything bad about anybody. We thought he was all right.”

Bob Orr, manager of the Lincoln Telephone Co., saw Kaczynski make frequent trips into town on his dilapidated bicycle. He said Kaczynski periodically would come by the phone company office and use a pay phone. He also spent a lot of time in the town library.

Kaczynski mostly dressed in black, sometimes in Army fatigues, and usually wore dark glasses, Orr and Lundberg said.

He carried his own water to his 12-by16 foot shack that stood about threequarters of a mile from the main road.

Duren expressed surprise that his former student was being questioned. “The person I knew wouldn’t be associated with this sort of thing,” Duren said. “He wasn’t an angry young man. We had some students at that time that fit that description, but he wasn’t one of them.”

Tom Demoretcky contributed to this story.

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