

Unabomber taunts victim with letter of explanation

Times Writer

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Federal officials Wednesday released the text of a letter in which the mysterious serial bomber in the Unabom case ridicules one of his victims for opening the package that exploded and badly maimed him.

The letter was sent to David Gelernter, a prominent computer science professor at Yale University who was injured when a bomb went off in his hands in June 1993.

The package-bomb blinded Gelernter in one eye, tore off part of his right hand, deafened him in one ear and wounded him in the chest.

The rambling three-paragraph letter, which was postmarked Oakland, Calif., April 20, went on to criticize Gelernter's 1991 book, *Mirror Worlds*, for asserting that the advance of computerization is inevitable. The letter used the FBI's headquarters in Washington as its return address.

Law enforcement officials have long believed that the bomber, whose targets over the last 17 years have mostly been involved with computer science, was violently opposed to changes in society brought about by computer technology. But until now, their intuition about motives was based almost wholly on circumstantial evidence.

In a letter to the *New York Times* this week, the bomber said that he was "out to get" scientists in the computer and genetics fields and that his immediate goal was the "destruction of the worldwide industrial system."

The letter sent to Gelernter makes a similar point.

The FBI said Wednesday that in addition to the letters received by the *Times* and Gelernter, two other letters had been sent, but it refused to reveal their recipients or contents.

The FBI said all four letters were mailed on April 20 from the Oakland, Calif., area.

Although the writer used the first person plural in his letter to the *Times*, Special Agent Jim Freeman, head of the FBI office in San Francisco, said, "We don't have a shred of evidence that he is connected with other people in the placing of the bombs."

Gelernter's book, *Mirror Worlds. Or the Day Software Puts the Universe in a Shoe-box. How it Will Happen and What It Will Mean* (Oxford University Press), describes a vision of the future in which interconnected computers will permit people to model and simulate the physical and social world extensively irrespective of whether some people dread becoming too dependent on their computers.

Gelernter has been a seminal thinker in a field known as parallel, or distributed, computer processing, which employs tens, hundreds or even thousands of processors or separate computers simultaneously to greatly speed computing times.

On Monday, a package that the FBI says was mailed by the mysterious bomber killed Gilbert Murray, president and chief lobbyist of the California Forestry Association, a timber industry trade group.

It was the second Unabom fatality in five months and the third since the bombings began in 1978. Twenty-three other people have been wounded.

Authorities have been concerned because with each attack, "the devices have become more destructive, without increasing in size," Freeman said.

The letter

This is the text of the letter sent by the Unabomber to one of his victims, Dr. David Gelernter of Yale University. Gelernter suffered extensive wounds to his abdomen, chest, face and hands in the June 1993 bombing.

Dr. Gelernter:

People with advanced degrees aren't as smart as they think they are. If you'd 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.

In the epilog of your book, *Mirror Worlds*, you tried to justify your research by claiming that the developments you describe are inevitable, and that any college person can learn enough about computers to compete in a computer-dominated world. Apparently, people without a college degree don't count. In any case, being informed about computers won't enable anyone to prevent invasion of privacy (through computers), genetic engineering (to which computers make an important contribution), environmental degradation through excessive economic growth (computers make an important contribution to economic growth) and so forth.

As for the inevitability argument, if the developments you describe are inevitable, they are not inevitable in the way that old age and bad weather are inevitable. They are inevitable only because techno-nerds like you make them inevitable. If there were no computer scientists there would be no progress in computer science. If you claim you are justified in pursuing your research because the developments involved are inevitable, then you may as well say that theft is inevitable, therefore we shouldn't blame thieves.

But we do not believe that progress and growth are inevitable. We'll have more to say about that later.

FC

P.S. Warren Hoge of the New York Times can confirm that this letter does come from FC.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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