

Was The Unabomber The Original Incel? Unpacking Ted Kaczynski's Relationships With Women

Ted Kaczynski didn't have much luck with the ladies, which some observers say may have contributed to his feelings of alienation.

Gina Tron

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Unabomber Ted Kaczynski had a complicated, and at times, hostile relationship with women.

When he was arrested in 1996 for his bombing spree — which killed three people and injured 23 between 1978 and 1995 — he was 54 and had never had a girlfriend. He lived alone as a mostly self-sufficient hermit in a cabin in Lincoln, Montana.

But even before he began living as a recluse, he struggled to connect with women.

The Netflix docu-series “Unabomber - In His Own Words” noted that while Kaczynski excelled academically during the early part of his life, he had trouble connecting with other people socially. Then, the prodigious student was accepted at Harvard when he was just 16. Elliott Halpern, a filmmaker behind the docu-series, blamed the university experience, in part, for stunting Kaczynski’s emotional growth.

“If you have this culmination of psychological immaturity and high intelligence and high sensitivity and you’re dropped into an environment where it’s really challenging for you and girls are not going to date you, it’s definitely going to have an affect on you,” he told **Oxygen.com**.

The only apparent woman that Kaczynski was ever romantically involved with was a co-worker he met while employed at Cushion-Pak, an Illinois rubber foam factory near the Kaczynski family home, USA Today reported. He was working under his younger brother David, who was a supervisor at the factory.

Ted and the woman had a few dates in 1978, and that woman also gave the future domestic terrorist what FBI agent Kathy Puckett believes was his first kiss at age 36, she told legal analyst Lis Wiehl in the author’s upcoming book “Hunting The Unabomber.”

“He writes about how she kissed him,” Puckett explained. “And, he describes it like a Martian meeting an Earthling. He said she was doing something with her tongue that he couldn’t quite understand. He had never kissed another woman in his life, because if he had, he would have written it down.”

Soon enough though, the woman rejected Ted as a possible partner.

“Ted was extremely upset,” David Kaczynski reflected in “Unabomber - In His Own Words.” “He wrote these limericks [...] these very unflattering, ugly sort of limericks about her and he posted them around the work site.”

David Kaczynski said he threatened to fire Ted if he didn’t stop harassing the woman, and Ted responded by showing up to work the next day and posting another one of the limericks up. As a result, David did indeed fire him.

Elizabeth Trojian, one of the two Canadian filmmakers behind the Netflix docu-series, told **Oxygen.com** that this situation only further proved to Ted that he couldn’t connect to women.

“I think it was really hard for him,” she said. “I think he went to the factory with the effort that he was going to connect with people and connect with his brother. He made this leap forward to try and date this woman and when it failed, it felt extreme to Ted. If he felt objected against, he wanted to object back harder.”

Puckett told Wiehl that Kaczynski struggled to even approach other women. She said that he had journaled "long agonizing passages that we took from the cabin about how he had a crush on a girl who worked at a gas station in Montana, and he bought a new pair of jeans in an effort to walk up to her, and he ended up sobbing in front of his campfire, because he couldn't bring up the nerve to talk to her."

He also journaled about a failed attempt to join a singles hiking group.

"He goes on a hike and is trying to talk to people, and he writes about this beautiful woman, but he couldn't talk to her," Puckett said. "He couldn't make the connection."

Kaczynski also appeared to hung up on being a virgin — something that caused friction between him and his brother David when the latter became engaged to a woman named Linda Patrik. An irate Kaczynski felt betrayed.

"He even wrote a letter to David talking about how they were both virgins, intimating that by getting married, David was breaking that bond," Puckett said in "Hunting The Unabomber."

At this point, Kaczynski was at least 44 years old.

Wiehl told **Oxygen.com** that Kaczynski explained to his brother in seething letters that marrying Parik "was the ultimate betrayal" and "it was clear that part of the betrayal was the virginity."

If his anger over being a virgin was true, Kaczynski could be one of the first high-profile incels — or involuntary celibate, an increasingly vocal online subculture — before the term ever existed. The term incel has been linked to several infamous deadly attacks. In 2014, Elliot Rodger blamed women's lack of attraction to him for his deadly rampage. He killed six people and injured 14 before killing himself. Rodger was allegedly cited as a warped hero by Alek Minassian. He's accused of using his van to fatally mow down 10 people and injure 16 on a busy Toronto, Canada street.

Kaczynski not only cut his own brother out of his life but he also cut ties with his mother too. While the real reason for doing so remains unclear, Trojan theorized that "if you have issues with women, if you can't connect with women, if you can't have a personal relationship then you are going to begin to have feelings of anger towards your mother."

In Kaczynski's notorious manifesto, which was published in 1995, Ted wrote that "feminists are desperately anxious to prove that women are as strong and as capable as men. Clearly they are nagged by a fear that women may NOT be as strong and as capable as men."

Halpern noted that Kaczynski did have a "general hostility towards women."

The bomber's former neighbor, Wendy Gehring, said in the docu-series, "In my opinion, he hated women. He had no use for us."

However, it can be argued that while he clearly had issues connecting with women romantically, he did respect them at points in his life. Trojan said that Ted was full of dichotomies and she didn't get the sense that he hated women through her correspondence with him. She and Halpern exchanged letters with Ted during the filmmaking process.

Halpern said it's important to note that Kaczynski, despite all his issues with women, selected a female journalist as the first person to interview him after his arrest. Theresa Kintz, now a lecturer in sociology at Indiana State University, accepted Ted's invitation and interviewed him in 1999 for Earth First! Journal. She was an editor at the ecological resistance publication at the time, and Kaczynski chose her over a gaggle of male journalists who were chomping at the bit to interview him, Halpern said. The interview between Kaczynski and Kintz is prominently featured in the docu-series.

"The journalist that he reached out to and who he trusted his entire story to, initially, was a woman," Halpern. "A young woman."

And, Trojan doesn't think he had any ulterior motive for choosing a woman other than mutual respect.

"It's very important to make it clear, I have read every line in the 16 hours of their interview and there is nothing flirty, no sexualization," Trojan said. "He liked her intellect and wanted to connect with her. I think that's really important."

She added of her interactions with Kaczynski, "there's the person you come in contact with that does not seem like a murdering terrorist and then there's this internal person who has such dark thoughts and it makes him a very complex human."

Since his subsequent life sentences, all of which he is currently serving in Colorado, he's apparently had more success with women. The attention his case has garnered has triggered an onslaught of letters from women, Kaczynski noted in an interview included in "Unabomber - In His Own Words." In an interview included in the series, he acknowledged that many women have shown interest in him but seemingly dismissed their interest as genuine because he said certain women tend to gravitate towards high profile inmates like himself.

Reporter Jill Sederstrom contributed to this report.

The Ted K Archive

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