

# Kaczynski Pleads Guilty

William Booth

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SACRAMENTO, Jan. 22 – Theodore J. Kaczynski, the schizophrenic hermit filled with rage against technological society, confessed as part of a plea bargain today that he was the terrorist Unabomber who killed three and maimed dozens more in a deranged campaign against scientists, computers and jet airplanes. Under terms of the agreement, he was spared the death penalty but will serve life in prison without possibility of release.

"The Unabomber's career is over," said lead federal prosecutor, Robert Cleary, in a statement outside the courthouse moments after the guilty pleas were entered.

In the last-minute deal, struck on the day that opening arguments in his long-delayed trial were to begin, Kaczynski pleaded guilty to 13 counts of transporting explosive devices with the intent to kill or maim. Kaczynski also pleaded guilty to all federal charges against him – those here and those in another case not yet presented in New Jersey – comprising five bombings during his decades-long crusade against modern technology.

At the same time, Kaczynski admitted in court that he placed or mailed another 11 bombs, for which he was not charged.

Kaczynski's admission of guilt in the decades-long series of bombings closed one of the longest-running, most expensive and most bizarre investigations in FBI history – which ended only when Kaczynski's brother alerted authorities soon after recognizing the fevered antitechnology themes in a 35,00-word manifesto published in June 1995 by The New York Times and The Washington Post.

Cleary said the government, which turned down earlier attempts by the defense to reach a plea bargain, agreed to accept life imprisonment rather than execution because today marked the first time Kaczynski agreed to plead guilty without any other conditions except a reprieve from death.

"The key to the agreement was this was the very first time there were no strings attached," Cleary said. "We believe justice was best served by an immediate guarantee" that Kaczynski will be imprisoned for life without an opportunity to appeal any portion of his case.

The prosecutor also called Kaczynski's younger brother David, who first alerted authorities that his older sibling might be the Unabomber, "a true American hero."

David Kaczynski previously decried the government's insistence on pursuing a death sentence for his brother. He has spoken of the pain of having a mentally ill sibling, who expressed hatred for his own family as well as technological society. David Kaczynski has repeatedly expressed sorrow and remorse for the destruction wrought by his brother.

David Kaczynski, speaking also for his mother Wanda, said, "I'd like to say our reaction to today's plea agreement is one of deep relief. We feel this is the appropriate, just and civilized resolution to this tragedy and to Ted's diagnosed mental illness."

A chaplain read a statement from Connie Murray, widow of the forestry lobbyist, Gilbert Murray, who was slain by the Unabomber. In it, she called Kaczynski "a cold calculating killer with no remorse."

Murray called the Unabomber "a terrorist" who deserved the death penalty, but expressed support for the plea agreement. "We hope he will never kill again," she said.

In the courtroom this afternoon, Kaczynski answered mostly yes or no to questions of his responsibility for the 18-year bombing spree.

"Do you understand you will spend the rest of your life in prison?" U.S. District Judge Garland Burrell Jr asked the seated 55-year-old defendant.

"Yes, your honor," Kaczynski replied clearly.

He showed no sadness, anger or regret. Instead, he seemed almost like the bright mathematics student he once was, when he chirped, "Guilty, your honor," to the ultimate question.

At one point, Kaczynski even made a little joke. Asked by the judge what his occupation was, Kaczynski answered, "That's an open question. I guess my occupation now is jail inmate."

As prosecutors read lengthy descriptions of the circumstances and evidence surrounding his 16 bombings, several family members of victims wept quietly.

Yet Kaczynski himself was often conferring with one of his attorneys while some previously unreleased excerpts from his coded journals and experiment logs were read aloud. The entries provided a chilling reminder that Kaczynski is not a harmless eccentric railing against environmental degradation and technological advancement.

In one 1985 journal entry read in court, Kaczynski expresses glee after hearing that one of his devices killed Hugh Scrutton outside his Sacramento computer store. Noting that Scrutton had been "blown to bits," his journal entry went on: "Excellent! Humane way to eliminate someone. Probably never felt a thing." He refers to a \$25,000 reward by writing, "Rather flattering."

His entries refer often to his loathing of "those [expletive] jets," to his hatred of "the technican class," and his greatest desire: "I must get revenge."

Today's deal came hours after Burrell ruled that Kaczynski could not represent himself at the trial because his request came far too late and was deliberately designed to delay the proceedings.

Before the plea bargain, Burrell called Kaczynski's refusal to allow his lawyers to mount a limited mental health defense "completely unreasonable" and was angered that the trial was twice delayed over Kaczynski's inability to agree with lawyers, who wanted to describe his mental illness to jurors.

At least three psychiatrists, including one from the federal prison system, concluded Kaczynski suffers from the grandiose fantasies and delusional rage of an unmedicated paranoid schizophrenic in deep denial.

The search for the Unabomber was the most extensive manhunt ever, spanning almost two decades, as federal agents searched in vain for an elusive terrorist who built increasingly sophisticated bombs, placed them in carved wooden boxes and books, stamped his deadly works "FC" (for Freedom Club), placed Eugene O'Neill commemorative stamps on the packages and mailed them to his victims.

The victims included a Yale computer scientist, an astronaut candidate, a Sacramento forestry lobbyist, a public relations executive, the president of United Airlines, and a geneticist.

The bomber, known for years only by a sketch of a moustached man in hooded sweatshirt and sunglasses, so terrorized the nation that he forced two of the most respected newspapers in the nation to accede to his demands and publish the 35,000-word ranting manifesto in exchange for a promise to cease his murderous spree.

The Unabomber had threatened to explode a bomb aboard a commercial airliner. In 1979, the bomber did strike an American Airlines flight out of Dulles International Airport, forcing an emergency landing and injuring twelve.

The FBI only captured Kaczynski after his estranged younger brother David read the manifesto and noticed similar language and thought of his older sibling, then living in small shack in the Montana mountains.

When agents raided the cabin, they found a dishevelled Kaczynski, living without electricity or running water, his body covered in dirt. But inside his shack, the FBI uncovered crates of damning evidence: crudely coded journals that read like a virtual confession; a nearly completed signature explosive device; his typewriter; and draft copies of the manifesto and letters he sent to newspapers claiming responsibility for the bombings.

Kaczynski will now undergo a pre-sentence investigation and then will return to court here in May to be formally sentenced to life in prison.

The judge also warned the Unabomber that he would be forced to pay restitution if he ever received any funds for his writings, mementos or interviews.

The Ted K Archive

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