

Kaczynski Sentenced to Four Life Terms

William Booth

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SACRAMENTO, May 4—Theodore J. Kaczynski, the convicted Unabomber who proved unrepentant to the end, was formally sentenced to four life terms in prison today after his victims confronted him in court with declarations of pain, pleas for vengeance and, for some, a desire to see him executed.

”Lock him so far down that when he dies he will be closer to hell,” said Susan Mosser, whose husband’s body was ripped open by an exploding package mailed by Kaczynski.

”May your own eventual death occur as you have lived, in a solitary manner, without compassion or love,” said Lois Epstein, whose husband, a professor of pediatrics, had his hand mangled by another bomb.

”The defendant committed unspeakable and monstrous crimes for which he shows utterly no remorse,” said U.S. District Judge Garland Burrell Jr. in handing down the sentence in a crowded Sacramento courtroom.

Burrell said Kaczynski still poses a grave danger to society and would mail his bombs again if he could. The federal Bureau of Prisons will decide soon where Kaczynski is to serve his time.

The life sentences, with no possibility of release, were part of a plea bargain struck between Kaczynski and federal prosecutors Jan. 22 after his trial was derailed over confusion about who should represent him in court. Kaczynski’s lawyers insisted on pursuing a defense that would have characterized their client as suffering from the delusions of a schizophrenic, a description he refused to allow.

Kaczynski pleaded guilty to charges related to three deaths and the maiming of two scientists during a bombing spree that lasted almost two decades. The killings ended only after The Washington Post and the New York Times published his anti-technology manifesto in September 1995 under threat of more deaths and his brother, David, recognized Kaczynski’s thinking and tipped off FBI agents who arrested the bomber at his Montana hideaway.

In today’s proceedings, Kaczynski, 55, strode up to a lectern wearing a knit sweater and, consulting several sheaths of white paper, read out a series of complaints accusing the government of distorting the meaning of his actions.

”Two days ago, the government filed a sentencing memorandum, the purpose of which was clearly political,” containing ”false statements, misleading statements,” he said.

This referred to excerpts from Kaczynski’s journals filed by federal prosecutors last week as part of their sentencing recommendations. The passages submitted to the court portrayed Kaczynski not as a principled eco-warrior out to save society from technology – an image that attached to him during the trial – but as a petulant, almost childish murderer who killed to extract ”personal revenge” on people who crossed him – from women who did not respond to his overtures to campers who wandered by his Montana cabin to planes filled with ”a lot of businesspeople.”

”By discrediting me personally, they hope to discredit my political ideas,” he said.

Kaczynski continued, "At a later time I expect to respond at length to the sentencing memorandum. Meanwhile, I hope the public will reserve judgment against me and all the facts about the Unabomb case until another time."

It was unclear whether Kaczynski was referring to further legal pleadings in the case, or whether he plans to issue communiques from prison. He is barred from receiving payment for his writings, but there remains widespread interest in the Unabomber.

"I believe in nothing," Kaczynski wrote in the journals released last week by federal prosecutors. "I don't even believe in the cult of nature-worshippers or wilderness-worshippers."

Of his killings, Kaczynski wrote: "My motive for doing what I am going to do is simply personal revenge."

Connie Murray, the wife of timber executive Gilbert Murray, who was killed by a Kaczynski bomb, walked out of court today as Kaczynski spoke. "I walked out because there was nothing he could say that I wanted to hear," she explained.

Mosser, whose husband, Thomas Mosser, was a public relations executive, walked to the prosecutor's table and spoke after Kaczynski read out his statement. "Nails," she began. "Razor blades. Wire. Pipe and batteries. The recipe for what causes pain. Hold it in your hand, as my husband Tom did, and you feel unbearable pain."

In a wavering voice, she told how the bomb package sat on a table in their New Jersey home as the couple's children played nearby. Thomas Mosser opened the package in the kitchen – there was a terrible explosion – and then Susan ran to her husband and found him sprawled on the floor, his insides tumbling out. She tried to stem the flow with a baby blanket.

Several victims told the court they would have liked to see Kaczynski put to death. Nicklaus Suino, an assistant to a University of Michigan professor who was injured by a bomb, said, "I wouldn't have shed a tear if he was executed."

David Gelernter, a Yale professor of computer science whose hand was severely disfigured in a bomb attack, had a statement read to the court, saying Kaczynski should have been executed but will live on as "a symbol of cowardice."

The Unabomber's brother, David, spoke briefly outside the courthouse.

"There are no words to express the sorrow of today's proceedings. To all of these people, the Kaczynski family offers its deepest apologies," he said, speaking the words the victims had hoped to hear from the bomber himself. "We're very, very sorry."

Special correspondent Suzanne Marmion contributed to this report.

A critique of his ideas & actions.



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