

In Book, Unabomber Pleads His Case

William Glaberson

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From prison, Theodore J. Kaczynski, who pleaded guilty to the Unabom killings, has a message for his brother, who turned him in to the Government.

In a book to be published this spring, Mr. Kaczynski says he could forgive what he calls his brother's treason. But forgiveness will come only if his brother, David Kaczynski, leaves his wife and joins with groups fighting modern society or, as Theodore did, lives in rural isolation.

"In this way he would not only earn my personal forgiveness; what is more important, he would be cleansed and redeemed of his treason against the values that he once held in common with me and many other people," Mr. Kaczynski writes.

"I know how to put him in touch with environmental radicals, and I believe they would accept him if he came to them repentant," Mr. Kaczynski adds in his manuscript, a copy of which the book's publisher provided to The New York Times.

The book, an argumentative memoir titled "Truth Versus Lies," does not acknowledge that Mr. Kaczynski was the bomber who conducted an antitechnology campaign that killed three people and injured at least 22 from 1978 until shortly before his arrest in 1996.

As the Unabomber, Mr. Kaczynski wrote prolifically, most notably in a long manifesto of his ideas for which he won publication in exchange for his promise of a moratorium on killing and maiming. But the book offers his first extensive public comments since his arrest.

The 548-page manuscript includes angry assertions about the news media, neighbors, teachers and acquaintances. One promiscuous woman he knew, he says, was a "damned animal." A school official was "prissy." As a youth, he remembers, he called his mother a "fat pig."

The theme, however, is that contrary to what his lawyers contended, the author is not mentally ill.

Mr. Kaczynski was sentenced last year to life in prison without possibility of parole, after pleading guilty so as to avoid a trial in which his lawyers intended to argue that he was acutely schizophrenic. His family had been complicit in the idea of a mental-illness defense, he says, lying about him not only to avert a trial that might have led to a death sentence but also to skirt embarrassment over abuse that his book says had been inflicted on him since childhood. It was this abuse that led to social difficulties for him, he says, but it was more convenient for his family to maintain that he was sick.

David Kaczynski "knows very well," the book says, "that imprisonment is to me an unspeakable humiliation and that I would unhesitatingly choose death over incarceration." But his brother also knew, he writes, that a trial in which an insanity defense was offered would be too agonizing for him to bear.

Anthony P. Bisceglie, a lawyer for David Kaczynski and the brothers' mother, Wanda, said that investigators had looked closely at Theodore's story and concluded that he had not been abused.

“This is symptomatic of Ted’s illness,” Mr. Bisceglie said, “and it is not uncommon in schizophrenia for this kind of nasty, angry, unpleasant striking out to occur.”

Although the book barely mentions the crimes of the Unabomber — so called because his earliest targets were university employees and airlines — it occasionally seems concerned with burnishing the bomber’s image. For instance, it disputes a news report that the Unabomber once panicked when he was spotted as he dropped off a deadly parcel.

In trying to illustrate that his past has been distorted, Mr. Kaczynski recounts what he describes as inaccurate anecdotes about his life that were widely reported after his arrest. But his own versions often differ only slightly.

One news account, he notes, said he had once placed a limerick on a wall that referred offensively to a female co-worker who had rejected him. In fact, he writes, he placed the limerick on a machine.

Mr. Kaczynski says that when he was 12, his father, who has since died, began calling him “sick” and compared him with an acquaintance who had been placed in a psychiatric institution.

“My mother imitated him in this respect,” the book says, “and from then on until I was about 21 years old, both parents would apply to me such epithets as ‘sick,’ ‘immature,’ ‘emotionally disturbed,’ ‘creep,’ ‘mind of a 2-year-old.’ ”

Mr. Kaczynski, a math prodigy who graduated from Harvard and became a promising academic at the University of California at Berkeley before embracing the life of a recluse at a Montana cabin, expresses particular anger toward his brother, describing him as a homely youth who grew into a lazy adult. Instead of identifying him to the authorities, Mr. Kaczynski says, his brother could have sent him a message saying he suspected him of the bombings and would expose him if there were more attacks. “If I were the Unabomber,” he writes, “that would have been an effective deterrent.”

Mr. Kaczynski is serving his sentence at a Federal maximum-security prison in Florence, Colo., near Pueblo. In letters from there and in conversations with visitors, he has said he was pressured to plead guilty and now wants a trial. Richard J. Bonnie, a professor at the University of Virginia School of Law and a nationally known expert on psychiatric legal issues, said he had agreed to handle Mr. Kaczynski’s case.

“Truth Versus Lies” is being published by Context Books of New York. The editor in chief of Context, Beau Friedlander, said any royalties would be placed in an escrow account to be distributed to the Unabomber’s victims or their survivors, as required by Mr. Kaczynski’s plea agreement.

The manuscript, like the Unabomber’s manifesto, includes detailed footnotes. In one passage, Mr. Kaczynski writes, “To those of us who regard the system as evil, my brother is another Judas Iscariot, except that, unlike the original Judas, he doesn’t even have enough courage to go hang himself.”

The footnote says, “I trust my readers will realize that, in comparing my brother to Judas Iscariot, I do not intend any comparison of myself with Jesus Christ.”

The Ted K Archive

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