

# The FBI Investigation of Forest Anon

Forest Anon

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# Instagram Post

Instagram Post published on March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2022

Some people get awards and certificates, medals and trophies; as far as accolades go I get an FBI file that's 207 pages long and a free entry into the U.S. government's list of potential boogymen.

Here are some of the FBI's more benign takeaways from this hairy little boogyman:

- "He simply wanted to live freely in the woods and amongst the wildlife that he befriended (mice, packrats, and birds)"
- "MANWELL talked freely about his lifestyle. He spent most of his time in his cabin in the national forest. He liked living in nature, was happy, and enjoyed his life."

Here are some of my more negative personal indicators:

- "Although he agreed with the Unabomber that the technological industrial revolution was detrimental to humankind, he vehemently disagreed with the violence carried out by the Unabomber to achieve change. He believed in peace, not violence."
- "MANWELL was asked about his interest in books that have inspired Ted Kaczynski. He said that he disagreed with Kaczynski's actions but believed in the idea of anti-technology because technology was ruining society. He said with sincerity and emphasis 'I am not the Unabomber'. He was a very strong believer in God and was Catholic."
- "He reiterated that he may have made comments against Israel, a country that was pro-war. MANWELL was anti-war, so his comments against Israel may have been misconstrued as pro-Nazi. He could only guess that people projected their beliefs of what they think his beliefs were based solely on his lifestyle."
- "He said that he was not anti-jew, only anti-war, and Israel wants war."

The FBI's conclusion:

- "MANWELL was very friendly, cooperative, and appeared to be truthful with his answers. Fellow interviewers did not believe MANWELL to be a threat to society. There does not appear to be a federal crime or nexus to terrorism, at this time."

I'd like to think the only thing I am a threat to is this whole modern illness of thinking-you-have-to-do-what-everyone-else-is-doing. But I'm not special, all my heros have FBI files. And at the rate things are going, one day you might too.

# YouTube Video

YouTube video published on Aug 5, 2022

“Terrorism: deadly violence against humans and other living things, usually conducted by government against its own people” — Ed Abbey

FBI Voicemail: Hi, Brandon spoke with you about three weeks ago. I’m calling with the FBI and I’m actually closing out my report that I’m checking up on my. My boss wanted me to you in person because that’s one of the requirements.

Man, where do I even begin on this one? Uh, most of you probably already know some of you don’t. Haven’t made a video talking about it, so I figure I will do that now. But I have an FBI file. The FBI investigated me in 2020 for 7 1/2 months. But we’ll get into that, and I have all the dates and everything written down.

They investigated me for 7 1/2 months. They opened the investigation on May 29th, 2020 and closed it on January 14th, 2021, after I agreed to do an interview with them in some random parking lot. A few cities. I was interviewed by three joint Terrorism Task Force agents, one of them being an intelligence analyst, another being a special agent and another being a Task Force Officer.

I have a 207 page file on me. Out of the 207 pages, they withheld 161 and provided me with 46 heavily, heavily redacted pages that they’re so heavily redacted that it’s to the point of illegibility.

They didn’t raid my cabin, they didn’t arrest me and I don’t know I’ve seen people say things like that. All they did was just interview me and to see if I was crazy or not. And then they realized, oh wow, this guy just likes feeding birds and mice.

## The Full Story

So I’m sitting on my bench watching the birds eat and I get an e-mail from my mom and the e-mail says “you need to call me as soon as you get this, the FBI are looking for you and want to talk to you.”

And I at first thought you know, oh man, it’s someone in trouble. Did somebody get hurt? I wasn’t even in my mind that they were looking at me.

I run up to where I get service and I call her and I say hey, you know what’s everything alright and.

She says that you need to call this number, the FBI has already been to your grandparents, they’ve been to your uncles. They’ve been to... Apparently, the FBI was back in my hometown searching for me. Going to all these different houses of my family members, people who I don’t even talk to anymore.

They showed up at my grandparents. My grandmother has passed away since then. Thanks FBI for making that. The last memory that my grandmother had of me before she died. And you know she had very bad dementia, paranoid, so it just scared the hell out of her having these FBI agents bang on the door. And asked if I was a, had any terrorist leanings radical terrorist leanings? Basically, they showed

up at my grandparents and they said, do you know where he is? And my grandfather said, Oh no, he all you know is that he lives in the wood now. And so then they said, OK. Well, here's a number...

They you know they were going to people's houses, who I haven't talked to in years. So family members, things like that. I mean, I haven't talked to some of these people in 1520 years, so and every one of them said, well, all we know is he's living in the woods to my mom and.

They're like, hi, this is a funny thing. They introduced themselves. Hi, I'm so. And so with the FBI, and I was just wondering, do you think that your son would be capable of building explosive devices?

This was immediately after. They introduced themselves to my mom and. The funny thing was. My mom was like, uh, no. He can't even put together a car engine. So then you know my mom emails me and she says, you know, you need to call me so I call my mom. She gives me the rundown and then so I call them and I'm like "hi, I promise I'm not a Unabomber."

## The Tip Off

At first somebody tipped them off saying that I was, uh, a Nazi sympathizer because I had spoken out against Israel. And you know they're lobbying here for conflict in the Middle East. And things like that. Apparently that made me a Nazi. It made me a big bad guy. They started looking into me and they said, Oh well, he's got Jaques Ellul on his bookshelf. Uh, he's a Unabomber, yeah he's a he must be a Ted Kaczynski. He must be planning to do some crazy shit because. He's living in. A little shit shack in in the woods. Reading anti tech literature. I read everything alright. I read anything I can get my hands on first of all and you know that's what I told him. I said I read everything I can get my. Hands on I just read 2001 a Space odyssey series. Doesn't mean I'm going to go try and fly to fucking Jupiter. I just want to play with birds and squirrels and lizards and things like that. I don't want. I told them that. I was like.

## Excerpts from the Report

I'll read you some of the the excerpts. I wrote them down because all I have is the PDF. From the FBI's own mouth.

He simply wanted to live freely in the woods amongst the wildlife. He befriended mice, pack rats, birds he did not want to get involved in any political discussions or take sides.

Manuel talked freely of his lifestyle. He spent most of his time in his cabin in the National Forest. He liked living in nature, was happy and enjoyed his life.

I want that as my epitaph by the way.

... although he agreed. With the Unabomber, that the technological industrial revolution was detrimental to humankind, he vehemently disagreed with the violence carried out by the Unabomber to achieve change. He believed in peace, not violence.

MANUEL was asked about his interest in books that have inspired Ted Kaczynski. He said that he disagreed with Kaczynski's Actions but believed in the idea of anti-technology. Because technology was ruining society. He said with sincerity and emphasis. I am not the Unabomber, he was a very strong believer in God and was Catholic.

He reiterated that he may have made comments against Israel, a country that was Pro War. Manuel was anti war so his comments against Israel may have been misconstrued as pro Nazi. He could only guess that people projected their beliefs of what they think his beliefs were based solely on his lifestyle.

And that seems to be a real big problem with everybody online as they project their own and beliefs onto me.

He said that he was not anti Jew, only anti war and. Israel went to war.

Yes.

Manuel was very friendly, cooperative, and. Appeared to be truthful with. His answers, fellow interviewers did not believe Mantle to be a threat to society. There does not appear to be a federal crime or Nexus to terrorism at this time.

They spent 7 1/2 months investigating me going through one of my social medias, going through other things that I never found out. What they went through?

Oh but. You know time? Passed I forgot about it. Forgot all about it. You know we were cool like they were very nice. It's part of their job though, and then I look at my e-mail and in my spam inbox. I have an e-mail from something called Facebook Records. They said:

Hello. This notice is to inform you that we received legal process from law enforcement seeking information about your account and produce data as required by law. The legal process was accompanied by an order that prohibited us from disclosing information about the case until a specific time. Expired and we were legally required to produce the records specified in the demand.

That made me so mad.

So I filed a Freedom of Information and Privacy Act request. I filed it on June 13th, 2021. Finally received it on February 28th, 2022. And most of that time it was spent with a redaction specialist.

## **Radicalize the FBI**

One thing we have to keep in mind is that yes. While the FBI is a very shady, dangerous organization that has a history of entrapping and radicalizing and recruiting people to attempt to carry out atrocities and acts of terrorism and other crimes against life and humanity... they are individual human beings, all grouped up working for this organization.

And human beings are like coiled springs. You know they're they have potential. And that potential is waiting to be released. Whether that is for good or for bad, it's still potential. These agents, these different people, have the potential to be good humans and to any FBI agents out there. I know. You are subscribed to this to any of the other agents, who I'm sure will watch this. Ah, you're a human being just like me. It's never too late to change. We have faith in you. You have the power to do something good. I know that.

Some of you may be disillusioned with some of the work that the FBI has you doing, like harassing little hairy hobos who live in the woods. I know that you feel you probably have a greater purpose in life, and I know that some of you out there May watch this and have some kind of a inside information. That the public needs to know about, such as Gislaine Maxwell's client list. I'm just kidding. But I'm not.

There are things out there that. You can do to. To make up for all of the bad that the FBI as an agency. Has been making you do will embrace you.

We need to radicalize the FBI just how the FBI tries to radicalize people and get them to commit acts of terrorism and other terrible things like that. We need to radicalize the FBI and make them become good. Join the good side. Stop doing what you're doing. It's terrible. You're trying to ruin people's lives, and you are successfully ruining a lot of people's lives you tried ruining mine and it didn't work. You fucked some things up. You fucked one very good thing up that I had. With someone that I love deeply. UM? But uh, other than that? We have faith in you.

## Fedposters

And also one last thing. Well, I don't know a couple last things. First of all, it's not fucking cool to be investigated by the FBI. All these Fed posters out there and people who who are all edgy about the things that they post. You guys have a lot more to lose than I do, and even if you say you don't. When they start showing up at your family members work and they start showing up at your job and your school and things like that. Then you're kind of going to regret all of your shit posts.

But secondly, I just want you guys to know. This keep this in mind to. Never let the fact that. Even though there's all these big, shady scary organizations, never let it stop you from living your life. Never become so paranoid. Go outside, get some fresh air and love your family. Love your kids. Love your wives, your girlfriends.

[Sound of a tree falling]

I hope you heard that because a tree just fell.

I think that's a good place to end this video. But you take care. I love all you. Thank you for your support and all your funny memes. It makes my day.

# Journal Chapter

## **An Interview With Forest Anon**

Journal chapter published on Aug 10th, 2022

Brandon "Branwell" Manwell, known by many as "Forest Anon", currently lives completely removed from civilization in a shack built of fallen Douglas Fir limbs in the Mojave Desert National Park, where he has lived alone since 2018. He maintains a strong but sporadic internet presence, giving his viewers the opportunity to share in his adventurous, off-grid lifestyle. He has been the subject of an FBI investigation, and makes his own Douglas Fir wine. He likes living in nature, is happy, and enjoys his life. What follows is an exclusive interview Mr. Manwell agreed to give Garden for this issue. He can be found on instagram @b.well and on YouTube as "Forest Anon".

**Garden:** When did you know you wanted to live on your own in the wild? How did your journey begin?

**Forest Anon:** I've always loved the freedom and adventure that wilderness provides. I grew up in a busy suburb that was surrounded by grassy hills and sandstone peaks, and every day in order to escape the city I would go seek out hidden gullies with patches of woods in them where I could read or camp for a few nights. Those places took my mind away from the city and comforted me during rough times. They taught me a lot of what I know about wilderness and wildlife today.

But over time as the city kept expanding and developing new housing tracts I began seeing some of my most cherished places either becoming less secluded or entirely excavated and paved into cul-de-sacs. It was an overwhelmingly claustrophobic feeling and I wanted to go somewhere a man could breathe freely and roam around being himself.

At first I chose to hobo around the desert because my great grandfather was a prospector who had lived a life full of adventure out there. I had fallen in love with the deep solitude and mystery of the desert landscape. I tramped around living in abandoned mining cabins in those mountains for five months. But I soon realized those cabins were rich with history and it began to feel like I was intruding. I wanted to go somewhere I could build myself a little shack to create my own history in.

I didn't want to destroy any wilderness by cutting down trees to do it, so I picked a forest that was predominantly douglas fir. The trees here shed their lower branches which make great timber for building. I camped for a week looking for the perfect spot and when I found one close to water, and with a view I thought perfect, I broke ground and began.

**Garden:** Is it true you live in a national park? How does that work? How do you avoid detection and harassment by law enforcement?

**Forest Anon:** I live in a national forest -illegally -on the side of a spur that juts out from the mountains and overlooks the forest and desert. As long as you establish your home deep enough in the forest where there are no trails or human traffic, and as long as it's reasonably inaccessible to the novice hiker or hunter then you will most likely be safe from any human contact or authorities. But the good thing about living minimal like this is if I were ever discovered it would be easy to just pack up and start again on a new mountain.

**Garden:** Describe a typical day for you, from morning to night.

**Forest Anon:** My daily routine depends on the season, but the birds usually wake me up at 6:00am when they announce their arrival at the feeders. I put on clothes, stuff my sleeping bag in one of my backpacks to keep the mice out, and then I go outside to pour a bucket of water from one of my five gallon jugs. I rinse my face, brush my teeth, sweep the pathway, fill the bird feeders and mouse dish if needed, and then I walk four hundred yards down to the creek to take a bath if there is no snow.



I spend a lot of time at the creek seeing what kind of critters are around and inspecting the plant life to study how the forest is recovering from the recent fire. After that I hike back up here to the shack where I either read in the hammock or sit on my bench and watch the birds at the feeders. If I have wine brewing I'll check on it. If it's spring I'll tend to the gardens. The heatwaves of the south western United States make summers the hardest, and I spend most summer days pouring water on myself and praying for the sun to set.

At sunset I'll get a fire going to make supper. Once I finish eating I'll pour myself some wine and sit on the hillside while I watch the twilight fade over the desert. That is my favorite part of the day. When darkness has fully engulfed the mountains I'll walk back to the cabin, feed the fire, read and write, and watch the mice chase each other. Then I rinse myself in the bucket one last time, unroll the sleeping bag onto my cot and go to bed.

**Garden:** You were investigated and interviewed by the FBI. Do you mind discussing what that was like, and what led to it?

**Forest Anon:** The FBI opened an investigation on me because I had anti-tech literature visible on my shelves in a YouTube video, and I had once spoken critically of Israel's lobbying for conflict in the Middle East. This was enough to warrant a seven month long investigation that began on May 29th, 2020 and ended on January 14th, 2021 after I agreed to an interview.

They never found me. My mother emailed me saying they were harassing old family members for my whereabouts, and kept giving each of them a number for me to call. I called it and scheduled an interview with them in a random shopping plaza a few cities away.

I was interviewed by three Joint Terrorism Task Force agents, and after speaking for a couple of hours they determined I wasn't any kind of threat to society. They understood I was harmless. They even recommended me books and gave me tips on how to make cheap hummingbird food.

Using the Freedom of Information Act I filed a request for my dossier, and received forty six heavily redacted pages of the two hundred and seven that are my FBI file. Their profile analysis ends with, "He liked living in nature, was happy, and enjoyed his life."

**Garden:** You maintain an impressive internet presence and following, both on Instagram and YouTube. How do you get power, internet, etc.? Do you feel it's important to be available online because you are showing people there's another way to live? Or is there another reason?

**Forest Anon:** I have two handcranks I use to charge up a series of powerbanks, that way I only need to crank once a week. But during the cold months I'll have to do it two, sometimes even three times.

I like to stay connected for a few different reasons. Some are just simple ones like keeping in touch with friends from my old life. But one reason as of late is I saw the feedback I received, like people telling me my videos bring them joy and make them appreciate life, or help them through dark periods. This one person told me they are stuck inside due to medical issues and my videos make them feel free; it all makes me feel like there is a big reason for doing this. To be told I make someone feel free or desire to live means the whole world to me. Freedom and life are the two greatest gifts.

**Garden:** Do you ever get lonely?

**Forest Anon:** I do get lonely sometimes when the fire is on its last embers, and it's usually when I think of old memories. But once you shake it off and start a new day you're just too busy to be lonely.

It's also a big part of why I feed the mice and birds. They are great entertainment and even better company.

I've only ever had one visitor and that was my friend Penguin who recently passed away. He got snowed in for three days and swore he would never return. Since the whole FBI ordeal I've chosen to not have visitors in order to keep this place a secret. Although I sure would like one every now and then.

**Garden:** For those of us who long for a life closer to nature, can you say you recommend your path? Or, put another way, what are the pros and cons to the Forest Anon lifestyle? Are the sacrifices worth it?

**Forest Anon:** I strongly recommend this life to anybody who likes nature, freedom, solitude, and adventure. It's often very hard and you have to be okay with being extremely comfortable sometimes. But when you start to witness things you know nobody else does, like animals whimpering in thunderstorms, trees crashing through the canopy, beetles that take decades to emerge from their larval state, deer drinking unaware from the stream you're sitting in; you never want to go back to a regular life. The sacrifices are worth every minute. Even the rough ones. I wouldn't trade it for all of the mansions and money in the world.



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