

The Ultimate Ted Kaczynski Research Document, Volume 2

The Investigation and Lessons We Can Learn

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1995 – Aged 51

The Investigation

Ted was unsurprisingly disparaging about the FBI:¹

If you use any kind of practical common sense at all, your chances of getting caught are practically zero. If there's nobody there to see you. The only danger is if you talk to somebody else, and tell them what you're doing and they don't keep their mouth shut.

The FBI is just incompetent. I mean you wouldn't believe it. I wouldn't have believed it, before I saw my case from the inside, how incompetent these people are.

If you look at these minute traces they get at a crime scene it's much less effective than they pretend. And add to that, the fact that the FBI lab's incompetent.

According to the witness' description, the Unabomber had reddish blond hair, and this was massive. This description was massively publicized, according to which the Unabomber had reddish blond hair. It's obviously inconvenient that my hair is brown instead of blond.

In my case, they had DNA results that were called the DQ alpha reading, and this was from postage stamps that were on Unabomb devices, and this supposedly would narrow it down to three percent of the population. In other words three percent of the population would have the same DQ alpha reading. You know, that doesn't prove very much, three percent of the population, because there are millions of people who would fit into that. You know, one thing I've learned to my surprise is that all this stuff is a lot less effective than people think. I mean technology is useful, if it's used intelligently, but if it's used by people who are incompetent, then it's not very effective.

FBI officers differed in opinion on whether they would ever have tracked him down:²

FBI Supervisory Special Agent Patrick Webb ... remained convinced that had Kaczynski's brother not turned him in, the task force would have identified and arrested him. "My personal conviction is that we would have caught him eventually," he insisted. "In the manifesto, he cited some obscure text book, and we looked who had copies and where the copies were available. There were eight copies in libraries across the country. They would have been able to tell us who had requested them. Once we got the name of who ordered that book in Lincoln, Montana, we would have had him. "It would have been a struggle and maybe I am fantasizing, but I think we would have gotten him through the grunt work. But it all stopped when his brother came forward."

¹ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

² Lis W. Wiehl and Lisa Pulitzer. Hunting the Unabomber: The FBI, Ted Kaczynski, and the Capture of America's Most Notorious Domestic Terrorist [Book]. Nelson Books. April 28, 2020. Original link. Archived link.

Ted's Family Realise He Might Be the Unabomber

Linda begins to suspect Ted:¹

It was his wife, Linda Patrik, who had never met Ted, who was the first to mention the possibility, initially as a small joke between them. "Hey, you've got this screwy brother," he recalled her saying. "Maybe he's the guy." But the banter planted a kernel of doubt in David's mind.

FBI Report:²

She and Dave had previously discussed the similarities of Ted's life to the trail which has been left by the UNABOM subject: specifically, that the UNABOM subject has origins in Chicago, has been in Salt Lake City and in Northern California, is believed to be a "loner," unmarried and in midlife.

* * *

Linda:

... In the month of August, 1995 ...³ I was vacationing in Paris ...⁴ on a trip celebrating our fifth wedding anniversary ...⁵ and I began to look over the reports about the Unabomber that were printed in the Herald Tribune.

Eric:⁶

This was a month or so before the whole manifesto was published, but she was able to read the stories about the essay in the International Herald Tribune, which was owned by the New York Times in the Washington Post. The more quotes from the manifesto she read the more she thought 'I know who this is.'

Linda:^{7,8}

¹ David Johnston And Janny Scott. Brother Recounts How He Came To Suspect Kaczynski Was Bomber [Written Interview]. The Spokesman-Review. May 26, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

² FBI. David Kaczynskis' First Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 18, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

³ FBI. David Kaczynskis' First Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 18, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

⁴ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁵ Michaela Haas. My Brother, the Unabomber [Essay]. michaelahaas.com. January 27, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

⁶ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁷ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁸ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

[B]ecause there had recently been bombings in the Paris subways, the Parisians were fascinated with the Unabomber and there were newspaper articles on him every day. It was a time when the FBI was releasing more information to the public: about his woodworking ability, about the cities he had lived in, and the fact that he was now considered to be a loner rather than part of a revolutionary group.

[T]here was a little article describing the Unabomber and what his interests were, and these different theories about what we should do. ‘We don’t want, you know, any kind of technology, We don’t want all of this. We have to go back to the natural way of life, you know, without machines and without phones and all of that.’ It was churning up in my head quite a bit. And I thought, gosh, that sounds like Dave’s brother.

David:⁹

She’s a philosophy professor at union college, she reads papers all the time, she’s trained to look for language and use of language, she’s a very intuitive person and she had been very concerned about my brother obviously she would be concerned with a brother-in-law who hates her without having met her.

The Daily Gazette:¹⁰

Patrik said she “strongly intuited” that Ted was the Unabomber while meditating on a trip to Paris in 1995, when the city was plagued by a series of bombings carried out by the Armed Islamic Group.

“My meditation was bringing up all kinds of feelings about the victims,” she said. “I fell off my meditation cushion onto the floor sobbing because of the pain of the victims. ... It was not that I was feeling exactly what they were feeling, but that I was very much aware of their suffering.”

Utne Reader:¹¹

Journalist: Did you have any doubts in that period, or were you pretty convinced that Ted was the Unabomber?

Linda: In philosophy, you get really complicated notions of what knowledge is, so that if I had to answer as a professional philosopher, I’d never say anything of the kind. But if you allow for the things that Western philosophy doesn’t, such as strong gut feelings, strong intuitions, then you allow yourself to draw conclusions that don’t necessarily appear rational at first. I couldn’t get this thought of Ted being the Unabomber out of my mind. I was obsessed, and I couldn’t tell if it was a realistic obsession or a fantasy obsession.

Linda:

... David joined me in Paris ...¹² for the last two weeks of that month. ...¹³

⁹ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC’s In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁰ Sara Foss. Years after Unabomber Drama, Kaczynski and Patrik Find Peace [Essay]. The Daily Gazette. 26 May 2013. Original link. Archived link.

¹¹ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

¹² Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

¹³ FBI. David Kaczynskis’ First Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 18, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

Linda:¹⁴

I was completely wrapped up in fear. But I knew I had to tell David about this as soon as he arrived in Paris after he recovered from jet lag. I was very scared, to the point of having paranoid fantasies about people planting newspaper stories or people following me in Paris because I was so absorbed in the suspicion that Ted was the Unabomber.

Project Unabom:¹⁵

Eric: When he arrived and saw her waiting at the terminal, he could tell that something was weighing on her.

David Kaczynski: We took a cab from the airport to the apartment she'd rented and you know she couldn't restrain herself completely, she said Dave, there's something I gotta talk to you about, it's something terrible.

Eric: David was jet lagged. And Linda told him it could wait. He took a nap and then when he got up the two of them went out for a walk.

David Kaczynski: We were kind of alone on that part of the street and Linda said that this sounded like my brother's ideology and she wondered if the Unabomber might be my brother. And my first reaction was "oh thank God, it's nothing real, it's just, you know Ted can't possibly be the Unabomber.

David:¹⁶

She said, 'I think we need to look into this.' I pretty much said, 'Yeah, if the opportunity arose.' I dismissed it.

Linda:¹⁷

At first David thought I was nuts and didn't take it seriously. But I couldn't drop it, so we discussed the situation intensely for a couple of days.

David:¹⁸¹⁹²⁰

At first I assumed Linda had let her imagination run away with her. She pointed out that although the manifesto had not yet been published, it was being described by media sources as a critique of modern technology. She knew my brother had an obsession with the negative effects of technology.

And then she pointed out ... that the Unabomber was thought to come from Chicago since the first bombs have been planted there and of course both of our families had come from Chicago there had been a subsequent bomb at a student centre at the ... University of California at Berkeley, where Ted was once a mathematics professor.

"That was thirty years ago!" I countered. "Berkeley is a hotbed for radicals. Besides, Ted hates to travel. He has no money."

¹⁴ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁵ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁶ David Johnston And Janny Scott. Brother Recounts How He Came To Suspect Kaczynski Was Bomber [Written Interview]. The Spokesman-Review. May 26, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁷ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁸ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁹ David Kaczynski. Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

²⁰ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

“But we loaned him money, didn’t we?”

I didn’t like the way the conversation was developing. The human mind can take any fixed idea and patch together evidence to support it. That’s what I thought was going on. But I wondered why Linda had focused such attention on my brother.

But I think the thing that tipped Linda the point where she actually sort of was going to approach me was news that the Unabomber had sent a manifesto a long essay to the New York Times in the Washington Post in which he argued explained that he was sending these bombs planting these bombs in a protest against modern technology so Linda’s thinking okay let’s see Chicago Berkeley anti-technology maybe it’s just coincidence but maybe these are pieces of a puzzle that add up to your brother and I can admit I was talking about denial I was very resistant at the time I’m saying look there’s a lot of radical environmentalist Ted has never been violent this is all a coincidence and Linda at that point extracted me from a promise.

“If the Unabomber’s manifesto is ever published, would you at least read it and tell me honestly what you think?” she pleaded.

Well, I could do that much. In fact, reading the manifesto might be the best way to allay Linda’s fear. At that stage, I wasn’t capable of imagining that the Unabomber and my mixed-up brother could be the same person. I’d had extensive correspondence with Ted; I knew how he thought and how he wrote. Surely after reading the manifesto I’d be able to say to Linda, “It’s not him!”

Linda:²¹

I really liked Paris, and I wanted David to see it, so we talked about his brother for a while and then came to an agreement that David would read the manifesto when we returned home. In exchange, we let the problem recede into the background so that we could enjoy the city.

Still, it was a strange stay in Paris. We had two weeks of wonderful romance, and in the evening we sat on the balcony of the apartment and discussed his brother possibly being the Unabomber. I had to listen to David telling me that my suspicions about his brother were unjustified.

For David’s part he remembers going back to the apartment at night as cathartic release of finally getting his deepest feelings about his brother out in the open:²²

[T]hat gave me a really long time to talk a lot about Ted to air some feelings about Ted, but at that point I was pretty darn convinced that he couldn’t be responsible for these things because I’ve never seen him violent. You know, usually people who are violently antisocial. Began at a much younger age. And maybe part of it was denial. I just didn’t want to believe it.

David:²³

It was strange, in that it had to be a joint decision, I think for a couple of reasons. One was that our whole family was in denial about the extent of Ted’s illness. I think that in some

²¹ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

²² Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

²³ Ellen Becker & Tom Mcpheeters. Unmasking the Unabomber [Essay]. Utne. Nov 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

ways you could relate our denial to some of the family's beliefs, which were that it was OK to be different, that we were different from other people, and that it was OK if Ted was different. It was OK if Ted didn't follow the normal career track that someone as brilliant as he would ordinarily follow.

But I think there was a deep fear that many families feel when mental illness strikes, that there is something wrong with the whole family. It's a tremendous stigma. There is tremendous shame associated with it. It took Linda, somebody outside the family who saw more clearly, to press me on this issue. She had persuaded me back in 1991 to take some of my brother's letters to a psychiatrist, and the psychiatrist confirmed that he thought Ted was very ill and isolation was definitely negative for him. There was not a good prognosis for him. At the same time, the legalities left very little to do, so we just kind of let things be and hoped that Ted would find help or seek us out when he realized he needed help.

FBI Report:²⁴

They returned to the U.S. at the end of August, 1995.

Hospital Visit

* * *

FBI Report:²⁵

During the last part of September, 1995, Dave's mother, Wanda KACZYNSKI, had been briefly hospitalized due to illness, and Dave and Linda had traveled to Chicago to care for her upon her release and see to her comfort upon her return home. On October 3, 1995, they were exiting a restaurant in Chicago with Wanda when Dave felt compelled to make what he called a "casual remark" to his mother which was, "Mom, did you ever think that Ted might be the UNABOMER?" Wanda paused and then said quietly, "It's crossed my mind." Linda was highly alarmed at the apparently casual nature of this conversation, and when she was alone with Ted again pressed him to read the UNABOM Manifesto when it was published, which occurred almost contemporaneously with the above exchange between Dave and Wanda. Dave noted that his mother later said she had read about the "violent militia groups" in Montana, and hoped that Ted had not joined one of them. She thought it might be likely, however, given that Ted is "so angry." She then said that she would never communicate her suspicion of such a thing on Ted's part, however, and she hoped that Dave would refrain from telling anyone of any worries he might have regarding Ted's associations with such groups because it "would be so unfair to him."

Reading the manifesto

David:²⁶

²⁴ FBI. David Kaczynskis' First Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 18, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

²⁵ FBI. David Kaczynskis' First Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 18, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

²⁶ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

On September 19, 1995, about a month after Linda had first broached her suspicions to me and six years after we had begun living together, the Unabomber's manifesto was published in the *Washington Post*. I read a news story about it in my local newspaper and felt vindicated. The manifesto was said to propound "neoconservative" views. Although Ted had sometimes considered our parents' liberal philosophy naive, I'd never thought of him as politically conservative.

To the best of my knowledge, he was apolitical. Whatever "neoconservatism" was, I couldn't imagine that label fitting my brother.

Publication of the manifesto allowed me to fulfill my promise to Linda to compare it with my brother's ideas and writing. She made a phone call to our local newspaper to find out where the *Washington Post* was sold, then dispatched me to a newsstand, one of the few in our area that carried the *Post*.

By the time I arrived, however, the last of six copies had been sold. As a lifelong baseball fan, I soon became engrossed in following the World Series. A subsequent visit from Mom further diverted our attention through Columbus Day.

The Washington Post:²⁷

But Linda's thoughts kept returning to that lingering suspicion. "Come on, Linda," David would say, "you're just being silly."

David:²⁸²⁹

It was not until the following Saturday, after breakfast at a local diner, that Linda suggested we go to the library to find a copy of the September 19 *Washington Post* containing the manifesto.

We found that the Schenectady County Public Library had not yet received its copy through the mail. I was willing to wait, but Linda was less patient. "Let's try the Union College library!" she said. I sighed and tagged along.

At Union, we soon located the September 19 issue but were disappointed to discover that the special insert containing the manifesto had been removed. "Obviously," I thought, "we're not meant to read this thing today."

But Linda persisted. "The Internet!" she exclaimed. "It's probably posted on the Internet by now."

What an irony, I thought, that I should be using the hypermodern Internet to find out whether my technophobic brother is an antitechnology terrorist. The very thought gave me a slightly queasy feeling.

Soon I found myself in front of a computer screen at the Union College library. It was my first time on the Internet. As I began to read the manifesto, I became aware that Linda wasn't looking at the computer screen. She was gazing at my face. Since she'd never met Ted, she knew that my face would tell her more than the words on the screen.

I fully expected to be able to turn to Linda and say, "It's definitely not him! Now do you see how silly you've been?"

²⁷ Joel Achenbach & Serge F. Kovaleski. The Profile of a Loner [Essay]. *Washington Post*. April 7, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

²⁸ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

²⁹ David Kaczynski. David Kaczynski's Lecture for the 'In Our Name; Restoring Justice In America' Conference [Lecture]. *In Our Name*. August 25, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

But as I finished the first paragraph, I sat immobilized, my eyes glued to the screen. I read on. I remember feeling a slight rush of adrenaline. My emotions were a mixture of fear, dismay, anger. I'd sometimes reacted this way while reading one of Ted's hurtful letters. In the opening lines of the manifesto, I detected a tone similar to Ted's when he wrote letters condemning our parents. Only here the indictment was vastly expanded. On the surface, the phraseology was calm and intellectual, but it barely concealed the author's smoldering rage. As much as I wanted to, I couldn't turn to Linda and honestly say that the writing was not my brother's.

Nor could I tell myself that it *was* written by him. I'd been an English major, a lover of literature. I assumed that a person's writing would be as distinctive and identifiable as their voice. But if it was indeed Ted's "voice" that I heard in the Unabomber's manifesto, it came to me muffled through thick layers of dread and denial.

That day we were able to retrieve only the first six pages of the manifesto. After the first page or two, the manuscript abruptly veered away from its opening theme and embarked on a puzzling critique of the political Left. Apparently this was the section that had earned the "neoconservative" label.

The public space at Union College Library was not an appropriate place to discuss whether my brother Ted had authored the Unabomber's manifesto. But as soon as we stepped outside Linda questioned me in an anxious whisper: "What do you think? Do you think he wrote it?"

"I'll be honest with you. Some parts of it *do* sound like him," I murmured, bending my head toward hers. "But other parts don't sound familiar at all. I don't know what to think. If I *had* to estimate, I'd say there's maybe one chance in a thousand that Ted might have written it."

As we walked back toward the parking lot, Linda was very quiet. Finally she said, "David, one chance in a thousand that your brother is a serial killer? Maybe we need to do something." I had no answer for her. In my heart I recognized that her fears could no longer be dismissed.

There should be an easy solution, my brother's sick, obviously society needs to be protected from my brother, my brother needs help, he needs treatment, maybe this is the chance to get Ted the treatment he needs, in an ideal world maybe this would not have resulted in such an internal emotional dilemma for me, but it was obviously not an ideal world.

Ted's Family Commit to Serious Research

David:¹²³

I didn't know much about the Unabomber case. I hadn't followed it in the news. I don't remember even hearing the word "Unabomber" prior to December 1994, when I read reports of a mail bomb that had claimed the life of Thomas Mosser, an advertising executive in New Jersey. Only later did I learn that the Unabomber saga had served as regular grist for crime-oriented television programs like *America's Most Wanted*. Linda and I didn't watch much television.

Surely, I thought, there must be old newspaper and magazine articles filled with details and clues. Perhaps if I read those articles, I'd find some piece of information that would put our fears to rest.

I dropped Linda off at home—she had a ton of papers to grade—and immediately drove back to the Schenectady County Public Library to conduct some research. I pulled out the *Reader's Guide* and found a couple of dozen entries under "Unabomber," several of which I located in the library's periodicals archive. For the first time, I read detailed accounts of the attacks, including the names of the victims, their pictures, a summary of their professional careers, the comments of their coworkers and devastated family members, the circumstances surrounding the explosions, and the speculations of law enforcement officials.

I studied the police sketch of the presumed Unabomber based on a woman's recollection of a man she'd glimpsed minutes before a bomb went off in Salt Lake City in 1987. I gazed at the drawing long and carefully. It depicted a youngish, mustachioed male in a hooded sweatshirt with aviator sunglasses. To my mind, it didn't particularly resemble Ted.

Accompanying the sketch was a physical description, also based on the eyewitness's sighting. It described someone three inches taller than Ted and ten years younger, with hair that was light, not dark brown like Ted's. Reading this, I felt relieved. With three points of difference, the description didn't match my brother, so he probably wasn't the Unabomber after all.

From the articles I gleaned other encouraging bits of information. For instance, forensic profilers backed up the witness's impression that the Unabomber was about ten years younger than Ted. From the writing, they deduced an author without an advanced degree, whereas Ted held a PhD from the University of Michigan. They speculated that the Unabomber might have worked for an airline or in some bluecollar field. Ted was a former college professor.

But no matter how hard I hunted for a piece of information that would eliminate Ted as a suspect, I never found it. As far as I knew, he'd spent years and years in his cabin continuously. He hated to travel and seldom did so. He lived a primitive life without money more than a thousand miles from northern California, where most of the bombs had been placed or mailed. He had taught himself how to survive in the wilderness. He had learned

¹ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

² David Kaczynski. Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

³ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

to read and write Spanish fluently. He still dabbled in mathematics. He'd written frequent, long letters to his family—until one day the letters abruptly stopped.

Had my brilliant, intense brother occupied himself with destructive projects we knew nothing about?

I carefully reviewed the timeline of the bombings. Nothing jumped out at me except the date of the very first bomb, which exploded on the Chicago campus of the University of Illinois in May 1978. In the summer of 1978, Ted made one of his rare trips home to earn some money. In fact, Ted, our father, and I worked at the same factory for a while. But I was positive that Ted had arrived by bus in *late June* of 1978. He'd even telephoned en route to let us know his scheduled time of arrival. He told us he was calling from a bus station in Minnesota or someplace. So barring an elaborate plan of deception—including lodging himself for a month somewhere in the Chicago area without his family's knowledge—Ted must have been in Montana in May 1978, so he could not have placed that first bomb. It never occurred to me that Ted could be deceptive.

I hurried home and reported the good news to Linda: the physical description didn't match Ted, the victims had no discernible connection to him, and I'd discovered nothing to implicate my brother in any of the bombings.

But if I thought any of this would make a difference to Linda, I was mistaken. She did not seem to feel relieved. No matter where the facts seemed to be pointing, Linda had a strong intuition that my brother was the Unabomber.

If Linda had been more easily convinced of Ted's innocence, I might not have felt any reason to say what I said next: "You know, hon, there's just one thing that troubles me: that sketch from Salt Lake City. I never knew until today that there had been a bombing in Salt Lake City. I do remember that Ted once had a job working construction in Salt Lake City. In fact, I visited him there. It was a long time ago. But ..."

While doing nothing wasn't an option, the options we did face were not very appealing. Should we notify the FBI? In my view, that could prove disastrous. I reminded Linda of the FBI's ill-advised attempts to make arrests at Waco and Ruby Ridge, which resulted in many deaths. I reminded her of Ted's paranoia and emotional fragility. What evidence did we really have against Ted? Why would the FBI take us seriously? And if they did, what if their investigation turned belligerent? Suppose they sent an agent to his cabin to ask questions. In Ted's paranoid state, he might panic and react badly, even if he were completely innocent. If he found out that I'd reported him, he would deeply resent my suspicion or think I'd behaved maliciously, and this would foreclose any possibility of reconciliation between us. In the worst case, he might lash out at an agent: fear does strange things to people. Or he might hurt himself, convinced that the peace of mind he so desperately craved was unavailable, even in the wilderness.

No matter what happened, the effect on Ted was bound to be disturbing—and to judge by his letters, he was pretty disturbed already. Linda and I settled on a quieter approach, more suited to our experiences and instincts. We both felt at home in a world of ideas and words. We knew how to make books open up to us and reveal the minds of their authors. Perhaps, we reasoned, if we read the Unabomber's manifesto several times very carefully, we could discover the truth. Besides, I had dozens and dozens of Ted's old letters tucked away in a trunk in the attic. Some of those letters touched on the theme of technology. By carefully comparing Ted's letters to the manifesto, we could possibly discern whether Ted had written both.

I told Linda that I had two good reasons to believe my brother was not the Unabomber. First, he had never been violent. People in their midthirties don't just wake up some day

and decide to start hurting people. Antisocial types usually start causing harm at a much earlier age.

Second, the Unabomber's rant against political leftism, prominently placed near the beginning of the manifesto, wasn't consistent with Ted's main concern about technology, nor had I heard him voice any similar views in the past. The author of the manifesto wanted to fend off any notion that a political solution could be effective against the threat posed by technology. His thesis was more radical: he argued that the problem lay much deeper than politics could plausibly reach. Ted had also been a young professor at Berkeley, a hotbed of radicalism during the '60s, a time of social and political turmoil. Ted's alienation from "the alienated generation" recalled Bob Dylan's line "He was always on the outside of whatever side there was." So I wouldn't have expected Ted to get cozy with left-wing environmentalists.

But even if Ted believed exactly what the Unabomber had written, I wouldn't have thought he'd write something with the energy or tone of the manifesto's attack on leftism, which appeared to emanate from a place of deep personal disappointment. Could it be that our parent's liberal politics (our father, to vex his friends, would occasionally claim to be a pacifist and a socialist; and Mom, against the grain of 1950s McCarthyism, sympathized with communism in theory if not as practiced) had generated something more than a dismissive reaction in my older brother? If so, why hadn't I heard about it before?

Over the next three or four weeks, Linda and I fell into a routine. The Unabomber (whoever he was) had promised to stop killing if his writings were published. We hoped the manifesto's publication would at least buy us time as the shadowy killer absorbed the public's reaction to his treatise.

Every evening after work, Linda and I would come home, eat dinner, and retire to a couch in our living room. There, instead of reading books or watching television or talking about the day's events like most couples, we'd sit side by side poring over the manifesto and piles of my brother's old letters.

...and made careful comparisons with letters that Ted had sent me over the years from his one-room cabin in rural Montana. Sometimes I thought I was projecting my worry, seeing what I feared to see, since Linda had planted a strong suggestion in my mind. At other times I thought I might be in denial, unable to see the painful truth because I lacked the wherewithal to deal with it.

Linda relied in large measure on my familiarity with my brother's views and personality. On the other hand, she couldn't possibly trust my objectivity. It was as if two people were looking at a body of water from different angles. From her position on shore, Linda could only see the surface of the water. Hovering above, I could see to the bottom of the lake, understand the psychological struggles beneath the surface of my brother's ideas and arguments. At times I thought I vaguely glimpsed in those depths a vision of my brother as the traumatized baby our mother had once described, eyes crossed in terror, strapped to a hospital gurney, stripped of all security and trust.

Linda and I endlessly discussed our readings of the manifesto and of Ted's letters. As with any interpretation, we were constantly left wondering how much of what we saw was our own projection and how much was an authentic reflection of the author, whether the author was my brother or someone else.

Occasionally I'd look up from my task and reflect on how bizarre it all felt. *Am I really doing this?*

We never found the proverbial smoking gun. I identified one phrase that gave me pause: the author of the manifesto suggested that modern philosophers were not living up to their reputation as “coolheaded logicians.”

I felt sure that Ted had once used the same peculiar phrase in a letter, but I couldn't find the letter. Of course, I didn't have all his letters at hand. Some were at Mom's house in Chicago and others were stored away in my Texas cabin. A few had been lost over the years.

Each day felt different as the pendulum of belief swung between one kind of doubt and its opposite. One day I'd read the manifesto and could almost hear my brother's voice speaking each word. I'd say to myself: *The truth is staring you in the face, only you refuse to see it.*

The very next day I'd reason with myself: *Linda has planted a suspicion in your mind. You've been worried about your brother. Our fear is built on worry and projection, nothing more.*

I had some powerful dreams during this period. In one memorable dream, Linda and I were together in a farm field, bending down over some manual work, planting or picking or weeding. At one point Linda glanced up and exclaimed, “Hey Dave, look at that!” She then pointed to some threatening storm clouds boiling darkly on the horizon. “Maybe they're coming our way. Maybe we should warn the neighbors,” she urged. “No, there's nothing we can do,” I said, and resumed my work. But Linda was insistent, which greatly irritated me. “It's got nothing to do with us!” I shouted. “Forget it!”

I remember waking up one morning Saturday morning, I slept in a little bit late and I'm lying there in bed and thinking I had the worst nightmare I've ever had in my life and then as the cobwebs started to melt I woke up I realized it's not a nightmare I'm literally considering the possibility that my brother is public enemy number one.

[W]ith a crushing sense of depression. I made my way to the kitchen table and sat down. I found Linda, who had gotten up earlier, munching on cornflakes. I caught her eye. My words spilled out unplanned: “Hon, I think there might be a 50–50 chance that Ted wrote the manifesto.”

Linda knew what it cost me to say those words. Now what were we going to do? Continue thinking and talking and procrastinating while perhaps my brother was constructing another bomb?

For the rest of that day we wrestled with it. I say “it” because the word Unabomber was too frightening to say out loud. Linda sometimes shortened it to “ub,” but instead I grasped instinctively at the neutral, impersonal pronoun.

Was Ted the UB or wasn't he? Should we do something? Should we talk to Mom? How long would the Unabomber wait before he struck again?

Deciding what to do next

David:⁴⁵

You might think these questions represented a logical sequence, but in reality they came at us from all directions at once.

⁴ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

⁵ David Kaczynski. *Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System* [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

I felt that reacting impulsively to our fears could result in great harm. However, Linda pointed out that waiting too long might also allow great harm to occur. We talked about it all day long, but by nightfall we felt even more confused and upset. We decided to sleep on it. Perhaps we'd wake up in the morning and the answer would be there.

But sleep eluded us. As we lay awake side by side, I talked about how troubled I felt, wondering if I'd ever really known my brother. If Ted were the Unabomber, he was responsible for wanton, cruel attacks on innocent strangers—for evil stuff.

I realized that my feelings toward my brother had subtly shifted. I'd never considered Ted capable of violence. In fact, my only fear along those lines was the haunting worry that he might someday kill himself.

I reminded myself of the cruel letters that Ted had written to Mom and Dad—emotional bombs, you might call them. But I always saw those letters as cries of pain. I couldn't uncover any memories that revealed deep-seated evil in my brother. In fact, the memories that flooded in were mostly fond ones.

I told Linda how Teddy had tried to give me his most prized possession—a coin collection—when I returned home from a brief stay in the hospital. “Teddy, your brother knows how you feel about him,” I remembered Mom saying. “You don't need to give Davy your coin collection. He knows you love him.”

Among the college philosophy courses Linda had taught over the years were courses in ethics. As a youth counselor at Equinox Youth Shelter, I was acutely aware of the dilemmas that teenagers sometimes face. I always counseled the kids against violence, even in violent circumstances. Many had come to distrust adults, particularly adults in positions of authority. I always urged them to find some adult to confide in when it was a matter of protecting someone's health or safety. But now I realized how easy it had been to lecture the kids—to urge them, “Do the right thing!”—when the risks and costs would be borne by them, not me.

I had to ask myself, *What if we turn Ted in and he's convicted and eventually executed? What would it be like to go through the rest of my life with my brother's blood on my hands?*

Now our question *Is Ted the Unabomber?* led me to a seemingly endless series of other questions and concerns: *What will this do to my brother? What will this do to my mother?* (I thought they both might die.) *What will this do to us—to Linda and me? What kind of life will we have if it turns out that my brother really is the Unabomber?* And, of course, the most urgent and compelling question: *What should we do with our suspicion that we know the identity of the most wanted criminal in America, a serial killer?*

The impact on Ted would be devastating. The impact on me would be devastating. Turning in my brother would have to be a considered act, not a thoughtless one. The damage to my brother could not be undone.

I also had to think about the effect all this would have on Mom. She was a seventy-nine-year-old widow. For years she had worried about Ted because of his emotional problems, his isolation, and his estrangement from the family. But I knew her worst fear about Ted didn't even come close to the awful suspicion that Linda and I were struggling with: that he might be a serial killer.

Mom would be crushed. She might even die of a stroke or heart failure. I couldn't imagine how I could begin to comfort her. Her wounds would never, ever heal. I couldn't be sure our relationship would survive.

I wasn't really thinking about justice. All I wanted was to minimize harm to everyone. The past—already overflowing with tragedy and suffering—could not be undone. Now it seemed that we could act to save lives only by sacrificing the life of my mentally ill brother.

There was no simple ethical formula that could make our decision less agonizing, no way of knowing we wouldn't come to regret our decision in the future. But no one else could stop Ted if he really was the Unabomber.

Linda made one other argument to push me toward our terrible choice. It was an argument formulated by Socrates in Plato's *Gorgias* dialogue. According to Socrates, treating others unjustly causes harm to the perpetrator as well as to the victim of injustice. It would be an act of cruelty to permit your worst enemy to behave unjustly: for example, to let him get away with murder. Linda argued that allowing Ted to continue hurting others would only result in greater damage to Ted—harsher punishment in the long run, psychological distress, spiritual deterioration, greater madness. Her Buddhist analysis arrived at the same conclusion, only more so, given the doctrine of rebirth. Through his acts of violence Ted was accumulating negative karma that could cause him immense future suffering.

These intellectual arguments reached across a moral abyss, but the bridge they formed was tenuous. I wasn't sure it would hold up under the weight of reality—especially if Ted got the death penalty. I countered that Ted might be innocent. Pointing the authorities to an innocent man—especially one with paranoid tendencies—could lead to disaster.

I remember when Linda and I were in high school this was like how many years 20-some years earlier there had been the story of this woman in New York City who had been murdered by the name of Kitty Genovese and there was a whole media cycle about bystander behavior because while she was assaulted over a period of 30 minutes it turned out that there was something like 29 or 30 witnesses who saw the entire assault and who never called the police and you know some of those witnesses had said things like well I thought they knew each other like that would make difference and some of the witnesses said well I didn't want to get involved and in some sense that became the net national headline and as Linda and I compared our story to that story we realized you know any one of those 29 witnesses could have said let somebody else do it maybe that was their excuse, well there was nobody else there was nobody who knew Ted well enough to actually take action here.

A Breakdown in Understanding & Trust

David:⁶⁷

I needed something more to go on than guesswork and intuition. I told Linda I needed to visit Ted at his cabin in Montana.

This suggestion upset Linda.

"It's not to confront him," I tried to reassure her. "I won't even mention the Unabomber. I just know that if I see him and spend some time with him, I'll learn something."

"But David," Linda countered. "He might hurt you. He's got guns, doesn't he? I can't let you go out there!"

"Hon, I'm sure Ted would never hurt me."

⁶ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

⁷ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

“David, a month ago you didn’t believe he was capable of hurting anyone. The truth of the matter is that we really *don’t know* what he’s capable of!”

She thinks this man is psychotic and a killer, what would he do if he thought his brother suspected? So, she was adamant against it. At one point she said the only way I’ll permit this is if you have a bodyguard with you disguised as a friend and even then she was not enthusiastic about the idea.

I wonder whether missed opportunities played on David’s mind when searching for an anchor on which to understand Ted after so many years of not seeing him in person. For example how beneficial it could have been to open up Ted to new experiences in the Texas desert.

* * *

David:⁸

After going back and forth for a while, we hit on a compromise: I’d write to Ted, ask for permission to visit, and wait for his response. Linda and I could make a decision once we heard back from him. Maybe Linda was counting on Ted to discourage me, since I hadn’t received a friendly letter from him in years.

In the letter I wrote, I told Ted I missed him. I said I had some vacation time coming and would be happy to drive him to Helena to pick up supplies before the heavy snows came. I tried to invest all the love and concern I felt for Ted in a simple and straightforward letter. There was no way I could put my heart on the page, but I hoped Ted might somehow feel it and understand.

David:⁹¹⁰¹¹¹²

“I’d like to see you because we’re brothers, with shared memories and a bond of genuine affection between us.”

Ted’s reply came two weeks later. I was alone at home after work when I retrieved his letter from our mail slot. I sat down on the living room couch and gazed at the envelope for a minute. My name and address were hand printed in the familiar block letters I’d seen on every letter Ted had sent me since college. I noticed my hand trembling slightly as I held the envelope.

My heart sank as I read the opening lines:

“I am not suffering, sick or discouraged,’ and I don’t know what indications’ you think you have that I am so. But if you want me to get sick, all you have to do is keep trying to communicate with me, because I get just choked with frustration at my inability to get our stinking family off my back once and for all, and stinking family’ emphatically includes you. So get this straight... I DON’T EVER WANT TO SEE YOU OR HEAR FROM YOU, OR ANY OTHER MEMBER OF OUR FAMILY, AGAIN.”

⁸ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

⁹ Ted Kaczynski. *Truth versus Lies* [Book]. Boxes 66 & 67, Ted Kaczynski papers, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Library). [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

¹⁰ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

¹¹ Joel Achenbach & Serge F. Kovaleski. *The Profile of a Loner* [Essay]. *Washington Post*. April 7, 1996. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

¹² Alan Chartock (Host). *David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With* [Podcast Interview]. *WAMC’s In Conversation With*. August 12, 2021. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

It said; ‘don’t come, don’t contact me anymore, get it straight that I really don’t want anything to do with you anymore, you’re not my brother, there’s no bond between us, that was broken a long time ago’.

Ted:¹³

... but with this qualification: I reaffirmed my commitment to help him if he were ever in desperate straits; if he needed such help he could contact me.

* * *

David:¹⁴

The letter was a short one for Ted: two sides of one sheet of notebook paper. Ted’s anger and coldness were truly incomprehensible to me. I couldn’t fathom what was going on inside his mind.

“He’s gone over the edge,” I murmured.

I realized I couldn’t reason with him; I couldn’t control him. And now it struck me that he probably could not control himself either.

For Ted’s part he wrote later:¹⁵

Since I had made it emphatically clear that I wanted to separate myself permanently from the family ... I don’t know how he could have expected me to let him come and visit.

He also claimed David was acting hypocritically for claiming to care about his wellbeing, whilst also secretly considering ‘denouncing’ him to the FBI:¹⁶

This letter was an interesting exercise in hypocrisy. It was carefully formulated to avoid giving any hint that Dave suspected me of being the Unabomber or that anything else unusual was happening; it rambled along nostalgically about how much he cared for me, and concluded: “I’d like to see you because we’re brothers, with shared memories and a bond of genuine affection between us.” This at a time when he was contemplating denouncing me to the FBI.

This is especially odd charge to level against Dave since Ted was trying to sell the world on the justification for a far more severe compromise in balanced compassion.

He had been engaged in an 18 year bombing campaign where he claimed to care about the innocent lives he was risking harming to wage his war (such as the secretaries and postman delivering his bombs) for in his mind the ends justified the means. As well, he was abusing his families desire to have a relationship with him to get them to fund the buying of materials for more bombs.

¹³ Ted Kaczynski. Truth versus Lies [Book]. Boxes 66 & 67, Ted Kaczynski papers, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Library). Original link. Archived link.

¹⁴ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁵ Ted Kaczynski. Truth versus Lies [Book]. Boxes 66 & 67, Ted Kaczynski papers, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Library). Original link. Archived link.

¹⁶ Ted Kaczynski. Truth versus Lies [Book]. Boxes 66 & 67, Ted Kaczynski papers, University of Michigan Library (Special Collections Library). Original link. Archived link.

Delaying a decision for the holidays

David:¹⁷¹⁸

I didn't tell mom at that point and I don't know if it was the right thing to do some time later actually way down the line she had a moment I think she'd spent a lot of time trying to protect me later on but she had a moment where she said David I wish you'd told me maybe I couldn't bear to tell her maybe I had to postpone that moment until it was absolutely necessary maybe it was truly my love for my mother I couldn't bear to inflict this this burden on her and lessen really the time came maybe I worried about her ability to handle it I think in many ways I short I didn't give my mother the credit it turned out she deserved at many points in the story ... It would have certainly made complicated the decision-making if she said no about going to the FBI, it certainly crossed my mind.

By this time the Thanksgiving holiday was fast upon us. Linda and I were planning to make the drive to Chicago to visit both of our families. I intended to recover several of Ted's letters that I'd left in a dresser drawer of my old bedroom at Mom's house. If a postmark definitively placed Ted in Montana on the same date the Unabomber had placed or mailed one of his bombs a thousand miles away in California, then we could rule him out.

Meanwhile, Linda and I both agreed it was time to bring Mom closer to us. We didn't want her to be far away if the worst happened.

So after Thanksgiving dinner we sat her down and made our case. The old house was becoming too much for her to handle, we pointed out. She should be closer to family in case she got sick again. It would be nice to see her more often.

Mom said she would think about it and let us know. She had some good friends she'd hate to leave behind. Overall, the visit wasn't a joyful one. Later that evening, she took me to task for not caring as much as I should about my brother. Had Mom intuitively channeled the secret deliberations that Linda and I were engaged in? It certainly felt that way.

None of the postmarks on Ted's letters provided the kind of alibi I was hoping for. The conflict between our moral obligation and my love for my brother could not be reconciled. We could not act, or fail to act, without sacrificing one for the other. Perhaps we would wake up some day and see our situation differently. Perhaps our sacrifice—illuminated by reason and necessity—would feel less painful over time. But if we waited for some magical resolution of our dilemma, we could end up waiting forever. We could end up waiting until someone else got killed.

I was too consumed with my own confusion and helplessness to appreciate the difficulty of Linda's position. Not only did it fall to her to push and plan and steer our investigation; she also had to motivate and comfort her reluctant partner along the difficult path.

After we returned to New York, I asked Linda for two weeks of silence on our all-consuming topic. I needed to go inward, to my spiritual core if such a thing existed, in hopes of finding an answer I could live with. Linda granted me the two weeks and faithfully respected my process throughout that time. But no answer ever came to me.

I did have one very disturbing dream in which our familiar living room was gradually becoming smaller. Day by day I could detect no difference, no movement. But over time it

¹⁷ David Kaczynski. Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

¹⁸ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

grew clear that the room was much smaller than it had been. In fact, the furniture was beginning to crowd together. “Linda,” I said, “we’d better get out of here before we’re crushed!” Linda quickly understood what was going on. But then I noticed for the first time that the doorways had vanished. The walls were coming together and we were left with no escape.

One night shortly after the end of my two-week reprieve, Linda and I were lying awake in bed when I shared with her a warm memory of my last visit with Ted in 1986. During this visit, I’d been using a couple of sawhorses to cut up some limbs for firewood when I suddenly lost my balance and fell roughly to the ground. I heard Ted running up.

“I hope I didn’t break your saw,” I offered. I knew that my brother only had a few tools and that he treated them with great care.

“I don’t care anything about the saw!” my brother exclaimed. “Are you OK?”

My voice trailed off as I finished recounting this incident. Then the stillness of our bedroom was abruptly broken by Linda’s sobs. I hugged her, trying to comfort her, but soon I, too, was crying uncontrollably. For a long time, we clutched each other tightly in the darkness.

When the crying was over, we lay there quietly. A discernible shift had taken place. The tangled brush of argument, speculation, and doubt had been swept away by this surge of pent-up emotions.

“We have to do something,” Linda said. I knew she was right.

Whatever was going to happen—all the unpredictable consequences that might follow from our actions—lay beyond our control. Try as we might to minimize the harm to Ted, Mom, and anyone else who might be affected, we could fail. But we shared one overriding concern: to prevent the Unabomber from claiming more victims.

Looking for a confidential language analyst Linda said:¹⁹

I also discussed my concerns with Dr. Robert Mitchell in therapy sessions. Then we contacted my best childhood friend, Susan Swanson, who is a private investigator in Chicago. I knew that we could trust her; I didn’t know anyone else who could help us in a practical way.

* * *

David:²⁰

Linda came up with the idea again an excellent idea that we should try to get some outside corroboration for our fears and she as an academic realized that there are people and I think they do this in the literary field they will analyze manuscripts and they whatever they do count adjectives or split infinitives or whatever and are able to tell whether Shakespeare wrote all of Shakespeare or homer wrote all of homer and so through an intermediary a friend of ours from back in evergreen park who was working as a private detective, she found someone to do a professional language analysis.

Linda:²¹

¹⁹ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

²⁰ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC’s In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

²¹ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

Without telling Susan that it had anything to do with the Unabomber, we asked her how to get a writing analysis done. As a teacher of writing — at that time I was grading at least thirty to forty papers a week — I had an eye for writing style. I convinced David that we should have a writing analysis done, but we didn't know how to locate someone who would preserve our confidentiality, so that's why we turned to Susan. ... At that point we just told her we had two documents that needed to be compared. She began to search for experts in the field, and she came back to say that the top expert was Clint Van Zant, [a former FBI behavioral science expert she knew] ...

Linda:²²

We knew that turning over any document to him was tantamount to turning it over to the FBI, so we had to make a decision whether we were willing, even with the scanty evidence that we had, to essentially turn this information over to the FBI.

It took us another month to decide. David was particularly concerned that his brother was so paranoid that if Ted were innocent, anyone showing up on his doorstep, especially an FBI agent, would be in danger. David was worried that his brother might either shoot himself or shoot the person who showed up — or, if his brother were innocent, we would be putting him through great emotional turmoil.

David:²³

We didn't tell her who we suspected but at one point it kind of slipped when we were talking about the report and I suddenly said Ted and I said oh, I didn't mean to say that, and then she told me well she kind of suspected that it was someone close to me and perhaps my brother, but we had complete trust in her.

Susan:²⁴

I've known Linda since we were toddlers. ... I thought it was hard to tell the difference between the two. It kind of flowed, it had the same tone. So, I went to work researching the Unabomber case, taking into account other things Ted had that were in common with the Unabomber. Probably the biggest geographic link had to do with universities where bombs were found. There were two at the University of California, at Berkeley, and one at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. We knew that Ted had gotten his Ph.D. at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and we knew he had been an assistant professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

David:²⁵

We were looking at the timeline of the bombings and letters that we had received from Ted. My big hope was that we would find that a letter was sent from Montana, on a day that, say, a bomb was sent from California. So, I was still hopeful that he might be ruled out.

Susan:²⁶

²² Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

²³ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

²⁴ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

²⁵ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

²⁶ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

And, what David knew was that Ted would sometimes hitch a ride to Helena, Montana. And from there, he would catch a Greyhound bus all the way to the San Francisco Bay area. I made some calls to the Greyhound bus line. They said there's no way you could take the Greyhound bus from Helena, Montana to San Francisco, California, without going through Salt Lake City, Utah. And since Salt Lake City is one of the places where a bomb had gone off, that was very concerning.

Realising Ted likely used their money for bombs

60 Minutes:²⁷

Mike: Then David and Linda spotted a potentially devastating possibility, twice after they had sent money to Ted, supposedly for medical bills, the Unabomber had struck killing two people.

David: We realized that our first loan to Ted had preceded a bombing by 6 weeks to 2 months and that our second loan to him had preceded a bombing by about the same amount of time.

Linda felt extremely angry, even a sense of responsibility that we had, we were somehow responsible for these acts.

Going ahead with hiring the language analyst

Linda:²⁸

We made our decision by mid-December and told Susan to go ahead and engage Van Zant to do the writing analysis.

We sent the letters, retyped, to Susan, who sent them to Van Zant and protected our confidentiality.

The Washington Post:²⁹

She just wanted him to analyze what he read and compare it to the Unabomber manifesto.

Van Zandt pulled together two teams of analysts and set to work.

David:³⁰

She called us back after a couple of weeks and said they would like more letters, they don't have enough to go on, so we retyped some of Ted's letters, sent them, we have a feeling of trust with the detective and with the people who were reading the letters at this stage because clearly they would have to know what this was about, we were asking them to compare the letters to the Unabomber manifesto. Our friend promised us that she would only reveal our identities if she were subpoenaed to, forced legally to do so, I think we trusted her very much and obviously we used her to get some distance from the person

²⁷ Mike Wallace. Ted Kaczynski's Family, S29E1 [TV Interview]. 60 Minutes. Sept 15, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

²⁸ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

²⁹ Serge Kovalski. His Brother's Keeper [Essay]. The Washington Post. July 10, 2001. Original link. Archived link.

³⁰ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

actually doing the analysis, we didn't want the train to leave the station without our being on the train and perhaps in a position to negotiate or affect the outcome.

In the moment that the secret left the family we understood that there was potentially a loss of control, so in a sense the decision was made a little bit piecemeal and at every point there was always the hope that we'd get news back that it couldn't be Ted, that Ted had a different writing style or something or other.

Christmas

David:³¹³²

Christmas came and went. Linda and I drove the wintry roads back to Chicago to visit our families. Over Christmas dinner, Mom told us she had thought about moving to New York and had reached a decision. With sudden cheerfulness, she announced that she had decided to sell the old house and move to an apartment close to us. It meant saying goodbye to her friends, letting go of some of the past, and embracing a new and different future closer to her son and daughter-in-law.

We went into the living room to open Christmas presents. As the evening wore on and we sat among the fresh gifts and crumpled wrapping paper, Mom said, "I hope Ted is not feeling sad today. Oh, I hope he doesn't feel lonely thinking about the Christmases we used to have. Maybe he has some friend who invited him over today so he's not all alone."

At this point Linda got up and went to the bathroom. "I hope so too," I said with little optimism.

"Dad and I always used to say our happiest times were when you boys were young. We looked back on those times with such fondness. We had such good times, didn't we? Do you remember those happy times, David? Were they happy times for you?"

"Of course, Mom. Those were wonderful times. I'll never forget them."

I changed the subject, wanting to talk about the future instead of the past. After a while I realized that Linda had been in the bathroom for a long time. I got up to check on her. I knocked on the door but got no answer. When I turned the doorknob and entered Mom's pitifully small bathroom, I nearly bumped into Linda, who was sitting on the toilet lid, tears streaming down her face.

I always come back to what, for me, represents a deep mystery: what kind of intuitive leap enabled Linda to solve a crime that had baffled a generation of skilled investigators, allowed her to identify a suspect whose close family members believed him incapable of such violence?

I imagine she pieced together the truth in the same way that people generally do: by fitting fragments together to constitute a larger picture. Still, she discovered, in my view, a truth that was greater than the sum of its parts. As a fly on the wall during many family discussions aimed at understanding Ted and brainstorming how we might help him, she picked up on elements that escaped us. Whereas our family conversations were mainly self-referential—*What did we do wrong? How can we help our son/brother?*—Linda, as a sensitive outsider, saw clearly what we couldn't: that Ted was beyond any help his family could give him. Intuitively, she *felt* his capacity for violence. By witnessing his parents' agony, sorrow, and

³¹ David Kaczynski. *Every Last Tie* [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

³² David Kaczynski. *Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System* [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

confusion she realized quite clearly that the damage caused by raw emotional violence is of a piece with the damage caused by physical violence. If Ted was capable of wounding his parents so deeply, then he was capable of almost anything.

Looking back on our journey as a couple through the ethical dilemma we faced and its aftermath, I see more clearly something I couldn't fully appreciate at the time: we took that terrible journey both together and apart, deeply bonded in some ways and quite alone and isolated in others.

Linda led the way and discovered the only way out of our small hell, which was through compassion for those whom Ted had hurt and those whom he might yet hurt.

But if I had not followed her, Linda probably would have gotten nowhere. Very likely there would have been more victims. Very likely, too, the integrity, the very essence of our love for one another would have been compromised, and our marriage might not have survived. Looking back, it all seems like a strange dream. Had it felt more real, I don't know how we could have survived with our sanity intact. While I am still dreaming that dream, writing this memoir, delivering lectures now and then on mental illness or the death penalty, writing occasional letters to my brother that I expect will go unanswered, needing to make sense of it all, Linda, I realize, would prefer to let the dream go, to live more fully in the moment, to recover the joy and newness we experienced in those first years of our marriage, before the Unabomber's shadow engulfed us.

I know that Linda, as usual, is right. She has paid plenty. Perhaps there is still time for us to share brighter dreams.

I'm very proud of our relationship, we made a pledge to each other that we would act together and really try to do the right thing and we would really talk it out and it wasn't just a process that could be done within a couple of days you know it's very interesting we always think of conscience or actions sort of located in a sole decision maker particularly in a sort of individualistic culture I think the truth of the matter is that you know this was not my decision it was a family decision it was a joint decision made by two people who had loved each other for a long, long time and the media with its brothers narrative and all of that stuff they cut Linda out completely it was like she didn't even exist when she was absolutely key to this night I would make the further point that some of the most important decisions we make are actually made in the context of relationship either within a family setting or a clinical team setting or as a whole culture that really relationships and the integrity of relationship is a key to having an authentic process.

Getting the report back from the language analyst

A few weeks later he the language analyst called Swanson:³³

His words were urgent: Whoever gave her the letters needed to contact the FBI immediately.

Here's how David & Linda received the news:

"... on New Year's eve of 1995 it was about to turn into 1996 and got the call from our friend I'd gotten home early from work and she said ..." ³⁴ "it was nothing to knock my socks off, as it turned out it was something to knock my socks off." ³⁵

³³ Serge Kovalski. His Brother's Keeper [Essay]. The Washington Post. July 10, 2001. Original link. Archived link.

³⁴ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

³⁵ Mike Wallace. Ted Kaczynski's Family, S29E1 [TV Interview]. 60 Minutes. Sept 15, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

“Well she read me the report it’s about two pages long the conclusion was what really got to me, the conclusion said that they believe that there was a ...”³⁶ “a forty to sixty percent chance that the manifesto and the letters were written by the same person ...”³⁷ “in other words it’s my brother.”³⁸

“David and I had agreed that if the report said that there was at least a twenty-five percent chance, we would go to the FBI ...”³⁹ “and [so] that’s what we did.”⁴⁰

³⁶ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC’s In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

³⁷ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

³⁸ David Kaczynski. David Kaczynski’s Lecture for the ‘In Our Name; Restoring Justice In America’ Conference [Lecture]. In Our Name. August 25, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

³⁹ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁰ David Kaczynski. David Kaczynski’s Lecture for the ‘In Our Name; Restoring Justice In America’ Conference [Lecture]. In Our Name. August 25, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

1996 – Aged 52

Ted's Family Takes The Step of Contacting The FBI Anonymously

Susan:⁴¹

So, David called me and he said, you know, that this was bad news.

David & Linda:⁴²

I said, "Well, we think we need to stop the violence, so we'd like you to contact the FBI." We thought everything's going to change. Well, two or three weeks go by, we don't hear anything.

"[As for finding a lawyer to mediate,] it wasn't as easy to do as you might think; the first lawyers that we tried to contact to help us didn't return our phone calls, eventually ..."⁴³
"Susan arranged for her old law school friend, Tony Bisceglie, to be our mediator."⁴⁴

David:⁴⁵⁴⁶

The first thing I asked him to research was whether or not we could get some kind of a deal in advance, in other words deliver a likely candidate in the Unabomber case in return for a promise that the justice department wouldn't seek the death penalty.

Susan had drawn up a list of nine conditions that we wanted the FBI to agree to, most of which involved preventing the FBI from jumping the gun and targeting Ted as their main suspect. We wanted them to search out evidence very carefully, because we didn't know if he was guilty or innocent, but we knew that he was mentally ill.

The list included conditions for a safe arrest and for the preservation of our confidentiality. The FBI was not supposed to reveal that David and I were the ones who turned in Ted. Susan's list of conditions was used by Tony Bisceglie as the basis for his letter to the FBI, which opened our negotiations with the FBI.

FBI Situation

Project Unabom:⁴⁷

The post published it in September 1995, and magazines and newspapers were in think pieces and tips flooded into the FBI and Max ran down leads and Cathy kept thinking about what all those words meant. And Terry tried to keep the whole thing running while assuring his bosses in Washington that the investigation was on track and September turned to October. In October to November and November to December.

⁴¹ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁴² Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁴³ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁴ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁵ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁶ Unnamed. A Conversation with Linda E. Patrik [Written Interview]. Union College News Archives. July 1, 1998. Original link. Archived link.

⁴⁷ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

Cathy: You can only keep that pace up. For a while, until you start losing people to fatigue to, you know lack of conviction that this is ever going to work to defeatism to. I mean, this is when people start dropping. You know, we've done everything we can. We've done everything we can. We've run every single lead out.

Eric: The manifesto was by far the best clue in the history of the. Case it was. Probably one of the best clues in the history of criminal cases. 35,000 words written by the killer. That was then made available to millions of people. How could someone not recognize that? Thousands of people came forward, the Unabomber sounded like an old student, an ex-husband, a brother. But none of those tips panned out. Four months went by and still nothing.

Project Unabom:⁴⁸

Eric: At the UNABOM Task Force headquarters in San Francisco, there was a document that agents were constantly updating labeled known UNABOM facts, fictions and theories. The head of the task force, Terry Turci, had commissioned it. Facts were mostly the physical evidence in the case the typewriter samples from the letters, the hand carved parts inside the devices stuff. That fictions were the key suspects that had already been washed out, and the once promising leads that had fizzled. Theories were the most tantalizing item. They were the connections, deductions, even pure gut feelings that no one had ever been able to disprove. Terry told the agents on the task force not to lose sight of the theories.

Terry: At some point in time, a couple of these theories are going to ram right into these facts, and we're going to know we're on the right track, and then all. Of the other. Things we can bring into this we'll. Start bringing into it.

Eric: In January of 1996, that moment happens. The task force has a new suspect. This guy checks a bunch of the right boxes. He has strong ties to the Bay Area. He is a history of building small bombs and he happens to live really close to the tiny post office near the airport where the Unabomber mailed the device that killed Thomas Moser.

Terry: We decide we need to know what he's throwing out his trash. So the first trash cover the first time. They bring a bag of crap out of this guy's trash. They find Hickory wood in the trash. Hickory wood fragments, now keep in mind that one of the things we had on our facts was that the Unabomber hand carved his bomb switches from Hickory.

Eric: Hickory wood apparently has its own biological fingerprints so they could see if these particular fragments were made from the same kind of Hickory they found in some of the bombs.

Terry: So the hickory fragments are taken and sent to the lab. The lab calls us and says, this Hickory is almost identical totally to the Hickory switches and the wood that the Unabomber is used in carving his Hickory switches. For his bombs. Well, now that but raises all the alarm belts you need to get a search warrant. You need to do this. You need to do that. We need to stop this person before they bomb again. But during all of this, what's your next step with this guy? What is he doing today? What is he doing this minute, you know? Are you watching him?

Eric: After all these years, they think we've got him. We just have to put the final pieces together, but then it all unravels when they dig into this guy's past. The timeline just doesn't match. He wasn't where the bombs were sent from at the right time.

⁴⁸ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

1st Letter to the FBI (Feb 12, 1996)

Tony Bisceglje's letter to Molly Flynn:⁴⁹

Dear Ms. Flynn:

As you know, this firm has been retained by a person in connection with this person's furnishing information on a confidential and anonymous basis to the Bureau which may be pertinent to its pending "Unabomber" investigation. In response to the information provided thus far, the Bureau has requested an opportunity to interview our client, to obtain the identity of an individual who might become a subject or target (hereinafter the Subject) of the investigation and to obtain additional information related thereto. Our client is fully prepared to cooperate with the Bureau and to comply with its above-described requests conditioned upon receipt of certain written assurances by the Bureau as set forth below.

First, the Bureau agrees that our client's identity, his cooperation and his role as a source of information shall remain confidential and shall not be revealed to persons other than the authorized Department of Justice employees with a need to know. Our client will be given the status and entitled to Bureau procedures applicable to confidential informants. This confidential treatment by the Bureau shall continue indefinitely, unless and until our client indicates otherwise in writing.

Second, the Bureau agrees that its investigation of the Subject will be conducted in accord with all applicable laws, regulations and guidelines.

Third, the Bureau agrees that its investigation of the Subject, if any, will be conducted in phases beginning with the most discrete and least intrusive measures to minimize any publication of the fact that the Bureau is investigating the Subject. The first phase could include inquiries with people from the Subject's past, but only if a pretext is used. The investigation in this phase should exhaust all investigative steps that do not require authorities to inform anyone that the Subject is a Unabomber suspect.

Once the quiet-phase steps have been exhausted, we would be informed of whether the Subject has been excluded as a suspect. If he is not included at that point, we would be notified before the next investigative phase begins.

If the investigation progresses to the point where the Bureau desires to speak with the Subject's mother or the people living in the town where the Subject now resides, we would be notified prior to the start of that phase. Prior to that point, such contacts would be considered "off limits".

The Bureau agrees that during the investigation, they would not contact or confront the Subject, due to his fragile psychological state. Our client has reason to believe that the Subject has a heart condition, suffers from stress, is paranoid, and his reaction to any contact from a stranger could endanger his life. It could also endanger our client's life.

Fourth, at every step of the investigation, and during each phase, all efforts to exclude the subject as the Unabomber would be made. The Bureau will keep us informed about the progress and results of its investigation of the Subject on an ongoing basis.

Fifth, in the event that the Subject would have to be arrested, the Bureau agrees that the arrest would be carried out properly in a humane way which minimizes any risk to the safety of the Subject.

These are our client's concerns. Please review them with the appropriate personnel and get back to me at your earliest convenience.

⁴⁹ Tony Bisceglje. Letter to Molly Flynn [Letter]. The Ted K Archive. February 12, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

Sincerely,
Tony Bisceglje

* * *

David:⁵⁰⁵¹

The attorney came back and he said he did not think there was any chance of getting a deal in advance, do you want to still go ahead and we said yes we're committed to going ahead, so he arranged an appointment.

He had taken a kind of a summary put together by our friend the private detective and the report from the forensic language analyst.

We thought everything's gonna change, well, two or three weeks go by, we don't hear anything.

Joel:⁵²

We are deluged with information. People are mailing in writings from... their uncles, their brothers, their ex-boyfriends, saying, well, this person might be the Unabomber. And we're trying to take it in and process it. There were thousands of people who got brief looks. There were 2,417 people who were designated formally as suspects. Ted Kaczynski was number 2,416.

Project Unabom:⁵³

Eric: Late January 1996, a young FBI agent in the DC Field office named Molly Flynn gets an assignment from her higher ups. There's a lawyer in town named Tony Begley who claims to have a client who might know something about the Unabomber. Go talk to him.

Molly: Him when I first met Tony, he provided. Some material and told me that he did not even know the identity of the client, but he considered himself to have a retainer of sorts, although he was representing them free of charge.

Eric: Molly isn't on the UNABOM task force, but she's in DC, helps out the investigation when she can. What she gets from Tony, the lawyer, is a bunch of letters between Tony's client and a person whose writing sounds like it might be the Unabomber.

Molly: I recall reading the letters and just my first impression was that the writer was an angry person, but you know they kind of referenced mom and dad and so the context would make you understand that the author and the recipient's brother.

Finding the proto-manifesto (somewhere between the 12th & 17th[?] of February, 1996)

David:⁵⁴

⁵⁰ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁵¹ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁵² Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁵³ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁴ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

But at this point, my mother got sick. She was in the hospital in Chicago. I had to fly back there, and I found myself alone in her house. And I realized she had saved a bunch of letters from my brother, and among her letters, I find a 23-page manuscript which I guess you'd call it a proto-manifesto. It was the essence of the manifesto boiled down to 23 pages, written maybe several years earlier. And at that point, without hesitation, we contacted the FBI.

Tony:⁵⁵

Yes, so when I saw the essay and saw those references and saw the same references in the manifesto and it was at that point that I took a deep breath, went outside, took a walk and I said this is very serious.

FBI Report:⁵⁶

Dave noted that his mother, Wanda, had begun the process of selling her home in Chicago about this time, in accordance with a plan to relocate to an upstate New York town near Dave and Linda in mid-March, 1996. Dave has been helping his mother go through her possessions in preparation for this move, and has travelled by train from Schenectady to Chicago to accomplish this. On one of these visits, and after reading the UNABOM Manifesto, Dave found a 23-page essay, which he recognized as having been written in 1971 or 1972 by Ted, in an unlocked foot locker in what had formerly been Ted's bedroom in Wanda's house. He recognized the document as one which Ted had shown him in approximately 1972, and noted the handwritten corrections on the typed carbon copy were in Ted's handwriting.

Project Unabom:⁵⁷

Eric: Molly only has time to skim it, her job is just to deliver the essay to the FBI lab, but the FBI lab is only interested in one thing. Whether the guy who wrote this essay used the same typewriter as the Unabomber?

Molly: I think they eliminate it within probably 5 minutes. They obviously were looking for specific characters and they I think they told me right there like no, this doesn't match. And I recall saying, OK, well who's going to going to look at the content? Because that's what it was really for and they said, oh we'll send that to the task force.

Eric: This is the protocol. Analyze the typewriter sample at the lab. Send the essay to the task force and let them handle the. Rest, but Molly is curious. So she gets her own copy of the essay and starts. Reading more carefully.

Molly: But I was looking at the essay I was like wow, you know, I'm surprised. I haven't heard from the task force about this material.

Eric: She calls up the. Task force in San Francisco and asks to speak to one of the senior agents, Joel Moss ... Joel's got UNABOM scar tissue at this point. Another suspect, the most promising. They've had in years has just washed out. He's not going to get excited about a call from a junior. Agent in DC. But here's her out.

Molly: And I asked him, I said, hey Joel, do you have a copy of this essay that we got from the attorney here in DC? And I remember him saying that, well, I have a note here saying that the typewriting doesn't match. And I said, well, no, I. I realize that, but I did you get

⁵⁵ Mike Wallace. Ted Kaczynski's Family, S29E1 [TV Interview]. 60 Minutes. Sept 15, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁶ FBI. David Kaczynski's Second FBI Interview; Giving a Physical Description of Ted [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. February 24-25, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁷ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

a copy of it. And he said, well, I don't know. I haven't seen it and I said, well, I, I'm sorry, I'm sorry, I think the lab told me they would send it to you and he said well, sometimes our fax machine doesn't work, so I said, well, you know your case better than I do, but I think you're really going to want to read this.

Joel.⁵⁸

A call came into the switchboard, at the San Francisco office, looking for someone from the Unabomb Task Force. It was from an agent and she's read the document and she thinks it might be important. All she wanted is someone on the task force to look at the document before it just went into the... great pile of okay-this-has-been-handled-and-washed-out. So, I asked her to send it to me. She faxed it to me, I looked at it, uh, and I concluded that the writer of this 23-page document and the writer of the manifesto were the same person. This is a huge moment. The light is at the end of the tunnel.

Project Unabom.⁵⁹

Eric: He calls the task forces, behavioral analyst Kathy Bucket ...

Kathy: Joel called me one day and it was about 7 at night, he said what are you doing? And I said what else am I doing? And he said I need you to look at something. We went down the street to the coffee shop that we. Went to a lot and. He pushed this Manila envelope across the table to me. I said what's this? And he said just take a look at it and I took it out of the. Typewritten copies of typewritten pages. Started reading the first page and by the 3rd paragraph the hair in the back of my neck stood up. I said, where'd you get this? And he said never mind, just tell me what you think? And I said this is the guy, he said I know. What are we going to do now?

The next day they share it with Terry churchy, their boss, who reacts the same way.

Joel.⁶⁰

We are going to solve this case. We are convinced of it. But we don't have enough evidence to arrest him. We can tie him very definitively to the manifesto, but it's ties based on... linguistic analysis, essentially. That's not enough to arrest him. We need to get into that cabin, we need to conduct a search of that cabin, and see what's in there. That becomes the primary goal, is getting into the cabin by a search warrant. We send a handful of agents up there.

Project Unabom.⁶¹

Terry: That is not your traditional fingerprint in that is not a strand of DNA and that is not an eyewitness, but I think it's just as good. When we saw the 23 page essay and we read it and that didn't take that long to read, you can read it a lot of times, and then compared it with the Unabomber's manifesto, there was simply no doubt it could not, you could not put that down if you believe that no two people write alike.

Eric: Like the manifesto, the 23 page essay asserts that science and technology are destroying human society, depriving individuals of their freedom and. Liberty both essays are fixated

⁵⁸ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁵⁹ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁰ Mick Grogan (Director). Unabomber: In His Own Words [Documentary]. Netflix. 2020. Original link. Archived link.

⁶¹ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

on the same range of topics, genetic engineering, artificial intelligence, the electrical stimulation. Of the brain. The sexual repression of the Victorian era, propaganda mass, media surveillance, and there are similar distinctive phrases scattered throughout. Both of them. The task force wants to know more. So three agents, Joel, Kathy and their colleague Mad Max Knoll get on a conference call with Molly Flynn.

Molly: Max was grilling me. He was grilling me about this suspect and he was. It was almost like he was cross examining me and interrogating me about wow. He doesn't match this. And he doesn't match that.

Max: I didn't believe it. I said, you know, just because somebody. Expresses these ideas, and just because there's some spellings, or that doesn't mean it's a person.

Molly: And I said, listen, I. I understand that we don't have a timeline for him that puts him in all of the places that the crimes occurred. What we have is a biography that suggests he had a significant connection to all of the places where the crimes occurred.

Max: The laboratory said it wasn't typed on the antique Smith corona. Pica style type 2.54 spacing machine. It was typed on a different antique typewriter.

Molly: So he was being very kind of skeptical. And then Kathy was saying how the hair was standing up on the back of her neck.

Eric: Max remained skeptical even when Tony Begley, the lawyer, revealed his client brother was Theodore John Kaczynski. A former math Professor living off the grid in the Montana Woods suspect #2416 in the UNABOM case.

Eric: And once you knew was suspect 2416. Theodore Kaczynski, were you still so-so?

Max: Oh yeah, hey listen, you know we have all of the so the experts telling us that he's got a. Be within a 500 mile radius of San Francisco and we thoroughly believe that. And here's a guy that. Is 750 miles from San Francisco, who lives in a cabin with no electricity, no running water, no means of transportation or their old beat up bicycle. And how can he get from that location to the Bay Area would be exceedingly.

Eric: Plenty of other agents agreed with Max. They couldn't believe Terry was putting any stock in this theory.

Terry: Oh yeah, people were very mad. In fact, one agent said I'm going to call FBI Headquarters, I've got some friends there and I'm going to tell them you're incompetent. I said, well, they haven't figured that out by now (laughs)...

Eric: Terry felt certain they'd found the Unabomber, but he understood how flimsy the lead could look to seasoned criminal guys like one big fiction up on the board.

Terry: So for two years you're. Preaching to us fact we gotta. We gotta work with facts. And the lab says fat, right? He needed a foundry to do all this heavy duty work. There's no foundry up there. He doesn't even know the bathroom even now hardly a sufficient heating system. He's got a potbelly stove in a cabin. How can we now turn around and say to the courts, to judges to the DOJ, to America, we're going to go charging at this guy 'cause. He's new, but how can you do that?

Eric: This was the key. The UNABOM task force needed to convince a judge to issue a warrant before they swept in on Ted Kaczynski's cabin. They needed more facts and to get them they needed to talk to his brother.

1st Interview - Feb. 17-18, 1996

Project Unabom.⁶²

The biggest news story in the United States in early 1996 was the weather for two solid months, the eastern seaboard was barraged by storm. After storm, the Blizzard of 96 in early January, then smaller follow-up storms 6 inches on January 15th, another eight, the first weekend in February. The New York Times ran 271 stories in the first two months of 1996 that included the word snowstorm. They ran three that included the word unabom. When Kathy Pocket lands in Washington in mid February. 12th major snowstorm of that winter is hitting the region. She's there to meet with David and Linda. Tony basically had communicated to the FBI that David was prepared to cooperate with the investigation, but he doesn't want to be used as a pawn in some sting operation. He has other requests too. David wants his identity to be kept secret until he says otherwise, because if Ted is ultimately arrested, David wants to be the one to tell him. I turned you in. Wanda Kaczynski, David and Ted's mother is off limits to interview until David says so. And under no circumstance can the FBI contact Ted due to his quote fragile psychological state. Maybe most importantly, David wanted some assurance that the government wouldn't pursue the death penalty against his brother [Even though he knew they had already told him they couldn't give a 100% guarantee]. All of that is on Kathy Bucket's mind as she prepares to meet David for the first time in her DC hotel. We have to make him comfortable. She thinks he can't feel like this is an interrogation.

Kathy: So I called the desk. The reservation desk at the hotel and said I need to move to a sweet, you know, Terry wasn't surprised that I was moving to a sweet. I usually try to squeeze as much money out of the budget as possible so I moved the whole thing to the interview site too. Sweet and had some pastries and coffee and tea and everything and just made it as warm as I could.

Once he started talking about his brother. First of all, he told me that he hadn't personally seen his brother for 10 years. And I said, well, then it was remarkable that you were able to recognize his writing, his style, and some of the words he used. And he said, well, it's not really that remarkable because my brother has been very, very important in my life. I've always admired him, always looked up to him.

David:⁶³⁶⁴⁶⁵⁶⁶⁶⁷⁶⁸

We had gotten the attention of someone he knew in the FBI, so we met with three members of the Unabom task force in Washington DC and from that point on we had a close partnership at least for the next two months as we gave them everything they asked for.

⁶² Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

⁶³ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁴ David Kaczynski. Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁵ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁶⁶ David Kaczynski. Families as Secondary Consumers of the Mental Health System [Lecture]. NYS Consumer Affairs. 2012. Original link. Archived link.

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⁶⁸ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

They invited us to a meeting in Washington DC two weeks after our first contact, we had two full days and they had brought in someone with some serious profiling experience who really began to click with what we were saying.

One of the agents sure seemed sceptical, like he seemed to think it was a wild goose chase and the other who said that she was involved in psychological profiling asked a lot of questions about Ted, our concerns about his mental health our family history all of those kinds of things and my read on the agents was that the one who was in tune with the psychological aspects was more willing to believe that this was a legitimate suspicion. Unless they were playing good cop bad cop who knows, and I've asked myself that question a lot.

And on the second day I remember they had one of the agents come back into the room with this rural map of Montana like a topographic very detailed map of the part of the county where Ted lived and he said David could you show me where your brother's cabin is?

And believe me at this point there's no turning back the die was cast our decision had been made but I can't tell you how painful it was to go to that map and put my finger down and realize I could be in effect sending my brother to his death.

They investigated for a couple of months, we were often on the phone with them.

There wasn't this shock of recognition, it was more gradual than that, I was interested in cooperating as fully as I could for various reasons, one reason is that I didn't want anybody else to be killed if Ted were the person responsible I wanted him stopped on the other hand I also wanted them to know who Ted was I wanted them to know about his paranoia, about the time we'd taken some of his letters to a psychiatrist, I wanted them to know that they were dealing not with some sort of political terrorist, but with someone with some pretty severe mental and emotional problems, and in fact the feedback I got from them was that they believed this, they said that they had understood their profilers understood from the time they read the manifesto that there was an undercurrent of mental illness there, that they were not dealing with a person who was working with a group of people, someone working on his own with some psychological problems.

Project Unabom:⁶⁹

Eric: The meeting goes long 10 hours. Kathy says David brought more letters with him, which Kathy and a few other agents handle with white surgical gloves, laying them out on the hotel room bed. One of the other agents. In the room is Molly Flynn, she'd called attention to Ted's essay, which is what led them here. But she's not convinced he's there guy, they don't have any hard evidence. As Kathy talks to David, Molly hangs back looking over the letters spread out on the bed.

Molly: In one of the letters from Ted to David. I see. A reference to L. Sprague de Camp's the ancient engineers, which was one of the I think maybe 4 works cited by name in Aidable Manifesto. And my eyes just got really big and I looked at the agent next to me who was one of the investigators and I just pointed it to him and and. I don't remember what he wrote some kind of sarcastic comment to me, but. That's when I started thinking, oh wow. This might really be the guy.

Eric: After that meeting the. FBI wants more, more letters, more essays, more evidence, anything that will help them build a case. Kathy meets up with David the following week. In El Paso. And together they drive out to his cabin in the Texas Badlands. He is an underground bunker there. Where dozens of old. Letters from Ted or store.

⁶⁹ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

Texas visit (Feb 24-25, 1996)

David:⁷⁰⁷¹⁷²

The FBI paid for my plane ticket down to El Paso and then we drove in a car about six or seven hours. We were on our way to my cabin down in Texas where I had some more letters stored and I was driving with the agents, one of the agents said to me “David I understand this is very difficult for you, but you should keep in mind, please consider that in helping us you’re also helping your brother and she went on to describe mental health treatments that are available in federal prisons and I was not in a position where I needed to be cajoled, in other words I was not a reluctant at all in my cooperation I was an open book to them, so they didn’t have to lead me on and I took this to mean that they were seeing things in the way that we did, that central to this tragedy was a case of mental illness and that if justice were to be done my brother’s life would be spared.

I sort of thought and hoped that if we worked closely with the FBI for one thing I wanted them to understand they were dealing with a person with some serious mental problems not with a terrorist is which was in the conventional sense which was how my brother was described so and I also thought maybe building a kind of relationship they might feel some sort of gratitude maybe I was really naive maybe I didn’t understand just how big and indifferent to a human appeal this machine is on the other hand I’m not quite so sure that it didn’t actually help I know it certainly helped in the efforts we made to save Ted’s life later on but at any rate the police the FBI agents who investigated were it wasn’t their decision to make really.

I’ve heard some cynically minded people say Dave they were they were just leading you on they were just playing you and another part of me says well they were human beings and they saw I was in pain and were in the car for hours maybe they just maybe she volunteered what she was thinking at the moment.

We had gotten some promises from them, one of the promises was that there would be a phased investigation mindful of Ted’s mental illness, I did not want agents showing up on his doorstep and so they promised that they would attempt in every way possible to rule him out without his ever knowing even that he was being investigated, we were also promised in writing that we would be treated as confidential informants, in other words that no one would ever know that we had cooperated and in effect turned my brother in and then there was a more casual verbal promise that we would have some advance warning if Ted were to be arrested.

The promise about the phased investigation they essentially kept as far as I can tell, the other two out the window.

FBI Internal Meeting

Project Unabom:⁷³

⁷⁰ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC’s In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁷¹ David Kaczynski. David Kaczynski’s Lecture for the ‘In Our Name; Restoring Justice In America’ Conference [Lecture]. In Our Name. August 25, 2012. Original link. Archived link.

⁷² Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC’s In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC’s In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

⁷³ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

The week after that, they're in Chicago, where David is helping his mother Wanda clean out their old family house. Wanda is about to move to upstate New York to be near David and Linda. While Kathy in Chicago, the task force higher ups ask her to brief the local office about this new suspect, Ted Kaczynski. She meets with the. Big boss there. The SSE special agent in charge and one of his assistants, the asac.

Kathy: And when I told them that we believed that the Unabomber was living in a cabin with no running water and no power in Montana, and had been for 25 years, they went unglued. I was in the SEC office and they actually shouted I remember the asac was standing over me wagging his finger in my face saying you're out of your fucking mind. You know this this is unbelievable, this is ridiculous. I'm going to talk to your boss.

Eric: Who did they think the Unabomber was?

Kathy: Oh, they had they. They thought it was a guy who had been one of the dungeons and Dragons participants.

Eric: The D&D guys Jeff Ward. This is almost two decades after you first became a suspect. 1 quick question. Just as I'm kind of visualizing this meeting at the FBI around how many agents were there screaming at you, and how many of them were women?

Kathy: Oh, maybe one or two out of about 20.

Eric: Yeah, I was just imagining a room with screaming men.

Kathy: Yeah, but that's. Not the first time. I mean, I was four years in the in the Air Force first. You know, screaming guys, you know? I mean, it's it's not that I would back down, but it's like you know, you can't really compete with that. You just wait for them to run down. I'm not going to yell back at them. That would be a waste of breath.

Eric: I heard a quote. From a couple FBI agents while I was reporting this story, they all attributed it to David Kaczynski's lawyer, Tony Begley. Women solved the UNABOM case without David. Wife, Linda, the FBI might still be searching for the Unabomber without Linda Private Eye friend Susan David might never have had the confidence to approach the government with his fears. Without Molly in the FBI's DC field office, who knows when the task force would have read that 23 page essay and without the task forces behavioral analyst, Kathy, they might never have gotten their reluctant key informant David Kaczynski to work so closely with them. When I asked Kathy. About this, she said it wasn't a coincidence. Being a woman in the FBI. Gave you a different way of looking at things.

Kathy: You've got to keep in mind that that I came in very early. I came in in 78. They really didn't think they needed women in the Bureau. A lot of people still didn't. This is the experience of a woman in a man's world. You see, because you know, I always told Joel who was my partner for a lot of years. And I said, you know? The problem with you is that you don't know what it's like to be in minority you. Really, don't you've. Always been, you know at the top. Of the heap because. Uh, if you don't grow up thinking or treated when you're growing. Up thinking that you are. And you have a lot more empathy. For everybody else you know around you and everybody else in in, not the top position. If you're at the pinnacle, it's very hard to relate to people who are not.

Eric: Kathy's ability to empathize with David was vital to the Unabomber case, but some agents start wondering if she's over empathizing. Following David around the country getting dribs and drabs of information from this guy who might be the Unabomber brother, when a bomb could go off at any moment. The doubts get back to someone, Kathy. Does not want to hear from.

FBI wanted David to write a letter to Ted

Project Unabom:⁷⁴

Kathy: I don't know if I told you about. When Jim Freeman almost had my scalp.

Eric: You didn't, but it's on my list of questions, so let's go there.

Kathy: OK.

Eric: Jim Freeman ran the FBI San Francisco office. He was one of the first agents I met reporting this story. Jim comes across is in control. It's not hard to imagine him being tough on his agents. Terry Turkey may have run the task force, but Terry worked for Jim. So when Kathy. Heard from Jim. It wasn't like getting scolded by your teacher. It was like getting called over the intercom to the principals office.

Kathy: So everyone gets on the phone and he says, listen, how's it going over there? And I said, do you know? Yeah, we're getting some good stuff, and David's this and David's that and he's continuing to help us and he says here's what I want you to do. We'll get David to write his brother. A letter. And say something in there that that gets a response. You know, maybe something about their mother I. Don't know you. He said, whatever it is, whatever the letter is, you know, have him write a letter and I said, boss, we can't do that.

Eric: Remember, one of Tony Busciglio conditions was that his client, David wouldn't be used in a sting operation.

Kathy: I said boss David is not going to do anything operationally for the FBI. They said what? Here's where you're talking about, and they said we promised we wouldn't use them operationally. Listen, I told you to do that and that's what you're going to do. You're going to get him to write this letter. We've got to get some momentum on this. You know you're talking to him, you're not getting anywhere. I said no, we are getting. Somewhere well I want. A letter written. We need to get some sort of outreach to the suspect there, and I said. We promised we wouldn't. We agreed that. We wouldn't, and he just screamed at me.

Eric: Jim Freeman says he doesn't remember pressing for a letter, but he acknowledges pushing Kathy to get things moving with David. A clock is ticking loudly in Jim said agents are already on the ground in Montana. Stalking Ted Kaczynski from a distance. They know their suspect is still a threat, although they didn't know it at the time. Ted had in fact just built another bomb. He does know is the whole Unabomber, operation is a massively expensive bureaucratic nightmare that needs to be wrapped up soon. So Jim sends his number 2. Terry Turchi the head of the task force to babysit Kathy at her next stop on the David Kaczynski tour.

Kathy: When we ended up in Schenectady a week or two later, Freeman hadn't hardly talked to me since, and he said I am not sending her up there by herself. You were going to go along with. That team you were going to be there. In charge, I don't want her in charge on this. She's not. She doesn't listen to orders.

Eric: Schenectady was the most important stop yet. That's where Kathy was finally going to be able to talk to Wanda Kaczynski, whom she'd been wanting to speak with for weeks. So, Kathy and Terry and a couple other agents land in Albany and head to Wanda's new home. When they arrived, David's inside with his mother preparing her for what's about to happen.

⁷⁴ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

FBI visits with Wanda

David:⁷⁵

They showed up at our house in Schenectady and actually took fingerprints, got more letters, more interviews, some interviews on the phone, finally I got a call that I was dreading from one of the agents who said; David and we're really sorry to have to tell you this, we're at a point in the investigation where your brothers moved to the top of our suspect list and we really feel like we need to talk with your mother, so do you think you could go to her tell her what's going on and perhaps persuade her to meet with us?

They had promised me that I would be allowed to be present at any interview with my mother and I think it worked both ways, I mean I wanted to protect my mother and at the same time I think they wanted someone who could persuade my mother to cooperate with them, so I had the unenviable task of approaching my mom explaining to her what I feared and also what I had done and I did not know if I was going to lose my mother's love that day, I knew she loved Ted with all her heart, I didn't know how she was would respond knowing what I had done, that I had turned him in.

[So...] One terrible day in March 1996, I climbed the stairs to Mom's new second-floor apartment in the village of Scotia, just across the Mohawk River from Schenectady, New York.

Linda and I decided that it would be best for me to face Mom on my own. Linda had been the first to suspect Ted. She was also the driving force behind our investigation of Ted and of the anguished process of ethical decision-making that soon consumed us. We didn't want Mom displacing any possible resentment onto her daughter-in-law.

When Mom opened her door, I saw stacks of cardboard boxes that she hadn't had time to empty since her move from Illinois. Quickly, Mom's smile turned to a look of dismay.

"David, you look terrible! Is something wrong? Tell me, what *is* it?" "Mom, I think you'd better sit down."

Perhaps it was the years of nagging worry, or else it was a mother's radarlike intuition, but Mom immediately homed in on her elder son: "Is it Ted? Oh, my God! Did something happen to Ted?" I could hear the panic rising in her voice. "Oh, David, tell me, please!"

"Mom, as far as I know, Ted's in good health. But I do have something troubling to discuss with you. Sit down, Mom, please."

Mom's La-Z-Boy chair had survived the purges of her move and was now in the corner of her apartment, near the window. When I picture Mom now, I often see her sitting in that chair, reading, watching television, or chatting with a visitor on the nearby couch.

I was much too agitated to sit down. I paced the floor back and forth, searching for some painless way to deliver my awful news.

"Mom, have you ever read any newspaper articles about the Unabomber?"

I saw her tense up, although as it turned out Mom had little more than a passing knowledge of the Unabomber's activities. She read the newspaper and watched a fair amount of television, but crime stories held little interest for her. I gave her a quick summary of the Unabomber's course of bombings and terror. I talked about the places the Unabomber had been. Then I reminded her that Ted had frequented some of the same places. I told her about the publication of the Unabomber's manifesto, with its broad critique of technology.

⁷⁵ Alan Chartock (Host). David Kaczynski | WAMC's In Conversation With [Podcast Interview]. WAMC's In Conversation With. August 12, 2021. Original link. Archived link.

“Mom, you know about Ted’s obsession with technology.”

As I continued to outline comparisons, I saw Mom gazing at me with a strange look on her face. Although I could read horror in her expression, her other emotions were unclear to me. Did she think I’d lost my mind? Was she horrified at the possibility that Ted might be a murderer? Or was she more horrified, perhaps, that I could even think of my brother as a murderer?

On the end table next to Mom’s chair stood her favorite photograph of Teddy and me, a picture taken in our living room by a professional photographer when I was about three years old and Teddy about ten. Perched on my brother’s shoulder was his pet parakeet. Teddy displayed much of the shyness but none of the rigidity evident in later photographs. Instead there was a softness, a vulnerability in his expression as he made himself a perch for the nervous little creature. My eyes glittered with pride, happy to be pictured with my big brother, pleased to be included at the center of attention.

I never questioned that Mom loved both Ted and me with all her heart. But would she still love me when I told her what I had done?

By now I was crying a little, wiping away tears and talking a bit faster. I decided I’d better come clean: “Mom, I’m really concerned that Ted might be involved in these bombings. I’m really scared.”

“Oh. Don’t tell anyone!” she blurted out.

It was the last thing I wanted to hear. But her reaction was understandable, even predictable, given a mother’s instinct to protect her child. For years, she had been consumed with worry over her elder son’s vulnerability. He was so different, so seemingly out of his element in a world of social conventions that most of us take for granted. “Mom, I’ve already told someone,” I said flatly. “I’ve approached the FBI and shared my suspicions with them. Now they’re investigating Ted to see if he might be the Unabomber.”

Life is full of tests, I suppose—tests big and small. Sometimes we see them coming, as Linda and I did, and sometimes they’re sprung on us without warning, as happened to Mom that day. We can only hope we’re prepared when the test comes.

Linda and I had had the luxury of time. We also had each other. Mom, on the other hand, had no time to think things through, nor anyone she could use as a sounding board.

After a stunned pause, she silently got up from her chair and came up to me. She was a very small woman—under five feet tall—whereas I’m over six feet. She reached up, put her arms around my neck, and gently pulled me down to plant a kiss on my cheek.

The first thing she said was “David, I can’t imagine what you’ve been going through.” It is still extraordinary to me that in this moment—probably the worst moment of her life—Mom’s first concern was for my feelings, not her own.

Then she said the most comforting thing imaginable: “David, I know you love Ted. I know you wouldn’t have done this unless you felt you had to.”

With those words, I understood that she owned me as her son. I hadn’t lost her love. I realized now that the three of us—Mom, Linda, and I—would face this ordeal together.

Still, she was where I’d been six months earlier when Linda first approached me with her suspicions. She couldn’t imagine that Ted could actually hurt someone.

“You know, Dave,” she said, “Ted has never been violent. He loves children and animals. We’ve always known there’s a deeply sensitive side to Ted—maybe too sensitive. I can’t imagine that he would wantonly attack and hurt people. I can’t believe he’s capable of anything

like that. Maybe it's a good thing you've gone to the FBI. They're going to investigate and find out that he's completely innocent. You'll see. This whole thing will go away like a bad dream."

"I'm glad you feel that way, Mom," I said with resignation, "but there's something else I need to tell you. There are some people from the FBI who would like very much to talk to you. Would you be willing to talk with them?"

That set her off balance. "Well, I really don't know anything. What could they possibly want to talk to me about? I don't know anything about this."

I explained to her that the investigators from the FBI were trying to rule Ted out as a suspect. Her postmarked letters from Ted could represent important evidence and perhaps prove Ted's innocence by establishing, for example, that he was in Montana on the same day the Unabomber had mailed a bomb from the West Coast. The investigators had lots of questions and were leaving no stone unturned. They had a psychological profile of the Unabomber.

"Well, Dave, I trust your judgment. If you think I should meet with them, then I will. When do they want to see me?"

"Actually, they're waiting downstairs in the parking lot," I had to tell her. "They'd like to talk to you now."

It must have felt to Mom as if her world had come unhinged.

I called Special Agent Kathleen Puckett on her cell phone and buzzed her in. When I opened the apartment door, I could see her coming up the stairs, with agents Lee Stark and Molly Flynn following close behind.

"I don't know what any of this is about," Mom announced as they came in.

What kind of training do FBI agents receive, if any, to help them deal with situations like this? How do you talk to a mother whose son is under investigation without making it seem like an inquisition? In any case, Kathleen, Lee, and Molly handled the situation gracefully. They were polite, professional, even sensitive in the way they approached her, careful to respect her opinions and feelings. They had no search warrant, no legal means to compel her cooperation. I'd told them I wasn't sure but I thought Mom would cooperate.

After explaining a little about the investigation and its methods, Kathleen asked for Mom's help. "Mrs. Kaczynski, do you have anything that might help us carry this investigation forward? Letters from your son, family photographs, anything typewritten that your son might have sent you?" (They were hoping to find a typescript that would match the manual typewriter that was used to produce the manifesto.)

Mom acknowledged that she had lots of things they might be interested in. She sent me to her walk-in closet to retrieve an old trunk full of family keepsakes—the same trunk where I'd found Ted's early essay on technology while Mom lay sick in the hospital six weeks earlier. The trunk was quite heavy, so I dragged it from the closet to the middle of the living room floor. After I snapped open the latches and swung open the lid, she got down on her knees to sift through the contents. Lee and Kathleen pointed to items of interest: letters from Ted, which Mom had arranged in chronological order going back to his years at Harvard; Ted's published mathematical papers alongside his grade school report cards; family photographs.

What happens when you put together a mom and family photographs? You get stories. True to form, Mom told stories. Now I heard not only the usual fond reminiscences, but also an effort to advocate and convince, as if to say, *Look, the Kaczynskis are a normal family; we did all these wholesome things that good families do; Teddy was a good kid; look, here's where*

we took him camping and he caught his first fish; you're not going to find the Unabomber in a family like ours.

Molly was occupied primarily with cataloguing the items and writing out receipts before she sealed them in plastic evidence bags. The transformation of a mother's cherished memories into evidence in a criminal case had to follow careful protocols.

At one point, Mom reached deep into the trunk and picked up a little blue book to show her guests. "This is Teddy's baby book," she told them. "It's a diary I kept during the first year of his life. Would you like to see it?"

"Yes, ma'am," Lee said. "It might be very helpful."

But before Mom permitted the little book to go into one of the plastic bags, she leafed through it to locate passages relating to Ted's hospital stay at the age of nine months. She desperately wanted the FBI to know about Ted's hospital experience—the trauma that may have caused her son psychological damage in infancy.

As I stood somewhat apart, gazing at my mother on her knees holding up Ted's baby book, trying to make the agents understand what it meant to her, I realized what a painful situation I had put her in. Yet she was handling it all so bravely. She had such faith—faith in Ted's innocence (which I no longer shared), faith in me (without which I could not have endured), and faith in the criminal justice system—that it would seek truth and justice; that even a mother's worried entries in a baby book more than fifty years ago would be regarded as a clue in that search for justice; that compassionate understanding could generate mercy for her son if the worst came to pass.

I still remember the poignancy of Mom's gesture as she held up Ted's baby book. In effect she was saying, *You're looking for the Unabomber and we'll do everything in our power to help you stop the violence.*

But don't forget for a moment that the person we're delivering to you is a family member, someone we love. It's the little baby that came out of my womb fifty-some years ago, the child and man I've worried about ever since because of his emotional problems, because his little psyche never really healed from that hospital experience. Don't forget for a moment that there is a human dimension to this tragedy.

* * *

60 Minutes:⁷⁶

Mike: The FBI gathered more than 90 items that included essays and a wooden box.

Tony: We were aware from the public profile that one of the characteristics of the, the Unabomber, was wood carving, we also knew that Ted had the ability to carve intricate boxes and we knew that he had carved such a box for his mother. This in fact is the box and it is a cylindrical box.

Mike: And the bombs themselves had been sent no in carved wooden cylinders.

David:⁷⁷

It was all over in about four hours. By the end of that time, Mom and I were utterly depleted. After the agents had gone, I asked Mom what she honestly thought. She repeated that she

⁷⁶ Mike Wallace. Ted Kaczynski's Family, S29E1 [TV Interview]. 60 Minutes. Sept 15, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

⁷⁷ David Kaczynski. Every Last Tie [Book]. Duke University Press. January 8, 2016. Original link. Archived link.

couldn't believe Ted would maliciously harm others. It seemed to me, though, that her voice carried an undertone of doubt.

We sat silent and numb for a few minutes.

"David," Mom said at last. "Do you remember the time your father found a baby rabbit in the backyard?"

I nodded. It had happened about forty years ago, at our home in Evergreen Park.

"You remember, Dad put the baby rabbit in a cage, but Teddy was extremely upset at the sight of a trapped and obviously frightened little animal. He blurted out, 'Oh, let it go! Please, please let it go!' So your father carried the cage to the empty lot across the street and let the baby rabbit go."

I remembered the story pretty well. As a story, it seemed to speak for itself: Ted was a sensitive child capable of empathy for a frightened animal.

In recalling this event, Mom seemed to pose a question: how could such a sensitive and compassionate child turn into a killer? But her story prompted other questions for me: *Would Ted end up like that trapped rabbit? Would this be the fulfillment of his worst fear?*

FBI Report:⁷⁸

Wanda was served with Federal Grand Jury subpoena issued at San Francisco, California calling for production of certain records pertinent to this inquiry. She advised that she had just spoken to David ... regarding the investigative interest in Theodore J. Kaczynski ... and that she would cooperate. Her cooperation was predicated on the thought that Ted is not responsible for the bombings attributed to the "Unabomber" and that her cooperation would ultimately assist in eliminating Ted as a suspect.

She was informed of the confidentiality requirement as set forth in the non-disclosure order attached to the above subpoena. She stated that she was sensitive to the fact that her other son, Dave, brought Ted's name up to the FBI in confidence. She was confident that Ted would be eliminated as a suspect and said she had no intention of communicating with Ted on this matter.

Project Unabom:⁷⁹

Eric: Wanda and David were still holding out hope that something in the chest were Wanda kept. Those letters would absolve Ted that dates wouldn't match up, but there'd be some explanation for the similarities in the writing. But for Kathy. It was a bonanza. The UN-ABOM task force was busy putting together an affidavit that hinged on comparisons of the Unabomber's writings to Ted Kaczynski. Kathy believed she'd found enough to make the.

Kathy: We come back with the treasure trove we walked out with boxes full of things and Terry was hugely proud frozen as he was. He was hugely proud that it worked and she cooperated and we got a lot of documents. I'm sure that David was just glad to see the back of us when we left there.

⁷⁸ FBI. Wanda Kaczynski Interview [Court Document]. The Ted K Archive. March 12, 1996. Original link. Archived link.

⁷⁹ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. Original link. Archived link.

The FBI Descends on Lincoln, Montana

Project Unabom:¹

Eric: In a major operation like this one, you need to get sign off from the highest levels of government and despite Kathy certainty, word comes down that the documents they've found are not enough. The Bureau can't risk another screw up. So they wait for something else, a new witness, some new piece of physical evidence. Another bomb to go off.

And while they wait, word comes back that someone familiar with the investigation has leaked it to a reporter. The reporter knows the FBI is surrounding a suspect in Montana, and he knows the suspects name.

Jim: It's not a common name, so I knew that I had it nailed enough that I could go on the air.

Project Unabom:²

Eric: In mid-February 1996, four FBI agents arrived in Lincoln, Montana, an old gold mining town on the Blackfoot River.

Max: We were covert. We didn't advertise who we were to the general public. We didn't dress like normal FBI agents, wooden suits and white shirts and ties.

Eric: Max Noel was leading the team and he and the three other agents did their best to blend. In they wore Wrangler jeans and western shirts with snapback buttons. Drove around in a rented pickup truck. They drop in and drop out of town trying to stay undetected. They spent their nights about an hour away in the nearest city Helena. Before anyone in the FBI was going to arrest Ted Kaczynski, Max's team had to figure out exactly where he lived, which wasn't as simple as you might think.

Max: Because Kaczynski lived in a rural area, his address was a rural route number. There were no addresses like you have in towns and cities. It was just rural route, #4 or whatever it was.

Eric: It had been two weeks since David Kaczynski first reached out to the FBI through his lawyer saying he had letters from his brother that sounded an awful lot like the Unabomber and in those two weeks the leaders of the task force had become convinced Ted was their guy, but they couldn't just swoop in and grab him. That's not how it works. They had to get a search warrant. From a federal judge 1st and to get a search warrant, they needed to convince a judge of two things, one that they had probable cause and two that they knew exactly what they would be searching.

[The rest of the book has not been archived on this website, see the source link for the full document.]

¹ Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

² Eric Benson. Project Unabom [Podcast Show]. Pineapple Street Studios. June 27, 2022. [Original link](#). [Archived link](#).

The Library of Unconventional Lives

Theo Slade
The Ultimate Ted Kaczynski Research Document, Volume 2
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