

**Unabomber beginnings trace back
to U-M: Brother says he suffered
'pretty serious delusions'**

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Theodore Kaczynski, the man the media dubbed the *Unabomber*, died Saturday in a federal prison at 81 after terrorizing the nation for nearly two decades by sending victims homemade bombs until he was caught in 1996. His own writings and brother suggest that his tilt toward violence started while studying at the University of Michigan.

“When Kaczynski entered the university, he was a precocious, solitary mathematics student whose brilliance his undergraduate education at Harvard had not yet revealed,” Karl Stampfl wrote in the Michigan Daily, adding that by the time Kaczynski left, “he’d developed an identity with a different name. He was the *Unabomber*.”

The report, “He came Ted Kaczynski, he left The *Unabomber*,” was based, in part, on a letter and unpublished *autobiography* that Kaczynski sent the university’s student-run newspaper.

The Michigan Daily mentioned Kaczynski’s dissatisfaction with his professors, what he considered low academic standards, and his experience in an Ann Arbor “rooming house.” Kaczynski became “convinced his landlord had turned others against him,” and disdained others and showed “little willingness to communicate with peers.”

Kaczynski, the 2006 report added, was “tormented by the sounds of a couple having sex through the thin walls” at the house where he was living. He “reported the sounds to the university, which, of course, took no action.” He began to have nightmares, the report added, and grew “angrier and angrier.”

The Michigan Daily described visits to a psychiatrist and suicidal — and then homicidal — thoughts. It was during that time, Kaczynski later told a psychiatrist, that he decided he would spend his life killing. It would take another decade before he acted on those thoughts.

‘The most miserable years’

Obituaries in published Saturday in outlets nationwide, summarized Kaczynski’s early life, his violent and deadly acts of terror, and the search for him, what some consider one of the most enduring and costly manhunts in American history.

A Chicago native, Kaczynski was an academic standout and participated in several extracurricular activities, including playing trombone in the marching band. At 15, he graduated high school, At 16, he enrolled at Harvard, earning his bachelor’s degree at 20.

Then, he landed at U-M. He earned his master’s and doctoral degrees in 1964 and 1967 in mathematics.

U-M, the Michigan Daily said, was not Kaczynski’s first choice for graduate work. He also applied and was accepted to the University of California at Berkeley and the University of Chicago, but U-M “offered him a grant of \$2,310 a year to serve as a student teacher.”

The Michigan Daily said Kaczynski described his time at U-M as among the worst in his life.

“My memories of the University of Michigan are NOT pleasant,” Kaczynski wrote in a letter to the Michigan Daily that the reporter said included a hand-copied excerpt from his 1979 unpublished *autobiography*. “I spent five years there. These were the most miserable years of my life (except for the first year and the last year).”

The report praised Kaczynski’s math acuity, noting he often solved “extremely difficult problems” and published them in prestigious journals. It added that his doctoral dissertation, “Boundary Functions,” was awarded the Sumner Myers prize for “the University’s best mathematics thesis of the year.”

At U-M, the report added: “His grades at the University marked an improvement from his grades at Harvard,” in part because he limited his course load. A confident student, he was considered “the darling of the math department,” with one professor calling him the best he had seen.

It mentioned another professor said that Kaczynski seemed: “A little too sure of himself.”

Capture, confession and death

After U-M, Kaczynski became an acting assistant professor at the University of California, Berkeley, but quit less than a year later, moved to his parents’ home in Illinois, and then in 1971, to a cabin he had built outside Lincoln, Montana.

In 1975, he began booby-trapping trails, sabotaging machinery and burning equipment near his cabin, according to news reports; and between 1978 and 1995, he mailed and delivered bombs to scientists and businesspeople from New Jersey to California.

Kaczynski, whose FBI file was code-named for the UNiversity and Airline BOMBing targets involved, was so feared that there was a \$1 million reward for his arrest.

By 1995 he threatened to send a bomb to an unspecified destination “with intent to kill” unless his 35,000-word manuscript was published, and the Washington Post agreed, with the recommendation of the justice department and FBI.

The anti-technology essay, “Industrial Society and Its Future,” became known as Kaczynski’s manifesto. It also was what helped tip authorities off to the *Unabomber*’s identity. David Kaczynski and his wife, Linda Patrik, the killer’s younger brother and sister-in-law, recognized phrasing from the essay.

By 1998 — two years after capture in a tiny cabin in the mountains of remote, western Montana, where Ted Kaczynski was living alone as a recluse — he pleaded guilty to killing three people and injuring 23 and was sentenced to life in prison.

In a 2016 “Nightline” newscast, David Kaczynski talked about his brother and his time in Ann Arbor.

“It’s pretty clear that by the time he was a graduate student at the University of Michigan, he was suffering from some pretty serious delusions,” David Kaczynski said

during the interview of his brother. “He was having delusions that people were laughing about him or making fun of him, or plotting against him.”

David Kaczynski said and his wife made the difficult decision to contact the FBI in hopes of saving lives.

Saturday, Kaczynski was found unresponsive after midnight at the medical center in Butner, North Carolina, according to the USA TODAY. Staff performed life-saving measures and took him to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead.

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