

Intelligence Sets This Suspect Apart

April 5, 1996

As a self-absorbed loner, the man suspected of being the Unabomber shares a classic profile with other accused terrorists in all but one respect, psychiatric specialists say: He is a good deal smarter than disaffected outsiders such as Timothy McVeigh, the prime suspect in the Oklahoma bombing.

And it is that mixture of twisted psyche and high intelligence that appears to make Theodore J. Kaczynski unusual, they say. It is certainly what seems to have enabled him to elude law enforcement officials for so long.

The Unabomber “is clearly someone who is paranoid and extremely insensitive, someone who can inflict enormous pain on others without caring,” said Dr. Charles Ford, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Alabama in Birmingham, who has studied sociopathic killers. “But he also is an extremely bright individual who has a need to show the world how clever and bright he is.”

While specialists like Ford stressed that they have not interviewed Kaczynski and thus could not comment specifically about a psychiatric diagnosis, they said his behavior through the years fits a common profile of a troubled loser who blames the world or institutions, such as government or academia, for his problems, rather than himself.

“One of the characteristics of such individuals is a tendency to externalize, to locate an outside cause for the internal demons that drive them,” said Dr. Jerrold M. Post, a psychiatrist at George Washington University and author of the forthcoming “Political Paranoia: Psychopolitics of Hatred.”

In that respect, Post and others say, the Unabomber resembles other disaffected individuals who blame society or government for their woes, such as McVeigh and the group of freemen holed up 350 miles from the cabin Kaczynski called home.

But what distinguishes the Unabomber, specialists say, is his narcissistic need to show the world just how brilliant he is.

“Think of the contrast between the pathetic loner” with no social skills and “the powerful, taunting presence” of the Unabomber, Post said. “It is a very empowering feeling to be able to wreak this kind of periodic havoc.”

The Ted K Archive

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The Spokesman-Review, April 5, 1996, Page A6.
<spokesman.com/stories/1996/apr/05/kaczynski-lived-a-life-on-the-fringe-ex/>

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