

# Swirling Around Unabom Suspect, an Environmental Dispute

John Kifner

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In the last half-dozen years that Theodore J. Kaczynski has lived his solitary, lonely life just outside this rugged mountain hamlet, a plan to gouge out one of the biggest open-pit gold mines has bitterly divided the people here.

Some said the mine proposed by Phelps Dodge, the principal partner in the project, would infuse much-needed cash into the hardscrabble local economy. But environmentalists argue that the mine would threaten the habitat of the Blackfoot River, the setting for the book and movie “A River Runs Through It,” and endanger the range of the elk, deer, bears, antelope and bald eagles that roam the area.

The Seven-Up Pete Mine — named for an old-time prospector who favored a poker game in which seven cards are dealt face up — would drastically change the wilderness the suspect in the Unabom case chose as his refuge from modern technological society. Many mountain slopes in the area have already been stripped bare by logging.

In Lincoln, herds of deer, many known by pet names, roam the yards around the yellow blinking light that marks the center of town and nibble from feeders. Public spaces are like the inside of a diorama, filled with animals, most of them horned, that have been shot and stuffed. Men drink and eat with their hats on.

The hermit-like Mr. Kaczynski rarely spoke to anyone here, and then only briefly, so there is no clear public record of how he felt about the mine.

Becky Garland, a strong opponent of the mine and the town resident who seems to have had the longest personal conversation with Mr. Kaczynski — a 20- to 25-minute talk — says he talked about his need for a job, his lonely childhood and a lost love and did not even mention the mining project.

The controversy about the mine has taken on some significance in the Unabom investigation because since the project was proposed, the Unabomber appears to have shifted his targets, from people connected with universities, airlines or computers to those linked to environmental issues.

The last two victims killed were Gilbert P. Murray, the head of a Sacramento timber lobbying group who was killed in December 1994, and Thomas J. Mosser, a public relations executive killed in his New Jersey home in April 1995. Mr. Mosser’s company did some work for Exxon, and the authorities believe that the bomber thought, apparently erroneously, that the company had tried to clean up the oil company’s image after the Valdez oil spill in Alaska. Over all, the Unabomber has killed 3 people and injured 23.

In wondering whether Mr. Kaczynski is the Unabomber, people here have been asking themselves what he might have thought about the mine. Phelps Dodge says the mine would produce 3.7 million ounces of gold and 8 million ounces of silver over 15 years and would be expected to stay open for 25 years. The company says it would employ up to 390 people with an annual payroll of \$13 million, although many of these would be heavy-equipment operators and other technically skilled personnel brought in from outside. It says it would spend around \$45 million on goods and services locally.

To get at the gold, the mine would operate around the clock, grinding up a small mountain south of the Bob Marshall and Scapegoat Wilderness Areas, some of the

nation's most pristine wild lands. The miners would set explosives in the rocks, grind up the debris and, finally, leach out the gold by sloshing a cyanide solution over the rubble. The mountain would be reduced to a huge pit; when the operation was finished, the mine company says, it would leave a recreational lake behind.

But environmentalists say the project would destroy the habitats of bull trout and wetslope cutthroat trout in the Blackfoot River. These fish depend on the clear, cold water of the river and its tributaries, which is already so polluted that the fishing scenes in the movie "A River Runs Through It" had to be filmed elsewhere.

The project could bring money here, but it has driven a wedge into the community, even splitting families.

At a family dinner on Easter Sunday, Tony Wood, whose relatives run the Lincoln Lodge Motel and hope that the mine would bring in business, shifted uncomfortably as he told of his opposition: "This is personal. I've hunted elk up there since I was old enough to carry a rifle."

In Lincoln, a wide space on Montana Route 200 that supports five bars, two snowmobile dealerships, an artist who carves figures of cowboys out of tree trunks with a chain saw and a very busy taxidermist, Mr. Kaczynski, with his matted hair, wild beard and gamy smell did not stand out at all.

In fact, he was nothing, a number of people volunteered, compared with a bunch called the Cabbage Patch Gang, so called because they live on Sauerkraut Creek. They really stink, townspeople said, and they wear long knives and sometimes come into town reeking of alcohol to tear up the bars.

Two years ago, in the summer, Mr. Kaczynski approached Ms. Garland, a lifelong resident who now has a business restoring ecologically damaged trout streams but was then managing Garlands, her family's dry goods and sporting equipment store. Mr. Kaczynski often stopped by the store for fishing lures, batteries and other necessities of his primitive backwoods life in an isolated 10-by-12-foot shack. But this time, he wanted to ask for advice and help in finding a job.

Ms. Garland was surprised, she said, because Mr. Kaczynski rarely spoke unless spoken to. When she agreed to talk, they set a time, and he arrived on the porch of the store to give her a three-page letter, handwritten on what she remembered as small note paper, describing his high I.Q., his advanced schooling in his early years and his education at Harvard, as well as briefly mentioning his loneliness.

"He talked of being very young, being younger than his classmates," Ms. Garland remembered. "He talked of not having friends. It seemed like he was unable to be a boy.

"He did write about having a relationship with someone at one time that didn't work out," she said. "I think he wrote the letter so he didn't have to speak about these things, so he didn't have to talk a lot. He wrote about being with classmates who were older and about being very shy."

The conversation lasted about 20 or 25 minutes, Ms. Garland said. "We sat and spoke about his wanting to get a job," she said, remembering the longest conversation

she has had with a man who lived here for 20 years. “I assumed he would probably be best at research, and I gave him the names of a few organizations that I knew of.

“He was no different that day than any other day,” she said. “He was just Ted. He was always quiet, shy and mannerly.”

Most of the horde of journalists who stormed through Lincoln last week are gone now. But Federal Bureau of Investigation agents are still painstakingly combing through the small cabin where Mr. Kaczynski lived and where they have recovered what they say is a draft of the Unabomber’s manifesto, one live bomb, a partially assembled one and what may be important evidence of handmade screws used to assemble bombs, which could provide an ironclad maker’s signature. The agents have checked fly-fishing shops, interviewed a woman who sometimes cut Mr. Kaczynski’s hair and even taken the envelope of wild white carrot seeds he once gave Ms. Garland’s sister, Theresa.

Local entrepreneurs at enterprises like the bars and the volunteer fire department are doing a land-office business in “Home of the Unabomber” T-shirts. Local radio stations and newspapers have been running contests for new state slogans like “Montana — the Last, Best Place to Hide,” “Big Scare Country” and “At Least Our Cows Are Sane.”

Theresa Garland remembers discovering a couple of years ago that Mr. Kaczynski, like her, was interested in gardening.

“I was really happy that after all these years, I finally had something to talk to him about,” she said. “For all the years that Ted lived here, you could mush all our conversations into half an hour.”

The Ted K Archive

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The New York Times, April 14, 1996, Section 1, Page 27. <[nytimes.com/1996/04/14/us/swirling-around-unabom-suspect-an-environmental-dispute.html](http://nytimes.com/1996/04/14/us/swirling-around-unabom-suspect-an-environmental-dispute.html)>

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