

Store owner says suspect seemed like 'an innocent'

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into his life.

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Two years ago, Becky Garland and a hermit named Theodore Kaczynski sat on the porch of her store in Lincoln, Mont., having a heart-to-heart talk.

She thought he was an innocent, a man whose feelings about the environment seemed to chime with hers. She seems to have caught a glimpse into his soul, learning things that had hurt him in the past. Now, as she visits her father and other relatives in Callao, Juab County, the entire Garland family is reeling over Kaczynski's arrest on Wednesday as the suspected Unabomber.

The Garlands have deep roots in Lincoln. Kaczynski has lived in a shack outside that town since the 1970s.

Cecil Garland, Becky's father, moved to Callao around 1993, turning over the family store in Lincoln — Garland's Town and Country — to Becky and another of his daughters, Teresa Garland. Cecil Garland is a rancher known for supporting environmental protection, an interest he shared with Becky.

Becky Garland, 40, was driving through Nephi on Wednesday night on her way to visit her father's home when she stopped to call the ranch. Callao is a remote, dusty community near the Nevada border, reachable only by dirt roads, and she wanted to ask if she could pick up anything in Nephi that the family might need.

Cecil Garland told her he had heard from folks in Lincoln. "I guess we just had reporters calling me all day long," she said.

Because "we were 15 hours on the road," she had heard nothing about the Unabomber arrest. When her dad told her what had happened, "I was almost unable to function, because my emotions were so crossed."

Becky and Teresa Garland got to know Kaczynski over the past couple of decades because he would shop at their store.

"The store's on the main street. Highway 200's the main street, and you just saw the man on his bicycle and he would come downtown and he would ride to the library or the grocery store and come into the store for some writing supplies, or thread, or what-have-you," Becky Garland said.

At those times, she said, a "trusting" relationship grew up between them.

"I guess he was just comfortable with me and we spoke a few times." Kaczynski was "just very quiet, very shy, very well-read.

She described Kaczynski as "very gentlemanly. He had manners."

He was so painfully shy that usually, talking for more than five minutes was more than he could muster. He wasn't anxious, but "once he was done with the conversation he was kind of, 'Now I've got to go.'"

For many years they kept their conversations on that kind of perfunctory level.

Becky Garland is a member of the Big Blackfoot Chapter of Trout Unlimited; for six years, she was chapter president. She and the group worked to clean up mine tailings on the Blackfoot River's watershed.

"He knew enough (about her environmental work) to say thank you ... He knew what I was up to," she said. "I think he appreciated what I was doing in the Blackfoot."

Since she made the local newspapers and TV news, “kind of the buzz in Lincoln” was to the effect of “that darn Garland girl,” she said.

Environmental activists can feel “kind of an unwritten bond,” she said. “Sometimes it’s a very lonely life, especially when you’re in the hustings.”

Also, “he would talk to my sister Teresa about gardening. He lived on what he grew most of the time, and my sister was a big gardener, and they exchanged gardening tips. And so there’s another bond out there.

“And he felt like he could talk to me.”

About two years ago, told her he was running out of money. He wanted to talk about how he could get a job, and he asked if there was sometime in the future when “he could take some of my time and we could talk.

“And I said, ‘Well, sure.’ ”

She knew a little about him already, having read some letters he wrote to the local paper. And he spent a lot of time at the local library.

Did Kaczynski look ragged and dirty, as he was at his arrest?

“Yeah, but he didn’t have any running water or electricity or anything. But oddly enough, there’s a handful of people in Lincoln like that.”

Whenever he came to town he presented himself as best he could, she said. He used to launder his clothing at a laundromat that Becky Garland owns.

“What he was doing, was trying to pick my brain of where he might get a job, because his funds were running out.” She doesn’t remember for sure where he got the money he used for his purchases.

“In his 20-some years of living in Lincoln, if I talked to him in those 20 years more than an hour, total, I would be amazed,” she said.

But now, “there was a very short time he was reaching out, I guess.” He was either trying to build on their relationship, or just ask for advice about finding a job, she said.

So one day, they sat together on her porch behind the store and talked. He introduced himself to her in a peculiar way — by writing.

“He gave me the letter that explained who Ted Kaczynski was in growing up.” The letter, written to her, spelled out his personal life — or what he wanted her to know about it.

“He gave me the letter and I sat and read it. I think it was maybe his resume to me, saying, ‘This is who I am, this is my family, and these are a couple of the lumps that I’ve taken in my life.’”

The letter indicated that “his IQ was very high, and it was almost like he was unable to be a kid, to grow up and take the lumps and bumps of being a kid.

“I think maybe he didn’t have a childhood, from reading his letter, because of his brilliance.”

The life that Kaczynski showed her “wasn’t one of your happy-kid life” stories, she said.

Another possible key to Kaczynski's personality and reclusiveness, discussed in the letter, involved his lovelife.

"I think one (of the lumps he'd taken) was someone that he loved very much, and it didn't work out," she said.

Thinking he could be a good researcher, she gave him names of organizations to contact in Helena. She doesn't know if he ever did get in touch with them.

She told him how to get to Helena too, because "I didn't know if he knew about those kinds of things." He could get in and out of Lincoln via the Lincoln Stage, which travels between that town and Helena daily with mail and freight, she said.

There was never an indication he could be a murderer, she said.

"I've had over 24 hours to think about it. There was nothing ... There is almost an innocence to the Ted I knew."

If the claims are true, "Obviously there's a whole 'nother person, and I don't know what kind of person. Obviously a very confused and angry person."

The Ted K Archive

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The Deseret News, 5 Apr 1996. <deseret.com/1996/4/5/19234929/store-owner-says-suspect-seemed-like-an-innocent/> &

<books.google.co.uk/books?id=kbsRAAAAIBAJ&pg=PA47>

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