

Suspect in C.E.O. Killing Withdrew From a Life of Privilege and Promise

The suspect, Luigi Mangione, was an Ivy League tech graduate from a prominent Maryland family who in recent months had suffered physical and psychological pain.

Corey Kilgannon, Mike Baker, Luke Broadwater and
Shawn Hubler

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Luigi Mangione being taken to the courthouse in Altoona, Pa., to be arraigned on Monday.

Rachel Wisniewski for The New York Times

Luigi Mangione, the online version of him, was an Ivy League tech enthusiast who flaunted his tanned, chiseled looks in beach photos and party pictures with blue-blazered frat buddies.

He was the valedictorian of a prestigious Baltimore prep school who earned bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Pennsylvania and served as a head counselor at a pre-college program at Stanford University.

With his credentials and connections, he could have ended up one day as an entrepreneur or the chief executive of one of his family's thriving businesses. Instead, investigators suspect, he took a different path.

The police now believe that Mr. Mangione, 26, is the masked gunman who calmly took out a pistol equipped with a suppressor on a Midtown Manhattan street last week and assassinated Brian Thompson, the chief executive of UnitedHealthcare. He was arrested in Altoona, Pa., on Monday after an employee at a McDonald's recognized him and called the police. Officers said they found him with fake identification, a weapon similar to the one seen in video of the killing and a manifesto decrying the health care industry.

Later on Monday, Mr. Mangione was charged in Manhattan with murder, along with additional counts of forgery and illegal weapons possession. And in the hours after his apprehension, his baffling journey from star student to murder suspect began to come into focus.

Mr. Mangione was in regular contact with friends and family until about six months ago when he suddenly and inexplicably stopped communicating with them. He had been suffering from a painful back injury, friends said, and then went dark, prompting anxious inquiries from relatives to his friends: Had anyone heard from him?

In July, one man tagged a social media account that appeared to belong to Mr. Mangione and said that he hadn't heard from him in months. "You made commitments to me for my wedding and if you can't honor them I need to know so I can plan accordingly," the man wrote in a now-deleted post.

Those six months will most likely become a focus for investigators as they try to gather more evidence about Mr. Mangione's connection to the killing, and what he was doing in the time that no one could find him.

Mr. Mangione left behind a long series of postings about self-improvement, healthy eating and technology — and a review of the Unabomber's manifesto. Bullet casings left at the scene, scrawled with words like "deny" and "delay," left the authorities and the public wondering if the shooting was payback for health care insurers rejecting claims.

In the wake of the attack, social media seethed with resentment against the insurance industry, and the unidentified suspect became, to some, a folk hero.

Mr. Mangione came from a privileged upbringing, part of an influential real estate family in the Baltimore area.

His grandfather, Nick Mangione Sr., and grandmother, Mary C. Mangione, purchased the Turf Valley country club in Ellicott City, Md., in the 1970s and developed the golf course community.

In the 1980s, the family purchased Hayfields Country Club in Hunt Valley, Md. It also founded the nursing home company Lorien Health Services, and Mr. Mangione's father, Louis Mangione, became an owner. The family also owned the radio station WCBM, which airs politically conservative programs and has other real estate holdings. A cousin, Nino Mangione, is an elected member of the Maryland House of Delegates.

The family's wealth and work with charity made it well known in Baltimore. Luigi Mangione was "just the last person you would suspect," said Thomas J. Maronick Jr., a lawyer and radio host who knows several members of the Mangione family.

"It is just such a well-respected family and such a prominent family within Baltimore County," he said.

Luigi Mangione attended high school at the prestigious Gilman School in Baltimore, where he wrestled and played other sports and was the valedictorian of his graduating class in 2016. In a graduation speech, he described his class as "coming up with new ideas and challenging the world around it."



The suspect was identified after a McDonald's employee recognized him from images released by the police.

Dave Sanders for The New York Times

He thanked parents in attendance for sending him and his classmates to the school, which he described as “far from a small financial investment.” Tuition is currently \$37,690 per year for high schoolers.

Aaron Cranston, who became friends with Mr. Mangione during their time at Gilman, said he recalled Mr. Mangione as being particularly smart — perhaps the smartest at the elite private school. Even before college, Mr. Mangione had already made a mobile app where users could fly a paper airplane through obstacles.

Mr. Mangione was social, friendly and never particularly political, Mr. Cranston recalled. He was ambitious and carried his long interest in computer science toward college.

“He was a big believer in the power of technology to change the world,” Mr. Cranston said.

Freddie Leatherbury, 26, an accountant who lives in Catonsville, Md., graduated from Gilman with Mr. Mangione in 2016. He recalled Mr. Mangione playing soccer for the high school team and running track or cross country.

“Those are both such disciplined sports. It says a lot about who he was as a student,” Mr. Leatherbury said. “He was very smart, a pretty big math guy, really well read and quite well liked to be honest. I don’t have any bad memories of him. He had a very healthy social circle.”

Race Saunders, 27, now a software developer who lives in California, recalled being “study buddies” with Mr. Mangione in high school. He remembered Mr. Mangione as a hard worker.

“We were all definitely leaning toward computer science,” Mr. Saunders said.

In college, Mr. Mangione excelled in that field. The commencement program for the University of Pennsylvania’s class of 2020 lists Mr. Mangione as a member of the school’s chapter of Eta Kappa Nu, an academic honor society for students in electrical and computer engineering that was founded in 1904. The society is selective, inviting only the top quarter of the junior class and top third of the senior class in those majors for membership, according to its website.

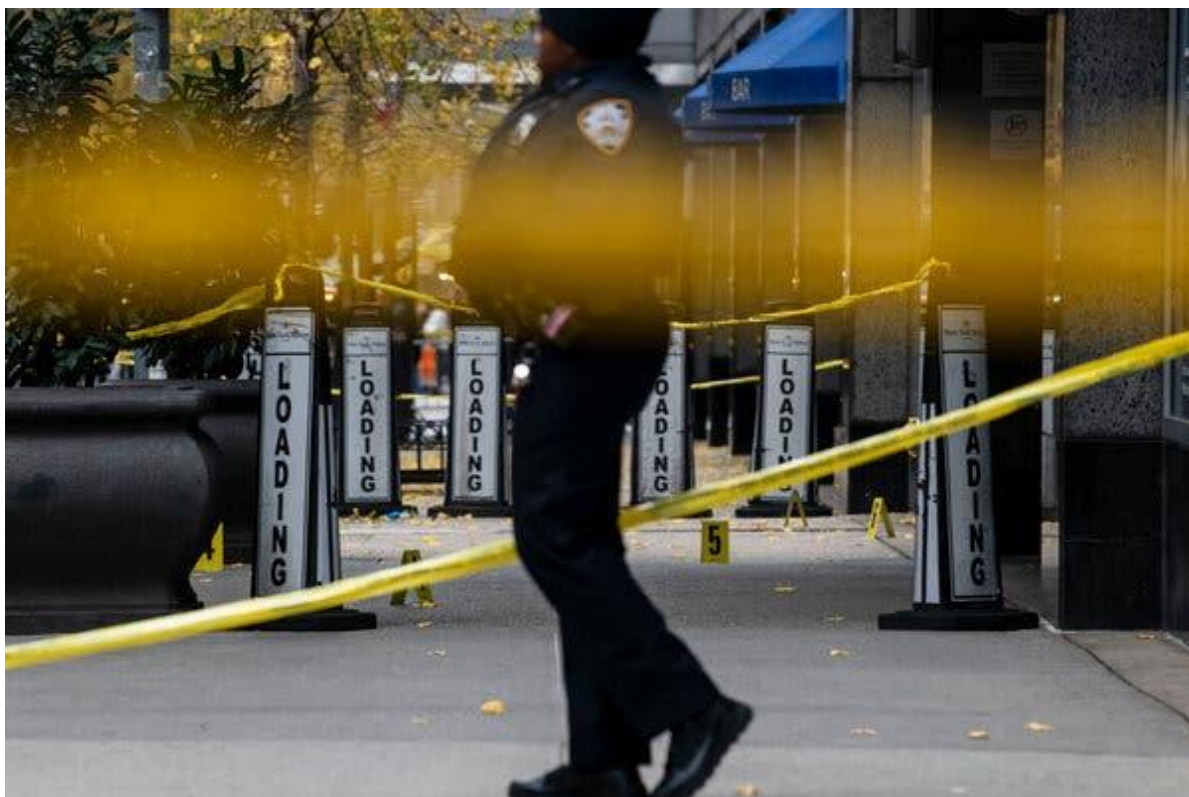
Mr. Mangione’s interest in computer games started at a young age, when he began exploring the community online, according to a now-deleted interview published on the University of Pennsylvania’s campus events blog in 2018. From there, the interview said, he wanted to start creating games himself and taught himself to code in high school.

“That’s why I’m a computer science major now, that’s how I got into it,” Mr. Mangione said in the interview. “I just really wanted to make games.”

After college, Mr. Mangione worked for or had internships with several tech companies, according to his LinkedIn profile and a former employer.

Mr. Mangione’s profile said that he had worked as a software engineer at TrueCar, an online marketplace based in Santa Monica, Calif. The company said in a statement that he had not been an employee since 2023.

In recent years, Mr. Mangione lived for six months in Honolulu in a “co-living” space called Surfbreak that caters to remote workers.



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Karsten Moran for The New York Times

R.J. Martin, the founder of Surfbreak, said that when he met Mr. Mangione in 2022, he was interviewing to be among the initial 20 or so occupants paying about \$2,000 per month to share quarters.

Mr. Martin described Mr. Mangione as a smart, accomplished and upbeat engineer. “Our mission statement is that we’re a community of givers and that we leave things better than we found them,” Mr. Martin said. “We look for people who are looking to give back. And he fit the bill. He was an ideal member for us.”

But Mr. Mangione was suffering from painful back issues, he said. “His spine was kind of misaligned,” he said. “He said his lower vertebrae were almost like a half-inch off, and I think it pinched a nerve.”

Mr. Mangione did not make a habit of complaining, and did not seem to be on any type of painkilling medication, Mr. Martin said.

Still, Mr. Martin said, he and others in the community came to understand that the pain was no small matter to a young man yearning for a normal lifestyle. “He knew that dating and being physically intimate with his back condition wasn’t possible,” Mr. Martin said. “I remember him telling me that, and my heart just breaks.”

Mr. Mangione left the co-living space after six months to return to the East Coast, where he told Mr. Martin he was planning to see his doctor. He returned to Honolulu afterward and rented an apartment in the same neighborhood.

Mr. Martin said that Mr. Mangione left Hawaii in the summer of 2023, presumably for an operation on his back. In August of that year, Mr. Martin said, he checked in via text to see how his friend was doing, “and he sent me back pictures of his back surgery.”

The pictures — scans of Mr. Mangione’s spine — were so jarring that Mr. Martin texted back asking how Mr. Mangione was feeling. “So, long story,” Mr. Mangione replied, according to Mr. Martin. “Will fill ya in in person. Back in Hawaii as soon as I can, I have to figure out some spine stuff here first.”

He said Mr. Mangione did, in fact, report in late 2023 that he had gone back to Hawaii, visiting Maui, the Big Island and Oahu in November and December before returning to Baltimore to see his family. While in Oahu, Mr. Mangione received a citation for trespassing for having failed to observe a sign at the Nu’uanu Pali Lookout, a spot with a breathtaking view of the island. He was fined \$100.

Mr. Martin said he made plans to connect with Mr. Mangione in February. When March came and went, Mr. Martin texted: “Miss you brother. Hope you are mostly recovered. Let’s catch up soon.”

“Yea dude let’s catch up on the phone,” Mr. Mangione replied on April 15, according to Mr. Martin.

But they did not connect. On May 20, Mr. Martin thought of his friend again and texted: “Yo! You awake?” Mr. Mangione did not answer, he said. A month later, on June 23, he texted him again. “Where in the world are you?”

There was no response.

Through a series of posts, Mr. Mangione's trail on the internet hinted at pain both physical and philosophical.

In January, Mr. Mangione left a review of a book containing the rambling manifesto of Ted Kaczynski, the Unabomber, on GoodReads, a social media site for bookworms.

"It's easy to quickly and thoughtless write this off as the manifesto of a lunatic, in order to avoid facing some of the uncomfortable problems it identifies," Mr. Mangione wrote of the document. "But it's simply impossible to ignore how prescient many of his predictions about modern society turned out."

One of Mr. Mangione's favorite quotes, listed on GoodReads, was, "It is no measure of health to be well adjusted to a profoundly sick society," from Jiddu Krishnamurti, the religious philosopher and teacher.

The GoodReads page also included self-help books about health and the human body, including, "Crooked: Outwitting the Back Pain Industry and Getting on the Road to Recovery."

A social media account that appeared to belong to Mr. Mangione featured an X-ray image of a spine reinforced with surgical implants. The X-ray showed a spinal fusion, a procedure that uses screws and rods to fuse two levels of the spine to address a misalignment that can cause serious pain, according to Dr. Hasit Mehta, a professor at New York Medical College.

Mr. Cranston, the school friend, said that he was forwarded a message this year from Mr. Mangione's family saying that the family had not heard from him in several months after his surgery. Relatives were hoping friends might know of his whereabouts.

Few, if any, did until his arrest on Monday morning.

Mr. Saunders, the high school friend, was shocked by the news but was skeptical that his classmate had suffered a psychological break.

"I would be surprised if it was some kind of mental breakdown," he said.

For now, investigators will be looking for any additional clues that might link Mr. Mangione to the shooting. One thing they were examining was the handwritten manifesto that he had in his possession when he was arrested, according to a senior law enforcement official.

The 262-word handwritten document begins with the writer appearing to take responsibility for the murder, according to a senior law enforcement official who saw the document. It notes that as UnitedHealthcare's market capitalization has grown, American life expectancy has not.

"To save you a lengthy investigation, I state plainly that I wasn't working with anyone," the writer wrote. The note condemns companies that "continue to abuse our country for immense profit because the American public has allowed them to get away with it."

At Mr. Mangione's arraignment in Pennsylvania on Monday, a judge asked him whether he was in contact with his family.

"Until recently," he replied.

Reporting was contributed by Mike Isaac, Emma Goldberg, Maria Cramer, Jesus Jiménez, Nicholas Bogel-Burroughs, Campbell Robertson, Callie Holtermann, Chelsia Rose Marcus, William K. Rashbaum, JoAnna Daemmrich, Jack Truesdale, Ryan Mac, Andy Newman, Brian Conway, Jan Ransom, Jacey Fortin, Shayla Colon, Heather Knight and Ashley Southall. Research was contributed by Susan C. Beachy, Kirsten Noyes and Kitty Bennett.

Corey Kilgannon is a Times reporter who writes about crime and criminal justice in and around New York City, as well as breaking news and other feature stories. More about Corey Kilgannon

Mike Baker is a national reporter for The Times, based in Seattle. More about Mike Baker

Luke Broadwater covers Congress with a focus on congressional investigations. More about Luke Broadwater

Shawn Hubler is based in Sacramento and covers California news, policy trends and personalities. She has been a journalist for more than four decades. More about Shawn Hubler

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<[nytimes.com/2024/12/09/nyregion/united-healthcare-ceo-shooting-luigi-mangione.html](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/12/09/nyregion/united-healthcare-ceo-shooting-luigi-mangione.html)>

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