

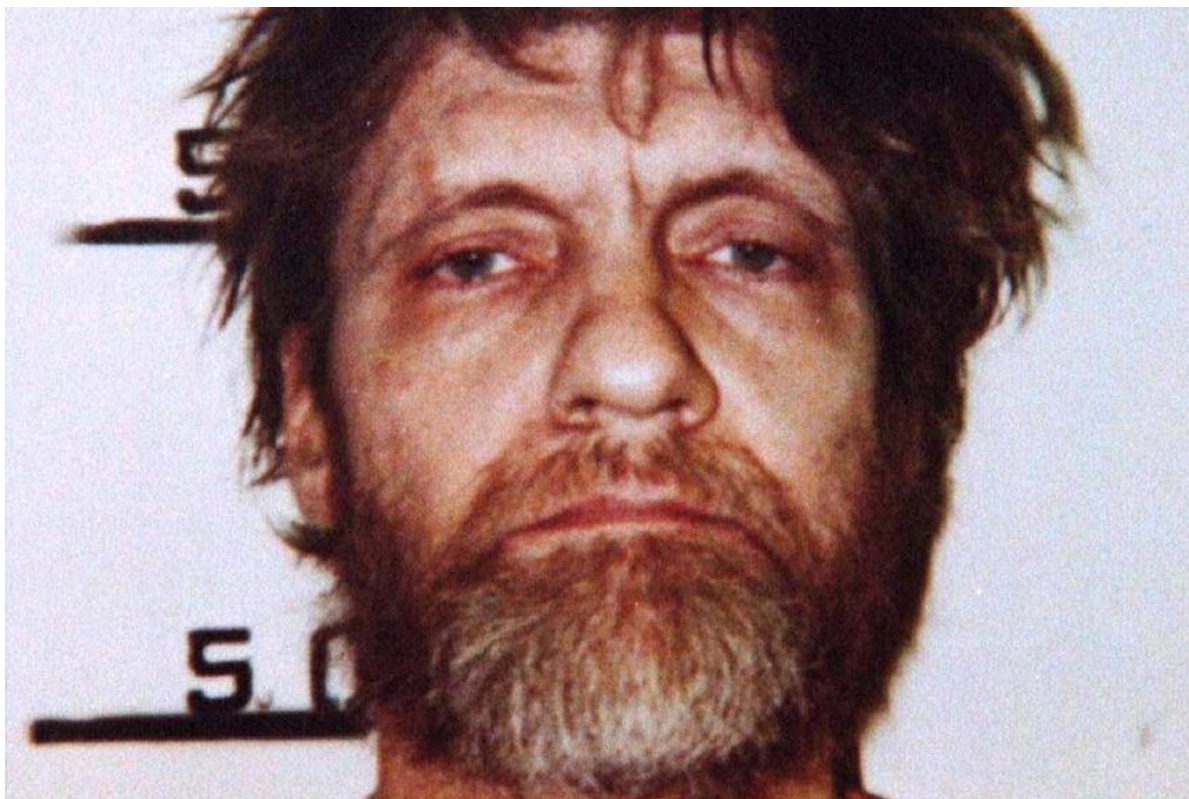
**Unabomber Ted Kaczynski, the  
lonely Harvard student whose room  
smelled of foot powder**

ABC/wires

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Unabomber Ted Kaczynski was finally caught in 1996. (*Reuters*)

Ted Kaczynski, the former maths professor and “twisted genius” who came to be known as the Unabomber when he carried out a 17-year spree of mysterious bombings that killed three people and baffled the FBI, has died.

Kaczynski, who made and sent many of his bombs while living in a primitive cabin with no running water in rural Montana, was found dead at a prison in North Carolina.

So, who was the man who entered a guilty plea rather than letting his lawyers proceed with an insanity defence?

Described by the FBI as “a twisted genius who aspires to be the perfect, anonymous killer”, Kaczynski was certainly brilliant.

Kaczynski skipped two grades to attend Harvard at age 16 and had published papers in prestigious mathematics journals.

## **The trombone player learns to make bombs**

Ted Kaczynski was born May 22, 1942, in Chicago, the son of second-generation Polish Catholics — a sausage-maker and a homemaker.

He played the trombone in the school band, collected coins and skipped the sixth and 11<sup>th</sup> grades.



FBI special agent in charge Jim Freeman fronts a 1995 media conference in San Francisco. *(Reuters)*

His high school classmates thought him odd, particularly after he showed a school wrestler how to make a mini-bomb that detonated during chemistry class.

“He wasn’t exactly gregarious, but he was extremely articulate,” Dale Eickelman, Kaczynski’s friend in his early high school years, told the Daily Southtown newspaper in Chicago after Kaczynski’s arrest.

“I remember Ted was very good at chemistry ... I remember Ted [at the age of 13] had the know-how of putting together things like batteries, wire leads, potassium nitrate and whatever, and creating explosions.”



This home, in the Chicago suburb of Evergreen Park, is believed to be the boyhood residence of Ted Kaczynski. (*Reuters*)

While it is not known exactly what caused Kaczynski to channel his natural talent toward evil, his participation in an infamous science experiment at Harvard may have been one reason.

There, psychologists subjected volunteer students, including Kaczynski, to hours of extreme verbal and emotional abuse as part of an attempt to measure how people handled stress.

The experiment, now regarded as unethical, lasted three years.

Others have cited a period in Kaczynski’s childhood when he spent long periods in isolation due to a severe outbreak of hives.

## The lonely student whose room smelled of foot powder

Harvard classmates recalled him as a lonely, thin boy with poor personal hygiene and a room that smelled of spoiled milk, rotting food and foot powder.

Kaczynski earned a doctoral degree in mathematics in 1967 at the University of Michigan before he got a job as an assistant mathematics professor at the University of California at Berkeley.

He resigned his post and moved to Montana in 1971 where he bought a 6,000 square metre block of land and built himself a tar-paper cabin near Lincoln, a town of fewer than 1,000 people in winter.

He learned to garden, hunt, make tools and sew, living on a few hundred dollars a year.



Some of Ted Kaczynski's possessions, including sunglasses were auctioned to raise funds for his victims and their families.

## A break-up, a sacking and a return to the woods

He left his cabin in Montana in the late 1970s to work at a foam rubber products manufacturer outside Chicago with his father and brother.

But when a female supervisor dumped him after two dates, he began posting insulting limericks about her and wouldn't stop.

His brother fired him and Ted Kaczynski soon returned to the wilderness to continue plotting his vengeful killing spree.

The cabin served as the main base for his homemade bombing campaign, which began in 1978 when he left a package for an engineering professor at Chicago's Northwestern University.



Reporters get their first look at the hand-built mountain cabin in 1996. (*Reuters*)

The package exploded, lightly wounding a police officer. A graduate student at the college became the second victim when a small bomb went off in his hands, giving him superficial burns.

Kaczynski then took aim at a bigger target, placing a bomb in 1979 in the cargo hold of an American Airlines plane that gave off smoke during a domestic flight, forcing an emergency landing at Dulles International Airport near Washington.

That attack caught the attention of the FBI and agents would spend years trying to catch a bomber who left no clear demands and little forensic evidence.

A six-year period between 1987 and 1993 in which no bombs were sent further confused investigators.

In 1980, Kaczynski sent a package bomb that exploded and injured United Airlines President Percy Wood at his Illinois home.



Kaczynski's cabin was moved from Montana to California to exhibit to jurors during the trial. (*Reuters*)

His first fatal victim was computer store owner Hugh Scrutton, 38, who died when a bomb loaded with nails and splinters went off in the parking lot of his store in Sacramento, California, in 1985.

As his bombs became more sophisticated, Kaczynski also killed New Jersey advertising executive Thomas Mosser, who had worked on improving the public image of oil major Exxon, with a mail bomb in 1994.

He then murdered Gilbert Brent Murray, head of a California timber industry lobbying group, with a mail bomb in 1995.

In all, the Unabomber set off 17 bombs, injuring around 25 people, some of whom lost vision, hearing or fingers.



When Kaczynski stepped up his bombs and letters to newspapers and scientists in 1995, experts speculated the Unabomber was jealous of the attention being paid to Oklahoma City bomber Timothy McVeigh.

A threat to blow up a plane out of Los Angeles before the end of the July Fourth weekend threw air travel and mail delivery into chaos. The Unabomber later claimed it was a “prank”.

## The manifesto and the suspicious in-law

Kaczynski triggered his own downfall in 1995 when he sent letters to media organisations demanding that they publish a 35,000-word essay of his about the perils of industrialisation.

“The Industrial Revolution and its consequences have been a disaster for the human race,” the essay began.



Theodore Kaczynski permanently maimed several of his victims. (*AP: Elaine Thompson*)

The Washington Post printed the manifesto at the urging of federal authorities, after the bomber said he would desist from terrorism if a national publication published his treatise.

Linda Patrik, the wife of the Unabomber's brother, David Kaczynski, had had a disturbing feeling about her brother-in-law even before seeing the manifesto and eventually persuaded her husband to read a copy at the library.

After two months of arguments, they took some of Ted Kaczynski's letters to Ms Patrik's childhood friend Susan Swanson, a private investigator in Chicago.

Ms Swanson, in turn, passed them along to former FBI behavioural science expert Clint Van Zandt, whose analysts said whoever wrote them had also probably written the Unabomber's manifesto.



The Unabomber described his brother David Kaczynski, right, as a "Judas". (*Reuters*)

"It was a nightmare," David Kaczynski, who as a child had idolised his older brother, said in a 2005 speech at Bennington College.

"I was literally thinking, 'My brother's a serial killer, the most wanted man in America'."

Ms Swanson turned to a corporate lawyer friend, Anthony Bisceglie, who contacted the FBI.

The investigation and prosecution were overseen by now-Attorney-General Merrick Garland, during a previous stint at the Justice Department.

David Kaczynski wanted his role kept confidential, but his identity quickly leaked out and Ted Kaczynski vowed never to forgive his younger sibling.

He ignored his letters, turned his back on him at court hearings and described David Kaczynski in a 1999 book draft as a “Judas Iscariot [who] ... doesn’t even have enough courage to go hang himself.”



Theodore “Ted” Kaczynski was serving four life sentences. *(AP: John Youngbear)*

The Ted K Archive

ABC/wires  
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powder  
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Australian Broadcasting Corporation.  
<[abc.net.au/news/ted-kaczynski-harvard-student-to-unabomber/102466880](http://abc.net.au/news/ted-kaczynski-harvard-student-to-unabomber/102466880)>

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