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Main Hall to Main Street

Connecting Campus and Community

JUL 28 2006

The Unabomber Boys

10 years ago, UM students
captured first photos of
reclusive terrorist



It was a spring afternoon, a Wednesday, April 3, 1996. Gregory Rec, a photojournalism student at The University of Montana, rolled into the journalism school, fresh off a freelance assignment for the *Denver Post*.

The outer office normally hummed with activity on a school day, but on this Wednesday, it was oddly empty and quiet. Rec poked his head inside the office of Professor Patty Reksten. Where was everybody? he asked her.

Moments later Rec was flying out the J-School door and making a mad dash for his old Subaru. Over the next few hours, Rec and three other UM photojournalism students — Bruce Ely, Derek Pruitt and Steve Adams — would capture some of the most sought-after images in the world.

It was a spring afternoon, a Wednesday. It was the day the FBI ended an 18-year-long manhunt for Unabomber Ted Kaczynski in the forests of western Montana. Rec, Ely, Pruitt and Adams certainly weren't the only photographers on the scene the day Kaczynski was taken into custody.

But the UM students were the only ones to take his picture.

Reksten, now director of photography at the *Oregonian* newspaper in Portland, Ore., remembers how wild the day was. It began with a call from Tom Cheatham,

then a visiting professor at UM who was freelancing as a producer for NBC in eastern Montana, where the FBI was involved in another event making national headlines, the famed standoff with Montana's *Freemen*.

The buzz around the FBI camp outside the small town of Jordan was hot. Cheatham told her: The FBI was about to arrest the Unabomber outside the small town of Lincoln.

Reksten barely had time to think before her phone rang again. The *New York Times* was calling. It needed two photographers for a highly secret mission, the editor told her. The paper had received a tip, and it was critical neither Reksten nor the photographers tell anyone about the assignment.

Reksten smiled. "You mean the Unabomber?" she asked.

There was a stunned silence on the other end of the line. "But nobody knows," the voice finally protested.

Reksten headed into the outer office. Ely, who was working as an intern for the *Missoulian*, plus Pruitt and Adams, were there. Cheatham's phone call tipping Reksten off meant she didn't have to keep

the story a secret from one of them.

Quickly, Pruitt and Adams signed on as freelancers for the *Times*, and Ely hitched a ride to shoot for the *Missoulian*. They drove the 80 miles to Lincoln, located the driveway to Kaczynski's cabin where other members of the media had assembled, and began their wait.

Rec's Subaru was overheating as it raced to Lincoln. He pulled up to the little media circus and found his three colleagues. No one was sure what was happening. Cars had come and gone all day, the others told Rec. No one knew if Kaczynski was there, or had been taken someplace else.

As they spoke, a white Ford Bronco came out of the trees and passed by.

The windows were tinted and you couldn't see inside. Two local high school students who were hanging around shouted, "That's him!" and jumped in their car.

None of the other photographers and journalists at the site took the bait. The four UM students huddled. Ely thought he could make out

— Continued next page

(Top) Making of a UM legend: Photojournalism students (left to right) Derek Pruitt, Bruce Ely, Greg Rec and Steve Adams celebrate their scoop in this image that ran in the summer 1996 *Montana Journalism Review*.

the silhouette of a man “with hair sticking up all over the place” in the back seat. They decided to break with the pack and follow. Pruitt and Adams climbed into one vehicle, and Ely joined Rec in the Subaru.

The Bronco made a stop at a motel in Lincoln, where a man — dressed more like a rancher than an FBI agent — exited the vehicle and went in a room for a moment. He returned, and the Bronco pulled onto Highway 200. The convoy — the two high school students, Rec and Ely, then Pruitt and Adams — followed.

“We were guessing if it was them, they’d be going to either Great Falls or Helena,” Ely said. “We had an hour to an hour-and-a-half drive in front of us, and it was going to be embarrassing if all they did was pull into a Burger King drive-through to get a hamburger or something.”

On Flesher Pass outside Helena, the Subaru began acting up again. Pruitt and Adams pulled out and passed as Rec and Ely slowed to a crawl.

“It got so bad I had to put it in first gear,” Rec says. “I’m sure Bruce was kicking himself for not staying with Steve and Derek.”

When the Subaru inched its way to the crest of the pass, the Bronco and two trailing cars were nowhere to be seen.

“Put your seat belt on,” Rec told Ely. “I’m putting it in neutral and we’re going to float down.”

“We went much too fast,” he goes on, “and took corners ... well, not responsibly.”

But they did catch the convoy before it reached Helena. Then, in one of the many oddities of the day, the Bronco took a right and the car carrying the two high school students kept going straight.

“To this day, I don’t know who they were, or where they went,” Rec says.

“But we stuck with the Bronco.”

By the time the Bronco pulled up near a nondescript office building in Helena, the UM students had convinced themselves they were probably farther from Kaczynski than they had been all day.

“We still didn’t know if he was in the car,” Rec says. “And by then we didn’t think he was. It just seemed like if Kaczynski was there, there would have been more cars, maybe highway patrol cars in front and back or something.”

Two men in flannel shirts and jeans exited the Bronco.

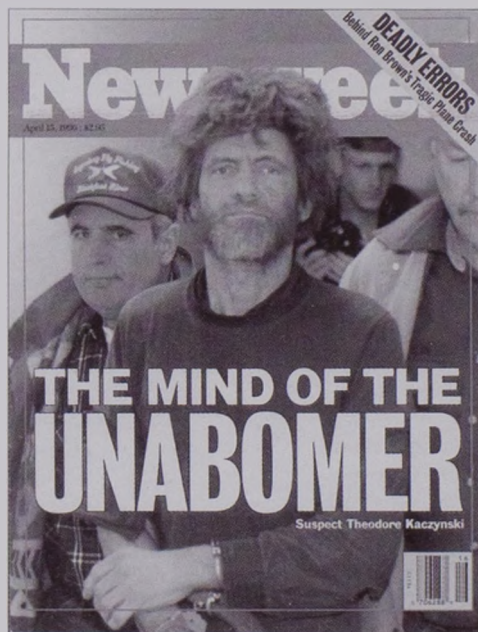
And then they opened a rear door, and Theodore Kaczynski — handcuffed, his unkempt hair shooting in thousands of directions — appeared.

The four UM students scrambled out of their cars. As the day had turned to dusk on the trip from Lincoln they had put faster film in their cameras and attached flashes.

They backpedaled down the street as the two FBI agents marched Kaczynski about 100 yards to the doors of the office building. They continued shooting pictures through the building’s windows as the Unabomber and agents waited for an elevator. The elevator doors opened, the trio disappeared inside, and it was over.

Well, not quite.

“We just assumed the doors had locked behind them,” Rec says. But a couple minutes later a janitor walked through



This April 15, 1996, cover photo was taken by UM’s Derek Pruitt. Another UM student, Bruce Ely, can be seen in the background. Also note the different spelling of “Unabomber.”

the door, and the students were back in business. They located the FBI office on the third floor and knocked, but no one answered.

“Steve said he needed to use the bathroom,” Rec says, “so we found the men’s room, but it was locked.”

Adams pressed his ear to the door. He could hear voices.

“That’s when we realized we weren’t the only ones who needed to go to the bathroom after the drive,” Rec says. He, Ely and Adams took up strategic positions outside the door so that, no matter which direction the people inside exited, one of them would have a head-on view, and Pruitt positioned himself further down the hall.

Which is how Bruce Ely made the cover of Newsweek — not with a photo, but in

one. “I chose the wrong spot,” he says, and ended up in the background of the magazine’s cover photo, taken by Pruitt.

This was in the days before digital cameras, and the four still had to develop their film and transmit their images — Pruitt and Adams to the New York Times, Ely to the Missoulian and Rec to the Denver Post, the paper he had been freelancing for earlier in the day and that had quickly hired him again for the Unabomber assignment.

They decided to head to the Helena Independent-Record, which they would offer a picture to in exchange for the use of its facilities.

There, the strange night would keep getting stranger.

First, the I-R’s photo editor wanted nothing to do with them.

“At one point, he told us he didn’t have enough chemicals,” Rec says, and the four were headed out the door to locate a one-hour photo place when the managing editor, who had overheard the conversation, stopped them.

“Do you really have photos of the Unabomber?” the man asked. “I’m telling you, we do,” Rec replied.

The M.E. turned to his photo editor. “Soup the film,” he told him.

Their first responsibility was to the newspapers that had hired them for the day, but after that, the four knew they might be able to sell the photos to other places.

They turned to Reksten, plus Missoulian photographers Kurt Wilson and Michael Gallacher, for advice. Wilson and Gallacher gave them the number of a picture agency in New York City, and also told them that they should offer photos to the Associated Press. Just make sure AP only allowed newspapers to use the pictures, and banned magazines, they said.

But the fellow they talked to at AP told them he would not keep magazines — which otherwise might pay good money for the photos — out of the loop. AP would do it for newspaper staff photographers, he said, but not freelancers.

“The first decision we made was that, whatever we did, we’d do it together,” Rec says. They would sell their images as a package deal and split any money four ways.

They called the New York agency, and agreed that, after the three newspapers they were working for and the I-R had run their shots, the agency would have exclusive rights to sell the pictures. The four would receive 60 percent of any selling price.

When AP called back and said it had reconsidered, it was too late.

Journalism school updates Unabomber saga

While most people would feel nervous receiving a letter from the Unabomber, for UM journalism graduate student Dan Testa it was cause for jubilation.

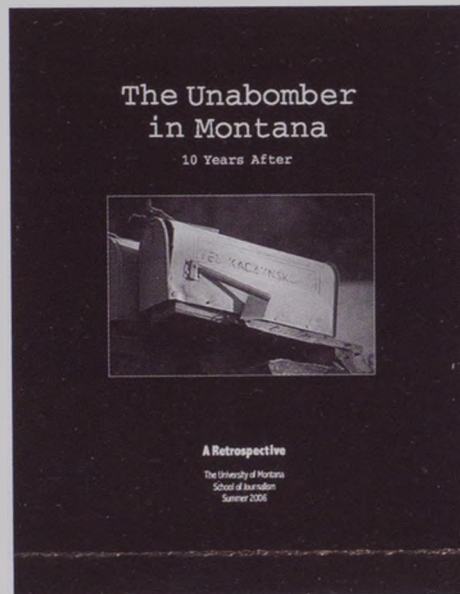
The letter arrived at UM's journalism school in March — right before Testa attended Associate Professor Sherry Venema's feature writing class. That class, along with Teresa Tamura's advanced photojournalism students and Keith Graham's design class, spent spring semester producing a 52-page, full-color publication commemorating the 10-year anniversary of Ted Kaczynski's arrest.

The nine-page Kaczynski letter was neatly handwritten and included meticulous footnotes. Written on legal-sized paper, it became one of the centerpieces of the UM project.

"We got the idea from the University of Nebraska," Venema said, "which had done a gorgeous publication about 40 years after the publication of 'In Cold Blood' by Truman Capote and its impact on this little town in Kansas. At a faculty meeting last fall, Jerry Brown, our dean, said we should do something like this about the Unabomber anniversary."

The UM publication finished printing in July and will be distributed to accredited journalism schools around the country, friends of the journalism school, donors and the student authors, among others. Copies also will be distributed in Lincoln, where Kaczynski lived.

Students delved into media coverage of the Unabomber saga, interviewed Kaczynski acquaintances, recreated the FBI manhunt and examined current



This new student-produced J-School publication can be found online at <http://www.umt.edu/journalism>.

attitudes toward Kaczynski's 35,000-word manifesto. The student publication is online at <http://www.umt.edu/journalism>.

Venema said her students updated and expanded the Unabomber saga with their publication, including stories on the whereabouts of Kaczynski's cabin (the FBI has it in the Sacramento, Calif., area) and who now owns the land near Lincoln where he lived. Students also managed to get interviews from people leery of the media, such as Lincoln librarian Sherri Wood, who had befriended Kaczynski.

Testa had written Kaczynski to ask for an interview, but expectations were low for any sort of response. In the

surprising letter, the convicted domestic terrorist wrote of his distrust of the media and how he found journalists to be dishonest:

"I've learned by experience that there is a technique that journalists use: They contact a potential interviewee and tell him that they want to give him a chance to tell his side of the story, or they tell him that they want to be objective and get at the true facts. Then when the poor sucker falls for it and gives an interview, the journalists slant their story to suit their own purposes, often very much to the disadvantage of the interviewee."

Kaczynski wrote that he would agree to an interview if the UM project investigated a 1999 book, "Unabomber: the Secret Life of Ted Kaczynski," which Kaczynski claims "consisted mostly of lies."

"Of course we weren't going to do that," Venema said, "but Dan (Testa) ended up writing a story not only about his life in prison, but also about the letter."

She said another student, Paul Brohaugh, also received a letter from Kaczynski. Brohaugh used the letter to write a story about the Manifesto.

She said the publication was an excellent learning tool for UM's journalism students. It allowed them to brainstorm story ideas, do interviews, work with photojournalists and undergo successive rewrites.

"So it was a very real-world experience," Venema said. "I'm just delighted with the final product." 🐾

— By Cary Shimek and journalism school Web reporter Sarah Swan

"The guy threatened my career," Ely says. "Said we'd never work in this business again."

Before the night was over the president of AP was on the phone to the four. They were sorry, they told him. They had tried to offer pictures, but without the standard magazine ban, their images would have been useless to them later.

"We still really didn't know what we had, because we knew by the time Kaczynski was arraigned the next day, everybody would have pictures" Rec says.

Ah, but by the next day, Ted Kaczynski didn't look like a disturbed hermit anymore. He'd been cleaned up, his hair was combed, and he was in an orange

prison jumpsuit.

Newsweek bought exclusive rights to the UM students' photos for a week for \$26,000, and over the years Ely estimates they've split more than \$40,000.

"It's funny," Ely says. "I just got a check the other day for something that happened 10 years ago. Now, textbooks are buying them."

All four are full-time newspaper photographers: Adams with the Pittsburgh Tribune-Review, Pruitt for the Glens Falls (N.Y.) Post-Star, Rec at the Portland, Maine, Press Herald and Ely at the Oregonian, where he works for Reksten.

At photojournalism conferences, other photographers still recognize their names

because of all that transpired on April 3, 1996.

"The four Unabomber boys," Rec says. "It's frustrating sometimes, because we've all been involved in big stories since then. In 2004 I was in Iraq twice, and the second time I was there was when that mess tent was blown up and 22 people were killed. It's odd to do something that intense, and still be known as the Unabomber photographer."

But everybody loves the story. It was a spring afternoon, a Wednesday. A day four UM students got the shots the world wanted — and nobody else had. 🐾

— By Vince Devlin

Award Helps Disadvantaged Students—

UM has received nearly \$500,000 to help economically disadvantaged students get the education they need for careers in health care fields. The funds were awarded to UM's College of Health Professions and Biomedical Sciences by the Health Resources and Services Administration, an agency of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The funds will provide scholarships for graduate and professional degree students in the college's three schools: the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation Science, School of Social Work and Skaggs School of Pharmacy, which includes the Biomedical and Pharmaceutical Sciences and Pharmacy Practice departments. For more information about the college, visit <http://www.health.umt.edu>.

Academy Established in China—Two UM law school adjunct professors traveled to China this month to help inaugurate the Xiamen University Law School Zheng He-Marco Polo Academy. The UM educators, David Aronofsky and Kristen Juras, were among the first to present courses created to bring students to Xiamen from different parts of the world to study pertinent policy issues in an international summer-school setting. Aronofsky, who is legal counsel for UM and lectured at Xiamen University in 2005, helped design the academy's programs. He also taught "The U.S. Legal System," a course involving the study of key Supreme Court cases that collectively illustrate how the system is supposed to function. Juras, co-author of "Law of the Sea in a Nutshell," is in China teaching "International Law of the Sea and Oceanic Legal Policy" with Xiamen University Professor Kuenchen Fu, a world-renowned scholar in international oceanic law. Xiamen University Law School is designated by China's Ministry of Education as a national excellence center in international law.

Fulbright Whisks Student to Denmark—UM graduate Devon Wootten has been awarded a Fulbright U.S. Student Scholarship to study Scandinavian languages and literature in Denmark. Fulbright Scholars are selected on the basis of their academic or professional achievement, as well as demonstrated leadership potential in their fields. Wootten received a master of



fine arts degree in creative writing with an emphasis on poetry from UM this year. His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Fence*, *The Colorado Review*, *Aufgabe* and *Backwards City Review*. While in Denmark, he will translate the poems of Danish poet Sophus Claussen into English. After studying in Denmark, Wootten, who is from Farmers Branch, Texas, plans to pursue a doctorate in comparative literature at the University of Iowa.

Health Center Renews Accreditation—UM's Curry Health Center has again received a three-year accreditation from the Accreditation Association for Ambulatory Health Care. The health center, which serves more than 13,000 students at UM, was first accredited by AAAHC in 2000. To earn the accreditation, CHC passed a series of rigorous and nationally recognized standards for the provision of quality health care that are set by AAAHC. Each health care organization seeking AAAHC accreditation undergoes an extensive on-site, peer-based survey of facilities and services.

Solar Power for Hurricane Victims—The UM Environmental Studies Program has provided a portable solar power system to help in rebuilding areas of the Lower Ninth Ward of New Orleans that were devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Len Broberg, director of the UM program, traveled to New Orleans in May to deliver the solar power system, which he constructed. It will be used in a project with Kansas State University, the Tulane City Center and Project Locus. The portable system will provide solar power for tools used to rebuild the House of Dance and Feathers, a community museum of Mardi Gras Indian history, and the home of museum owner Ronald Lewis, which is located on the same site. "Our goals are to provide electrical power to a community in need and to model the practical use of solar power," Broberg said. "We want to encourage people to think about solar power as they rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf Coast. More solar power means less greenhouse gas emissions." After the Lower Ninth Ward construction project is completed, the portable solar system will be used by community-based organizations in the area for various reconstruction and educational purposes. ☀

Art exhibit—through Aug. 19.

"Landscapes along the Lewis and Clark Trail," Meloy and Paxson galleries, depicts scenes in Montana and Washington, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday. Information: Montana Museum of Art and Culture, <http://www.umt.edu/montanamuseum>.

Wildflower gardening—July 25, free, 7 p.m., Nature Adventure Garden, Fort Missoula. Information: Montana Natural History Center, 406-327-0405, <http://www.montanaturalist.org>.

Lecture—July 25, "The Aesthetics of the Japanese Garden" by Yuriko

UM Events

Saito, Rhode Island School of Design, 7:30 p.m., Gallagher Business Building Room 123, free. In conjunction with the Environmental Ethics Institute "Exploring the Landscapes of Environmental Thought" at UM through July 28. Find a complete schedule at <http://www.umt.edu/ethics>. Information: UM Center for Ethics, 406-243-5744.

Blue Mountain Observatory—July 28, open house if the sky is clear. Free open houses are scheduled the third

and fourth Fridays of July, August and September. Observing begins about one hour after sunset. Call Diane Friend at 406-243-4299, for weather and cancellation updates. Map and directions online at <http://www.physics.umt.edu/BlueMountain>.

Saturday Discovery Day—July 29, "Big on Bugs," noon, Montana Natural History Center, 120 Hickory St., Missoula. Meet live insects and learn about where they live and what they do. Free with Montana Natural History Center admission. Information: Montana Natural History Center, 406-327-0405.



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