

# Unabomber's Criminal Collectibles Up For Auction

by KATHY LOHR



U.S. Marshals Office of Public Affairs/Flick

The manual typewriter that Ted Kaczynski used to type most of his Unabomb documents, including the "Unabomb manifesto." It was seized by the FBI during a search of his cabin in April 1996.

May 24, 2011

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## 'The Hermit On The Hill'

Ted Kaczynski was a brilliant math professor at the University of California, Berkeley, who abruptly resigned. In the 1970s, he moved to Lincoln, Mont., where he built a small cabin. Known as "the hermit on the hill," Kaczynski learned to assemble bombs in the woods, and for more than 17 years he sent them to targets across the U.S. — from university professors to computer stores and airlines.

Three people were killed and more than 20 injured in the attacks.

In 1995, newspapers published the Unabomber's 35,000-word manifesto that would ultimately lead to his capture. A tip from Kaczynski's brother in 1996 led the FBI to the Montana shack where officials found bombs, chemicals and notebooks full of data about his notorious life.

The federal government is holding an unusual auction. It's selling the possessions of criminal mastermind Ted Kaczynski, better known as the Unabomber. He made bombs in a remote cabin in Montana and sent them across the country targeting scientists, computers and airplanes.

Kaczynski's bombs killed three people and injured dozens. Now officials are selling his property online.

The Unabomber eluded federal officers from 1978 — when he sent his first package bomb — until 1996 when a tip from his brother, David, led the FBI to a remote shack in Montana where Ted Kaczynski was arrested. The case was one of the longest and most expensive in FBI history.

— Kathy Lohr



Enlarge

AP/Flickr

A composite shows the iconic sketch of Ted Kaczynski released by the FBI and, years later, his hoodie and sunglasses, now up for auction.

"It was significant because it terrorized this country for 18 years," says Albert Najera, U.S. marshal for the Eastern District of California.

After Kaczynski pleaded guilty to setting 16 bombs and was sentenced to life in prison, the courts looked into disposing of his assets to pay \$15 million in restitution.

"Now clearly we don't expect to make anywhere close to \$15 million," Najera says. "But whatever it is that we get back will, in fact, go directly back to the victims."

The most popular items so far? The iconic hooded sweatshirt and aviator sunglasses depicted in the Unabomber police sketch for so many years, handwritten and typed copies of his 35,000 word manifesto, the Smith Corona typewriter he used and academic records from Harvard.



the picture show

### Photos: The Unabomber's Personal Effects For Sale

### 'Murderabilia'

Najera says the Unabomber captivated people because he's one of the country's first modern-day domestic terrorists.

### Other Auctions Of Offender Belongings

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"It changed the way that we got on the airplanes. It changed the way that we dealt with mail coming into our institutions," he says. "It was very significant at the time and still is."

Some are glad the auction is moving forward. Others aren't happy Kaczynski is getting more notoriety. But it's clear regardless that these "murderabilia" auctions generate a lot of attention.

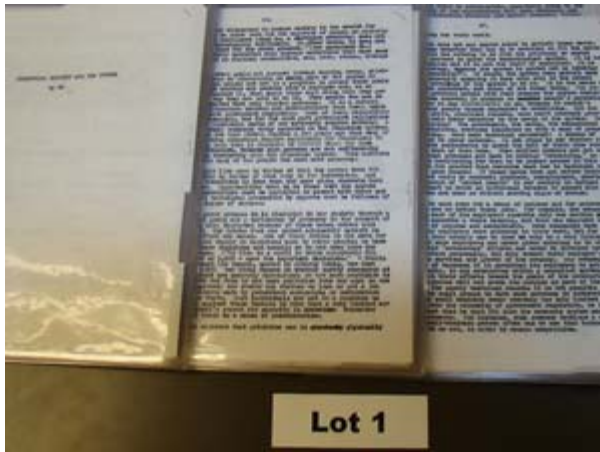
"A lot of these people have found a place in pop culture," says John Hickey, a consignment director with Heritage Auctions. "They transcend quote

'criminals.' "

Heritage, based in Dallas, has sold Bonnie and Clyde "wanted" posters, John Dillinger's wooden gun, and letters from Lee Harvey Oswald. Hickey says they're generally high-ticket items.

### So Who's Buying?

"The collectors I suspect are going to be almost universally male — and guys certainly over 40 and maybe 50 and fairly affluent, I suspect," Hickey says. "And they're going to want to have something that they can pull out at a cocktail party or whatever and make conversation with."



U.S. Marshals Office of Public Affairs/Flickr

In June of 1995, Kaczynski sent his manifesto, "Industrial Society and its Future," to *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, threatening to mail more bombs if the papers didn't publish the manuscript. After much debate — and an FBI recommendation — they published.

A few crime memorabilia websites already exist, but these kinds of items are not generally available on eBay anymore.

David Schmid, a professor at the University at Buffalo, is the author of a book about serial killers in American culture. He says these auctions raise questions about whether they promote criminals — or whether they help the victims.

"So people who participate in it are basically having to sort of be honest with themselves and say, 'I'm interested in this material, not for any justifiable reason, just because I find it fascinating,' " he says. "And that's something a lot of people are not prepared to do. So that's the reason murderabilia and something like the sale of Kaczynski's possessions makes people nervous."

Schmid says he has no problem with the sale as a way for victims to get some compensation. The initial bidding on Kaczynski's personal items was slow, but it has picked up. The auction runs until June 2 — and experts say serious bidders aren't likely to get involved until the last couple of days.

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