

CHAPTER XVI

Every journalist who is not too stupid or too full of himself to notice what is going on knows that what he does is morally indefensible. ¹

- Janet Malcom

L.M. Singhvi... relates the anecdote of an Eastern European journalist who said:“... our newspapers, like those of the rest of the world, contain truths, half-truths, and lies. The truths are found on the sport pages, the half-truths are found in the weather forecasts, and the lies are found in everything else.” ²

- La Jornada

It must be the very first thing you learn in journalism school: Why do research when you can make things up? ³

- David Gelernter

At the end of Chapter I we saw how Serge F. Kovalski and Lorraine Adams of the *Washington Post* lied about my “hospital experience” by misquoting my mother’s Baby Book. The *New York Times*, too, lied in its May 26, 1996 article about me. The author of the article, Robert D. McFadden, wrote that the Unabomber was described by a witness as having “reddish-brown hair.” But the description that the FBI obtained from the witness in question stated that the Unabomber had reddish-*blond* hair. So why did McFadden make it reddish-*brown*? Obviously because he found it inconvenient that I didn’t fit the description of the Unabomber. Since the fact that the Unabomber had reddish-blond hair had been massively publicized, it is scarcely conceivable that McFadden’s error could have been inadvertent.

In the very next paragraph McFadden makes another statement that has the earmarks of a conscious lie. He states that when the Unabomber was spotted by the witness he “panicked” and “fled.” There was no basis for this statement. The Unabomber’s coolness in leaving the scene had already been publicized.

Many journalists do not hesitate to lie to individuals in order to get material for stories. As an example I quote the following from a letter from Sherri Wood, librarian at Lincoln, Montana:

“[O]ne day a reporter came in [to the library] from the Sacramento Bee and asked for an interview and we told him no. Then he asked us for just some general information about you and the arrest, and the town, just for background information. He said that it would

be off the record. I said ok, and went to file books as we talked. After a while I heard Mary ask him why he was writing if this was all off record and then he said he had changed his mind and decided to put it on record. We both immediately shut up and then asked him to leave, after we told him what a rat we thought he was. He did then go on to print an article and made it sound like I gave him an interview voluntarily. ... I do not trust the press”

Unmistakably conscious lies about concrete facts are relatively infrequent in the media. False statements are extremely common, but it is clear that many of them are simply the result of negligence, and it is often impossible to distinguish the intentional falsehoods from the negligent ones.

In the May 26, 1996 *New York Times* articles about me, I counted at least 42 clear errors of fact, in addition to the two intentional lies that we cited earlier. To give just a few examples: The *Times* states that my father “loved to go hunting.” To my knowledge he hunted once, and only once, in his life. The *Times* states that my mother was “familiar with science.” In reality she doesn’t know as much science as the average fifth-grader. The *Times* states that the car I bought in 1967 was used. In fact, it was new. The *Times* has my father’s employment history badly garbled . ¹ Etc., etc., etc.

Other national news sources didn’t do much better than the *New York Times*. Thus *Time Magazine* wrote that I had “an outhouse out back” and a root cellar below my cabin, that I had volumes of Thackeray, that I sometimes stayed inside for weeks at a stretch ¹¹ (all of which are false). . . the errors just go on and on and on.

The errors we’ve just been citing are probably inadvertent ones that resulted merely from excessively sloppy reporting, since it isn’t clear what motive the media would have for lying in these cases. But when false statements are made that tend to incriminate me, or tend to make me seem repellent or despicable, it is often difficult to tell whether the falsehoods are accidental or malicious. For example, when *Time* reported that I had “bomb manuals” in my cabin ¹² (which is false), were they lying purposely or were they just relaying false information that they had received from some FBI agent? When *Newsweek* wrote, “Ted continued to take handouts from his brother - a few thousand dollars in money orders over the years,” was the falsehood intentional or only the result of sloppiness in collecting facts?
¹³

Thus far I have been discussing only false assertions made by the media themselves concerning concrete factual matters. But there also have been falsehoods of other types. One of these types I call the “irresponsible quote.” A newspaper or magazine protects itself from the accusation of falsehood by means of little phrases like “Jones said...” or “according to Smith...” For example, the *New York Times* wrote: “Butch Gehring . . . said he once heard [Ted] complain about his costs rising to \$300 from \$200 a year,” ¹ which is false. The *Times* also quoted a former neighbor of mine, [Le] Roy Weinberg, to the effect that as a kid I “didn’t play,” ¹ a statement so implausible on its face that it should have aroused any reporter’s suspicion. What is much more serious, the *Times* quoted irresponsible statements that tended to incriminate me: “Stacie Frederickson, a Greyhound agent in Butte, remembered ticketing Mr. Kaczynski - ‘a geeky-looking guy’ - about 15 times on intercity buses south to Salt Lake City or west to the Coast.” ¹ Frederickson’s statement is false. “At a Burger King

restaurant next to the bus terminal in Sacramento, Mike Singh, the manager, remembered [Ted]. He was carrying what appeared to be an armful of books. He had a sandwich and a cup of coffee and left. Mr. Kaczynski took a room at the Royal Hotel, next door to the bus station. A desk clerk, Frank Hensley, remembered him because he stayed there periodically in recent years, usually in spring or summer, for three days to a week at a time. He used the name Conrad to sign the registration book... ”¹ Singh’s and Hensley’s statements also are false. If Frederickson, Singh, and Hensley didn’t simply invent their stories, then they have confused me with someone else. In earlier chapters we discussed many other false statements about me that have been quoted in the *New York Times* or other national news sources, and - it must be emphasized - there have been so many others (even in the *New York Times* alone) that it would be impractical for me to try to mention all of them. I haven’t even tried to count them.

As experienced journalists, the *New York Times*’s reporters and staff writers are well aware that, especially in highly publicized cases, there are a great many people who will make statements that are false or grossly distorted, either because they are stupid, or because they want to see their names in the paper, or for some other reason. Yet the *New York Times* and other national and local periodicals have quoted the uncorroborated words of any jerk who has taken it into his head to talk to the media, and they have done so without warning their readers that the quoted material is highly unreliable.

Among the large numbers of unverified statements that are available, do the media select for quotation those that give a story the slant that the editors want? They probably do, though it is difficult to prove it. It is worth noting that almost all of the false statements that have been published about me in periodicals of national circulation have been negative or neutral; only a rare few have been positive.

There is yet another way in which the media purvey falsehood, and in this case there cannot be the slightest doubt that intentional slanting is involved. Journalists will make negative statements about an individual that are so vague that there is no way they can ever be definitely proved or disproved, yet by repeating such statements over and over again throughout an article they can give their readers a decidedly false impression of the individual in question.

Robert D. McFadden’s article in the *New York Times* provides an excellent example of this technique. The article appears under the headline, “The Tortured Genius of Theodore Kaczynski.”¹ In reality I am neither tortured nor a genius. McFadden proceeds to assert that in my Montana cabin I “watched dying embers flicker visions of a wretched humanity.”¹ I did nothing of the kind. The next paragraph states that mathematics was the “sole passion of [my] life” and that it was “suddenly dead.”¹ Actually, mathematics was never the sole passion of my life, and my interest in it declined not suddenly but gradually, over a period of years. McFadden then describes my undergraduate days at Harvard as “humiliating.”¹ They had their bad points, certainly, but I never felt that they were humiliating. He describes the lines at the corners of my mouth as “obstinate,”¹ but there is no rational evidence that they have anything to do with obstinacy. In his fifth paragraph, McFadden speaks of my supposed “instabilities,” “obsessions,” and “rigidities”¹ without presenting any rational evidence that I was unstable, obsessed, or rigid, and he goes on to say that I

“deteriorated” until my family “did not recognize” me,¹ which is sheer fantasy. The article rambles along endlessly in the same vein.

Most of these assertions are so indefinite that it would be virtually impossible ever to prove them false. How would one prove that one has no “instabilities” or that one has not “deteriorated?” The words are just too vague. It might be possible to disprove a few of the assertions if one wanted to take the trouble; for example, I might be able to document that fact that mathematics was never the sole passion of my life. But I would have to devote several pages to this seemingly trivial point, and in doing so I would look ridiculous because I would appear to be making a mountain out of a molehill. I would look even more ridiculous if I tried to prove that I am not “tortured”, since the word was never meant to be taken literally anyway; it was used only for its emotional impact. Yet emotional language and indefinite assertions of the kind used by McFadden, when repeated over and over, can quite successfully portray an individual as a repellent sicko.

Needless to say, the *New York Times* is not the only periodical that uses this technique. The method is applied quite generally in the news media.

Before my arrest - that is, before I had the opportunity to compare what I know to be the truth with what the media say - if someone had told me how dishonest the media are I would never have believed it. Since my arrest I have talked with a number of lawyers, investigators, jail personnel, and law enforcement officers who in their daily work have seen the difference between what they have personally experienced and what the media report, and they have all told me that most journalists have little regard for truth and little hesitation about embroidering their stories. As one very able lawyer expressed it to me, “These people are animals - animals!” See Appendix 7.

Why do journalists stretch the truth as far as they do? For one thing, the news media are supported mainly by advertising, and to sell advertising space they need a large audience. They know that the public is more attracted by a dramatic story that portrays someone as a hero or a villain than by a sober, careful, balanced account.

For another thing, the media are controlled by people who are committed to the system because it is from their position in the system that they get their power and their status. Consequently, the media constitute a kind of cheerleading squad for the system and its values. Journalists who don’t cooperate with the system’s propaganda line are not hired by major news outlets and that is why the news media uniformly support the basic values of the system. It is also why they portray as a villain or a sicko anyone who appears to be a threat to those values.

In my case, the FBI quickly succeeded in convincing the media (through dishonest tactics that we will discuss later) that I was probably the Unabomber. Journalists must have realized that my identification as the Unabomber was uncertain, since the FBI is known to have railroaded innocent people in the past, but they knew that they could attract a bigger audience by jumping on the bandwagon and trumpeting to the world the capture of the supposed Unabomber than by publishing a sober account that retained rational skepticism.

¹ Moreover, the Unabomber had attacked the basic values of the system in a strikingly effective way; hence, once they had accepted the assumption that I was the Unabomber, the

media had to maintain the propaganda line by depicting me as a repellent sicko.

During the first months following my arrest I repeatedly asked my lawyers about the possibility of suing some of these people for libel, but they told me that it probably wouldn't be worth the trouble, because the very volume of publicity about me had made me into a "public figure," and the libel laws concerning "public figures" made it very difficult for any such person to win a libel suit.

The statement I made earlier, that the major news media uniformly support the basic values of the system, may be questioned by some readers who notice that it is not uncommon for the media to criticize various aspects of the system. But there is a difference between questioning *aspects* and questioning *basic values* of the system. The media criticize, for example, corruption, police brutality, and racism whenever they appear in the system, but in doing so they are not criticizing the system itself or its basic values, they are criticizing diseases of the system. Corruption, police brutality, and racism are all bad for the system, and by criticizing them the media are helping to strengthen the system.

On infrequent occasions the major news media do allow *cautious* criticism of some of the system's basic values. ² But such criticism is expressed in more-or-less abstract terms that keep it remote from the sphere of practical action. The attitude is always, "Isn't it too bad that such-and-such; but after all we just have to accept it and live with it as best we can." No one is ever encouraged to do anything that might actually upset the workings of the system.

"' If you mean to tell me,' said an editor to me, 'that *Esquire* tries to have articles on important issues and treats them in such a way that nothing can come of it - who can deny it?'" ²¹ - Paul Goodman, *Growing up Absurd*

Criticisms of the system that appear in the media constitute one of the safety valves that help to relieve the average man's resentment; and moreover they provide the illusion of independent-minded journalism. Thus they help to deaden the impulse to real, substantial, fundamental dissent.

After my arrest on April 3, 1996, FBI agents and officials began disclosing to the media massive amounts of information concerning the alleged evidence found in my cabin, and other supposed evidence against me - though much of the "information" was in fact false. Even if all of the information had been true, its release would have been unethical and contrary to regulations. The government itself admitted this:

"The United States acknowledges that government personnel have disclosed to members of the press certain details of the search of Kaczynski's cabin and of the government's investigation. Although there is no evidence that these disclosures were made with the intent to influence legal proceedings [ha!], such disclosures were improper and contrary to Department of Justice policy." ²²

FBI Director Louis Freeh and Attorney General Janet Reno must have known about the massive disclosures to the press within a day or so after they began. In fact, Freeh issued

the following directive on April 4:

“To protect the integrity of this investigation and prosecution, I am reminding you of our ‘bright line’ policy, and there is to be no discussion with the media regarding any aspect of this case. It is not only distressing to both me and the Attorney General, but to every person who has worked so tirelessly on this matter over the last several years, to read and hear investigative information in the press. It is destructive to provide that information and must not continue to happen [sic].”²³

But the disclosures continued for several days. There cannot be the slightest doubt that Louis Freeh and Janet Reno could have stopped most of the disclosures immediately if they had wanted to, because this was not just a matter of a dribble of information leaking out covertly; the disclosures were on a massive scale.² The lawyer who was then representing me, Michael Donahoe, told me that FBI agents involved in the search were openly taking items of alleged evidence from the cabin, showing them to representatives of the media, and explaining (not necessarily truthfully) what they were.² Yet Freeh and Reno allowed the disclosures to go on until, on April 17, Freeh issued a statement:

“I ordered an investigation early this month of whether any FBI employees have leaked investigative information from the UNABOM case. ... Unauthorized disclosure of investigative information or other confidential material will lead to immediate firing from the FBI and possible prosecution.”²

By that time, my attorney Michael Donahoe had already filed a motion to dismiss the charges against me on the grounds that the publicity had irrevocably destroyed my right to a fair trial.² In denying this motion, Judge Charles C. Lovell relied in part on the statement of Louis Freeh that we have just quoted:

“Judge Freeh [Lovell wrote] has ordered an investigation, and he has promised dismissals and prosecution for any government officials releasing confidential information.”²

On August 29, 1996, my attorney Quin Denvir wrote to Robert Cleary, Special Attorney to the U.S. Attorney General and chief prosecutor in my case:

“Dear Mr. Cleary:

“On April 4, 1996 [sic; should be April 17], FBI Director Louis J. Freeh issued a directive stating, *inter al*, that the FBI’s Office of Professional Responsibility was conducting an investigation into the leakage of information regarding the Unabom case and that ‘unauthorized disclosure of investigative information or other confidential information will lead to immediate firing from the FBI and possible prosecution.’ In denying Mr. Kaczynski’s Montana motion regarding the leakage of information, the district court relied upon that statement of Director Freeh. (RT, p. 13.) I am writing to inquire as to whether the FBI Office of Professional Responsibility has conducted its investigation in this regard and whether any FBI personnel have been fired or otherwise disciplined as a result of that investigation.”²

Mr. Denvir has told me that as of mid-October, 1997, he has received no answer to this letter.

It's obvious that Janet Reno and Louis Freeh never seriously intended to prevent the unauthorized disclosures or punish the agents responsible for them. The disclosures were made with the acquiescence (if not the covert encouragement) of Reno and Freeh, because the Justice Department knew that the warrant for the search of my cabin had been issued without probable cause. By trying me in the media and creating a public presumption of my guilt, they hoped to make it difficult for a judge to suppress the alleged evidence seized from my cabin on the grounds that the warrant was invalid.

As long as we are on the subject of the FBI, I can't resist passing along an anecdote that was recounted to me by a police officer whom I believe to be intelligent and reliable, and who told me he was an eyewitness of the events.

A local police agency located a drug dealer in whom the FBI was particularly interested and passed the information on to the Feds. The FBI and the local agency then set up a stake-out around the hotel where the suspect was living and waited for him to come out. After they'd waited for several hours, one of the FBI cars pulled away and drove off. Then another FBI car left and then another. The local police lieutenant who was in charge of the stake-out wondered what was happening, so he took off after the FBI cars, pulled one of them over, and asked what was going on. The FBI agents answered that it was five o'clock and they weren't allowed to work overtime without permission from their supervisor. So they had just taken off without bothering to notify the local police involved in the stake-out.

I am not, of course, in a position to vouch for the accuracy of this account, but I find it easy to believe in view of other evidence I've seen of the incompetence of the FBI. I'm told that most local police forces that have worked with the Feds are contemptuous of them. It seems that the FBI is good at just one thing, namely, propaganda. It has succeeded in creating an image of itself as the world's most effective law-enforcement organization, and, considering the difference between the image and the reality, this constitutes a truly brilliant demonstration of the propagandist's art.

NOTES TO CHAPTER XVI

1. Janet Malcolm, *The Journalist and the Murderer*, Vintage Books, Random House, 1990, p. 3.
2. *La Jornada Semanal*, May 18, 1997, p. 7. *La Jornada Semanal* is a supplement inserted in the Mexican newspaper *La Jornada*. The passage quoted has, of course, been translated from Spanish.
3. David Gelernter, *Drawing Life: Surviving the Unabomber*, The Free Press, 1997, p. 51.
4. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 24, column 4.
5. (Pd) Application and Affidavit for Search Warrant, p. 80, paragraph 154.
6. For example (Hf) *Newsweek*, April 15, 1996, p. 40: "The woman banged on the window, motioning the man away. He calmly picked up the bag and left." Media reports of

the Unabomber's calmness are supported by the FBI's reports of its interviews with the witness. (Nc) Police-FBI Interview of Tammara Fluehe, February 22, 1987, p. 5: "FLUEHE stated that the individual never seemed in a hurry, and walked at a normal pace." (Na) FBI 302 number 12, November 18, 1993, p. 1: "FLUEHE said that when she yelled to GAY the individual placing the device on the ground looked up at her... he then slowly stood up, turned around and walked toward 300 East Street." (Nd) Memorandum of Interview with Tammara Dawn Fluehe on December 16, 1993:

"FLUEHE stated the individual who placed the device ... knew he was being observed, but did not appear to be startled or afraid and the individual slowly turned around and walked away. ... This individual seemed very confident and in no hurry when he left the area."

I am not especially trying to defend the Unabomber's courage. I am concerned only to show that McFadden is a liar.

7. (Cb) FL Supplementary Item #14, letter from Sherri Wood to me, February 2, 1998, p. 1. Early in April of 1998 I asked Jeff Severson, a legal assistant on my defense team, to call Sherri Wood and ask her if it would be alright for me to use the quotation to which this footnote refers. She gave her permission orally. Later she sent Mr. Severson a letter in which she slightly corrected what she had written in FL Supplementary Item #14. Instead of saying that the reporter had "changed his mind and decided to put it on record," she wrote: "He stated he had decided that it should be up to his boss if what we were saying should be off the record or not." See (Cb) FL Supplementary Item #15, letter from Sherri Wood to Jeff Severson, April 8, 1998. There are no other discrepancies between these two letters of Sherri Wood.
8. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 22, column 3.
9. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 23, column 3.
10. Same, p. 23, column 4. The truth is that my father had been working for a Chicago company called Cushion-Pak. In or around 1966, Cushion-Pak sent him to Lisbon, Iowa to start a small branch that was called Iowa Cushion-Pak. Iowa Cushion-Pak was doing well when the parent company called my father back to Chicago. After working for a few years in Chicago for Cushion-Pak, my father resigned and took a job with Foam Cutting Engineers because it was much closer to his house in Lombard. The owners of Foam Cutting Engineers were not the same as those of Cushion-Pak and Iowa Cushion-Pak. In fact, Foam Cutting Engineers and Cushion-Pak were competitors.
11. (Hg) *Time*, April 15, 1996, pp. 40, 41. I never had an outhouse. I did have a root cellar, but it was not underneath my cabin; it was more than a hundred feet away. I had no volume of Thackeray. I could not have stayed indoors for weeks at a stretch even if I had wanted to, because I had to fetch water, cut firewood, tend my garden, gather wild greens, hunt for meat and so forth.
12. (Hg) *Time*, April 15, 1996, p. 41 wrote that my home had "two walls filled floor to ceiling with Shakespeare and Thackeray and bomb manuals." In reality, no wall of my

cabin had more than a single shelf of books; I had perhaps two or three volumes of Shakespeare, not more; no Thackeray; and I had no bomb manuals whatsoever.

13. The quotation is from (Hf) *Newsweek*, April 22, 1996, p. 32. I accepted “handouts” from my parents. Every one of them was matched by an equal handout to my brother, except for the final handouts in 1991, amounting to \$7,700. See Chapter VII, pp. 211, 212 . As to the \$7,700, brother could not have complained that he was getting short-changed, since at that time I renounced all claim to my share of our parents’ estate, so that the entire amount (a matter of some hundreds of thousands of dollars) would go to my brother on our mother’s death. See (Ca) FL #461, letter from me to David Kaczynski, July 20,1991, pp. 8, 9.

I never asked for nor accepted any “handouts” from my brother. In Chapter IX, pp. 260-262, I described how he offered me money for medical treatment in case I needed it and how I declined his offer. In 1985 my brother offered to give me \$200 for bus fare so that I could visit him in Texas. (Ca) FL#302, letter from David Kaczynski to me, April or May, 1985, p. 4. I answered,” Your offer to give me \$200.00 for bus fare is very generous - but I couldn’t accept it.” (Ca) FL#304, letter from me to David Kaczynski, late spring or summer of 1985, p. 2. In late 1994 I asked my brother for two loans totalling \$3,000. My brother did lend me this money, but a loan is not a “handout”. It is true that I was unable to repay my brother at the time when I had told him I hoped to do so, but it is also true that the loan was well secured, so that he was in no danger of losing his money. I changed the deed to my land so that it was held by my brother and me in joint tenancy, and if I had died it would automatically have become his sole property. I also sent my brother notes in which I stated that the land was to become his property if I did not repay the loans by a specified date. According to a local realtor, the land could have been sold for about twelve or fifteen thousand dollars. All this is confirmed by my correspondence with my brother, (Ca) FL#473 through FL#483, and by (Ga) Deed #6.

14. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 24, column 1. There was an article (Hd) *Missoulian*, April 3, 1997 (the *Missoulian* is the newspaper of Missoula, Montana), authored by one Mick Holien, that was based on an interview wit Butch Gehring and his wife Wendy. It Contained the usual nonsense. It is distressing that a supposedly responsible newspaper would publish material like this solely on the word of people whom any experienced journalist should have recognized as chuckle-headed and unreliable.
15. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 22, column 3. A photograph published in (Hg) *Time*, April 15, 1996, p. 46, shows me playing in sandbox in our back yard in Evergreen Park in 1954. I very often played in our back yard, and Leroy Weinberg must frequently have seen me doing so, since his back yard began only a few feet beyond the point where our back yard ended.
16. (Ha) *NY Times Nat.*, May 26, 1996, p. 24, column 1.
17. Same, p. 25, column 1.
18. Same, p. 1.

19. The media often inserted little inconspicuous phrases in their articles that would enable them to claim that they had not actually said that I was the Unabomber, but it is safe to say that most readers scarcely noticed these phrases and received essentially the message that I *was* the Unabomber. For example, (Hg) *Time*, April 15, 1996, p. 37: “The man who seems to be the Unabomber was arrested - another example of the way in which a demon, hitherto concealed, may shrivel when brought into sunlight. The suspect’s family turned him in because they recognized his writings - a killer betrayed by his own prose style.”

Despite the phrase “seems to be” and the fact that I was called a “suspect,” to all but the most careful readers this amounted practically to a statement that I was the Unabomber.

20. See, for example, (Hg) *Time*, August 28, 1995, pp. 50-57, ‘The Evolution of Despair,’ by Robert Wright. The author does hint at practical action, but none that would be in conflict with the basic needs and values of the system.
21. Paul Goodman, *Growing up Absurd*, Vintage Books, 1960, Chapter II, pp. 39-40.
22. (Pb) Government’s opposition to Donahoe’s motion, p. 4.
23. Same, p. 3.
24. (Pa) Donahoe’s memorandum in support of motion to dismiss, Appendix A and Appendix B.
25. For confirmation see (Cf) Letter from Quin Denvir to Michael Donahoe.
26. (Pb) Government’s opposition to Donahoe’s motion, Exhibit C.
27. (Pa) Donahoe’s motion to dismiss.
28. (Pc) Denial of Donahoe’s motion, pp. 7, 8.
29. (Ce) Letter from Quin Denvir to Robert Cleary.