

You Can Eat Your Cake and Have it To

James Fitzgerald

James Fitzgerald led a celebrated career at the FBI, investigating many violent crimes and pioneering his own investigative method, forensic linguistics. In this talk, Fitzgerald leads us down the unique path to his unique career, showcasing how our early experiences impact our later trajectory. Former FBI Special Agent, Criminal Profiler, Forensic Linguistic Lead Investigator for Unabomber Case.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qn_287JXpWQ

Hi everyone, the title of my talk is a nine word proverb.

Some of you may have seen before kind of remember we're going to come back to it, including where the verb placement fits into it.

But basically the talk today is about life experiences on the journey that we're all taking some of us earlier stages.

Some of us, perhaps at later stages.

Some of the interests.

We make in some of the decisions we make down.

In the line which ultimately lead to career choices, we are going to be talking about you because these choices and all affect who you are and what you are.

We're going to start a little bit talking about me just to kind of put some perspective in it for you in that regard.

So this is me, when I went to Penn State, this is my graduation picture and if you don't believe that's a Penn State.

Graduation picture it must be because they all.

There's the old ID card I used to carry within a year and a half.

I was a rookie police officer in Bensalem Township Police Department in Bucks County P.

OK, 11 years after that I'm a rookie FBI agent at Quantico.

Just getting my orders to New York City.

Throw in a graduate degree at Villanova University and one leader at Georgetown University and all of a sudden I'm retired as a profiler as a forensic linguist, but still doing work in with those skills in terms of TV, I was a consulting producer on Criminal Minds.

I also did a show killer profile.

You can see some of them.

Here I did a bunch of media interviews.

Still doing them did one today for Dutch TV and always busy doing various kinds of issues relating to my FBI career.

I've written three books so far, and I've even started a company, a consulting company, doing work there, but in the last few years I found what I'm mostly known for it seems.

Is this guy?

He was a serial killer that plied his trade for 17 years in the US, keeping law enforcement in certainly the FBI.

Very busy and it came to the forefront in the last few years with this Discovery Channel miniseries which is now on Netflix 8 part 8 episodes to it, in which the actor Sam Worthington portrayed.

Me in how the FBI did, in fact, finally identify and capture the Unabomber.

In that particular case I was involved with a particular letter that was written in the early 1970s to a magazine in which a certain odd worded sentence was used and I recognized it from somewhere couldn't quite place it. But then I also saw a 35,000 word manifesto.

Written by this person who wanted to get it published in the media with also that same oddly worded sentence.

And after all those years I finally got involved in this case looking for a guy that came to be known as the Unabomber.

We'll come back to him in a bit, but as far as me and as far as kind of the general topic of.

The talk today.

What did I want to be when I grew up and I wasn't sure I went through high school.

I even sat in some of the same seats.

You may be sitting in here at Penn State scratching my head saying I really don't know.

What I want.

To be or what I want to do?

And people would ask me and my typical response would be, yeah, you know, I'm still not really sure, but I kind of know I don't want to get a job counting someone else is money.

And somehow that was just an end all for me.

I kind of knew what I didn't want to do, but I still didn't know what I wanted to do so.

And actually, I thought I invented that term.

I thought I came up with that on my own because it was kind of important to me and it's just something in my own mindset.

It's just something I didn't think I wanted to do until years later.

I saw a movie and actually an old Disney movie and come from 1960. I saw when I was a kid and it is in fact Swiss family Rob.

Listen, it's a movie about a family that gets marooned on a tropical island and with you know, full of exotic animals and beautiful blue waters and vistas.

And occasionally pirates would show up to they'd be fighting them off it.

Was a set.

Of parents, three sons and later a young woman, Castaway came one board onto the island and.

In one of the scenes near the.

End of the oldest.

Son and this young woman are having a discussion about if they ever get off the island.

What kind of work would they want?

Do and the discussion goes something like this.

You can see Robert Roberta says.

And then the Fritz character not fits.

But Fritz responds that he doesn't want an office job.

Counting someone else is money, and I remember watching this again just about five years ago and saying that's where I got that line from this Fritz character influenced me back when I was a young kid.

Watching this Disney movie, never realizing that's subconsciously how it would all play.

Out so while.

Its provenance was in fact lost on me.

Its importance wasn't.

But we continue from there too.

As about as I remember from my earliest years, my parents would talk about their crime of the century growing up in the early part of the 20th century, and that was the kidnapping of the young son of aviator Charles Lindbergh was the biggest case at the time.

The the early days of the FBI they were involved in New Jersey State police.

It was the biggest investigation going on looking for this young baby.

All kinds of reward posters put out.

There were notes passed back and forth and the bottom line is I wanted my.

I asked my parents lots of questions about it and my dad finally said go read a book about it.

They have them at the library, so my first grown up book ever was in fact a book called kidnapped by Joseph Waller and on at 10 years of age and reading about this investigation, it just fascinated me.

I just couldn't.

I couldn't stop turning the pages.

I probably didn't do some homework that I should have been doing, but I was reading the book and enjoy.

In it, and the part that I remember the most, even as I got older and before I got too much involved, my own criminal investigations and and trying to solve them is there were notes that went back and forth from the kidnapper to the Lindbergh family trying to arrange a money payment.

Whatever the baby was actually dead already, so that's a whole other part of the story, but the man was still sending these ransom notes.

And there was actually forensic linguistic analysis within these within this investigation by people and that part fascinated me more than anything.

Wow, people can look at documents at language and figure out what happened.

Before the term forensic linguistics was even invented, but here in all that's had this case focused on so it was very interesting that I at 10 to 11 years of age this case fascinated me.

But then, within a year or two.

Uhm, I found myself liking enjoying reading the newspaper Philadelphia Evening Bulletin long out of existence, but I would read the comics at first, then do the sports page front, page 2 even as a young kid and I like to read about they had a column comic called Answers to quiz.

Trees and if you want to know something about any aspect of life, you send them a letter.

They may answer it in the paper itself, or you may get a letter sent to you.

So what did I do?

I sent a letter to the evening bolt and it.

It's like the equivalent of Google today, except it took weeks to get your response.

And if you said hey Siri today, it takes seconds to get your response back, then it took.

Weeks so here is the letter that they've sent back to me after I asked them.

Don't ask me why I was curious about this.

What's the longest word in the English language?

Took a few weeks to get back to me.

Here is the letter they sent the actual copy of it, and here's just a summary.

Of what the word is.

45 letter medical term. I'm sure it's been beaten by now by a longer word. I'm not going to try to pronounce it.

I've never used it in conversation in my life, but at 12 years of age I.

I liked having that information I brought into school, shared the teachers.

I thought that was pretty cool too.

So here I am at 12 years of age and again I'm not even consciously thinking of these things, but I'm already showing sort of an interest in in criminal investigations.

I'm showing an interest in language and little did I know that someday, decades later, these would sort of come together and help me solve a pretty major case.

I also enjoyed music back at the time and.

Back in the 60s, a lot of different genre, different singers.

One of them was The Four Seasons.

Here's a song, and yeah, I remember the title.

Of this talk.

Look at the end.

There have my cake and eat it too.

OK I remember those lyrics from back in the day.

And guess who else sang a song with those lyrics in it?

Yes, Bob Dylan.

Lately day you can see the same term lose there at the.

Near the end of his song, or at least one of the stanzas.

Uhm The Statler Brothers.

They kind of did a comical version of this song, in which it you can't have your Kate and Edith 2 clever twist on words.

But the verb formation is kind of the same there if you notice.

But again, growing up in life, it wasn't all just songs and newspapers, and even reading books.

I enjoyed word games.

My mother got me into word games early on crosswords, Scrabble, cryptograms, and we would sometimes argue over who's gonna do the crosswords that day.

So a few degrees later, life continues on Penn State a few degrees after that, a job as a police officer FBI.

My brand new profiler. Where do I find myself in 1995? My first case is a profiler unabom SF.

The Unabom task force UTF for short looking for this guy who's been killing people for 17 years.

He'd already killed three people.

He's already injured about two dozen.

He almost brought down a commercial.

Airliner, luckily he failed.

And you know what?

They had virtually no clues, no evidence at all on this guy.

No fingerprints, no DNA, no hairs and fibers.

The sky was so good, so careful he was a genius.

We knew it going in.

But guess what?

He liked to write.

He liked to write a lot, and his magnum opus was the manifesto, a 35,000 word anti technology treatise.

If you will, but everything evil since the industrial revolution in this in our world, and that's why he had to kill people.

So I was tasked with helping to work this case and put it all together, which is what I did.

I focused on the language.

And I happened to find in the manifesto itself paragraph 185. Guess what I see that proverb from those old songs I remember as a kid remember nothing was easily looked up on Google back then.

But look, the verbs are transposed.

Eat and have it too.

What's up with that?

This guy?

He's made a mistake where he made very few mistakes in his writings.

And then I find a letter written by someone.

I I knew we knew his name 'cause he signed the bottom to a letter to the editor to a magazine.

Look how he ends that particular letter again, that transposition of the verbs.

We were onto something here and we actually used these sentences along with a bunch of other linguistic features for the first time ever to get a search warrant in federal court using language and language alone to get into somebody's cabin. And that's what we eventually did. And here's a comparison of the two sentence how most of us say them, and how.

Both Ted Kaczynski living in this cabin and the Unabomber wrote those same particular sentences and it was this first time ever used in this particular case that language came together in his search warrant and he was of course was arrested.

He was, he pleaded guilty and he's now serving time forever in a little cell.

In Florence, Co in the supermax, he's not sending bombs to anybody anymore, but coming back to you.

I just want to leave you with the.

Fact that you are.

What interests you?

And that's OK.

There's nothing wrong with that.

If you have skills, if you have likes, if you have interest no matter what stage of life you're in, even some older folks out there, you may be thinking of a second career in retirement.

Whatever fall back, look back into your memory banks and look at what you enjoy doing back in the day.

And maybe you can get a certificate.

You can get a degree, you can get some work experience in it and maybe full time.

Maybe part time you even start at the bottom at first, whatever it may be, but you may wind up climbing that ladder someday and getting to where you want to be.

In closing, someday some of you you may wind up solving a major criminal case in this country.

You may invent a cure for disease.

You may you.

You may be a lawyer.

You may be a doctor.

You may invent a widget of some sort.

Whatever it is you want to be, build something, tear something down, fix it as long as someone is willing to pay you for it and it's legal, you may want to count someone else is.

Money, that's OK if you want to do it.

Nothing wrong with it at all, but just focus on the time that you are when you're growing up.

What you really like and this too can come to work for you, and I truly believe you can eat your cake and have it too.

Or is it the other way around?

I suppose it doesn't matter, or does it?

Thank you everybody.

The Ted K Archive

James Fitzgerald
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www.thetedkarchive.com