

Suspect Was Professor's Boyhood Pal

Phil Kadner
Daily Southtown Columnist

1996-04-05

Editor's Note: Dartmouth College Professor Dale F. Eickelman attended junior high school with Theodore Kaczynski in a Chicago suburb in the mid-1950s. (The FBI believes Kaczynski could be the Unabomber.) Eickelman has had no contact with Kaczynski since 1959 and will cooperate with law enforcement officials if so requested, a statement from Dartmouth College said.

The following column is reprinted with permission from the Daily Southtown of Chicago

They were boyhood pals who played chess, rode bicycles to each other's homes and blew things up.

Dale Eickelman went to junior high school in Evergreen Park with Theodore J. Kaczynski, the man FBI agents believe may be the infamous Unabomber.

"We were friends from the sixth to the eighth grades and into our freshmen year in high school," said Eickelman, who now lives in New Hampshire and is a professor of anthropology and human relations at Dartmouth College.

"Ted was a very, very bright individual who was double promoted after his freshman year in high school. Then he went off to Harvard. I only saw him once after that.

"He used to ride his bicycle over to my house, about a 20-minutes ride over some pretty rough terrain, and I would ride my bike over to his house and we would do things together.

"He wasn't exactly gregarious, but he was extremely articulate. I mean, we were about 12 or 13 years old at the time, so I'm thinking back about 40 years now, to about 1954, 1955 and 1956.

"I remember Ted was very good at chemistry and we would do the things that kids do when they're learning about chemicals and what they can do. We would go out into an open field and, I remember Ted had the knowhow of putting together things like batteries, wire leads, potassium nitrate and whatever, and creating explosions.

"We would just blow up weeds, nothing more. I know this is going to cause a problem. But, yes, we would go to the hardware store, use household products and make these things you might call bombs. I remember once we created an explosion in a metal garbage can. Nothing much happened. You wouldn't want to damage the garbage can because your parents had to use it to put garbage in."

Eickelman, however, said that he never thought his friend's actions were indicative of a future Unabomber.

"We were just bright kids who read a lot of science books and experimented, as bright kids did during that era," Eickelman said.

"Remember, TV wasn't available in every household, so inventive youngsters found creative ways to entertain themselves.

"We played chess a lot. And he was very, very good. He almost always won."

Eickelman recalled Kaczynski's parents as being friendly and very interested in broadening their son's horizons.

“I remember his mother, for example, just saying, ‘Hey guys, how about going over to the Little Red School House?’ and she would drive us over there in her car, and we would look at an exhibit or nature display.

“As far as Ted, I wouldn’t call him asocial or unfriendly. But he wasn’t socially affable. He was never the sort of person to share intimacy.

“He impressed me as being a fragile person, although he wasn’t physically weak. In fact, he was much stronger than I was. I remember him being much better at sports, baseball and basketball, than I. And he was much more at ease in those sorts of social situations than I was.

“I seem to recall that Ted actually moved into the community from somewhere else, but I don’t remember where. Anyway, I met him at Central Junior High School and that’s where we went for sixth, seventh and eighth grades.

“We went to Evergreen Park High School together, and we remained friends during our freshman year, but then he got double promoted and we didn’t see each other as often.

“He went from being a freshman to being a high school senior. Then he graduated and went to Harvard.

“I remember Ted as being very good in science and getting top grades in math. I mean, I always got A’s in math, but I had to work at it. Ted just seemed to glide through.”

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The Ted K Archive

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