How The Unabomber's Brother Reclaimed His Identity

Tim Doyle & David Kaczynski

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Would you turn in a loved one, even if it meant they might face death for taking the lives of others? How would you cope if the world tarnished your family's name? Could you find peace amid unimaginable chaos? In this episode, I speak with David Kaczynski, brother of the Unabomber, who faced these questions head on. David shares his journey to reclaim his selfhood, heal through poetry, and advocate for compassion, despite the public and personal battles that forever changed his life.

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Tim Doyle: What's up outworkers. Would you turn in a loved one, even if it meant they might face death for taking the lives of others? How would you cope if the world tarnished your family's name? Could you find peace amid unimaginable chaos? In this episode, I speak with David Kaczynski, brother of the Unabomber, who faced these questions head on. David shares his journey to reclaim his selfhood, heal through poetry, and advocate for compassion, despite the public and personal battles that forever changed his life.

I believe we all have a story that the world can benefit from hearing. And the reason why we share that story is because I think there's most likely at least one person that can benefit from hearing that story because they're going through a similar experience

and that story can act as a guiding force or just that beacon of hope for that person, understanding that they can endure and get through what they're going through. You have a very unique one of one story, I would say. At the onset and as everything unfolded, was there any story or someone else, someone else's experience that you could look to as a sign of solace?

David Kaczynski: interesting. You know, one of my favorite books when I was, well, maybe in college and then I've read it several times since is the book Man's Search for Meaning by Viktor Frankl, who spent some time in a Nazi concentration camp and he talked about even under the worst circumstances, most hellish circumstances, trying to find some meaning or some redeeming value in some way to respond to this experience that would be meaningful.

Tim Doyle: You've had a fair amount of media coverage to talk about your brother, Ted Gazinski being the Unabomber. And you've also written a book titled Every Last Tie, the story of the Unabomber and his family. And what stands out the most to me, I think from your interviews and also explicitly in the subtitle of your book is that it's the story of the Unabomber.

Do you feel like there's a difference between telling the story and your story?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, it's interesting. think, you know, given some of the reviews or online reviews of the book Every Last Tie, it was clear to me it wasn't necessarily the book that most people wanted to read. They were interested in my brother, what got him to that point, and I don't delve deeply into that or into many of his letters to me over the years.

prior to his arrest. I'm talking mostly about our family and the impact on our family. And so it's kind of, I would say it's the story I needed to write rather than the one most people wanted to hear.

Tim Doyle: What was your relationship with Ted like growing up and then into adulthood?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, was very positive. mean, he was seven and a half years older. So he was definitely my big brother. I looked up to him because our family really had a sort of working class, depression era family with an intellectual bent. And Ted sort of took that to another level. mean, he skipped two grades in school, went to Harvard at the age of 16.

He had an IQ of 166 and so really looked up to my brother very much. And there were many ways in which he was, I remember many incidents that sort of displayed his kindness toward me. Some I've written about in the book. I remember is one I don't talk about all that often is I was sick in the hospital for just a couple of nights and when I came home, Teddy tried to give me his coin collection, his prized collection. I remember mom saying, Ted, you don't need to do that. Davey knows that you love him. You don't have to give him your coin collection. It was only years later that I sort of began to put pieces of the puzzle together. And mom had told me about Ted's hospital experience.

She described as a traumatic experience when he was nine months old. And so he might have been particularly sensitive to the suffering one experiences as a result of a health problem. I had cut my hand in a little accident and I had to stitch it up and sew a nerve together. And Ted was apparently deeply moved by that. But that's just one of many stories that indicate his kindness. Certainly there was a bond later.

When he decided that he was going to quit his job as a university mathematics professor and look for land up in Canada, he invited me to join him. And I thought, wow, that's really cool. So we spent an entire summer together. I think it was my junior year at college. Unfortunately, that land deal didn't work out.

David Kaczynski: I ended up graduating from college, moving out west to Great Falls, Montana, just because I loved the area and the nature surrounding it. And lo and behold, Ted decided to follow me there. He said, what do you think about buying some land together? And again, I was very, very pleased that my brother felt such a bond for me. Didn't quite realize it at the time maybe, but now I realize I was.

probably his closest friend when he still regarded me as a friend.

Tim Doyle: So taking things back to when you were still kids, at a young age, you clearly perceived that Ted was different from others, so much so that you asked your mom what was wrong with him. What gave you the impression that Ted didn't like other people?

David Kaczynski: For one thing, he didn't have friends. He was kind of very bonded to the family, but like even if, like, I mean, the four of us, Mom, Dad, Ted and me, the close family, when an uncle or an aunt would drive up or a neighbor would come and knock on the door, Ted would like run out of the room like he was almost afraid.

But he definitely did felt it was an intrusion. He didn't sort of we had this narrow family circle and Ted didn't welcome a lot of other people into that and I think it was those two things his lack of friends is Kind of being shut down around people outside the family that made me ask my mom what was wrong with Teddy and that was when she explained to me about his childhood hospital experience, a trauma that he had experienced at nine months being in the hospital for I think about 10 days. And in those days, hospitals were not very welcoming to families of children. They only allowed our parents to visit. I think it was twice a week for two hours. And mom really felt that Ted had felt abandoned.

and that it created, even though he might not remember that experience, after all he was only nine months old, that it had kind of affected his life going forward, the way traumas are known to affect people.

Tim Doyle: So getting more so into the psychological component later on in Ted's life as well, you write in your book, he might've been ready for the academic challenges of a place like Harvard, but he was not ready developmentally or psychologically. Mastery of learning, which Ted surely had, has little to do with the master of life or of self.

The broad reach of the rational mind doesn't extend far enough to embrace the complex challenges involved in becoming a person. Do you think Ted's focus on intellect was a coping mechanism for his lack of overall personal development?

David Kaczynski: It could be, and in some ways, it might have actually helped to inhibit his development. For one thing, it took him out of context. mean, it took him away from a peer group his same age, thrust him into an elite college like Harvard, where many of the kids, especially in those days, were upper class. We were working class. Ted was much younger. So I think there's that element.

Later in life, we had a lot of sort of philosophical discussions, mostly through letter, but sometimes in person when we would meet. And for me, at that point, I had kind of really embraced the arts. I loved when our parents took us to the Art Institute. I just really loved that. And Ted had a very I think in some ways his view of life and other people ended up being narrowed by his devotion to science and mathematics. I remember him saying, talking about, I think it was called the verifiability principle in positive philosophy, and the idea was that anything that couldn't be verified was meaningless.

How do you verify a Picasso or a work by Dickens? I mean, you could sort of measure it against a sort of historical record or whatever like that. But it's like, OK, it's purely subjective. It's purely emotional. We could dismiss it in our search for truth because it can't be verified objectively. And of course, that sort of really embeds and solidifies a very strict subject-object.

dichotomy. I remember reading Martin Buber's book, and Thou, in which he talks about there being two kinds of relationships, a little simplistic, but I-it relationships and I-thou relationships. So it was like Ted had sort of circled the wagons and for him it was the I-it relationship that sort of governed his thinking.

David Kaczynski: And the Aidao was one that he struggled with, struggled with. you know, had a tremendous, I mean, one of his critiques of technology was that it, in the long run, it gives us this illusion of being able to control nature, but ultimately it encroaches upon our personal autonomy. We become cogs in a system, gears in a system, just...

part of the system instead of autonomous free decision makers. So I'm quite in sympathy with some of Ted's analysis of technology, but I think his terrible limitation was his inability to understand relationship or the quality of relationship or what you can derived from relationship. Now if you took human beings out of it, maybe that was part of what he loved about nature, that it was all interconnected. I'm not sure, he never verbalized that, but it struck me that maybe in nature he saw something that he couldn't quite negotiate in his relationships with other human beings.

Tim Doyle: Harvard plays a crucial aspect in your brother's story from another component. Can you walk me through exactly what happened with the psychological experiments and also what the bigger impact of that was?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, and of course we don't absolutely know what the impact was, but it certainly has kind of a smoking gun. When Ted was I think 17 years

old, maybe in his sophomore year, he was recruited for a study by a very famous psychologist then at Harvard, Henry Murray. And the experiment that he participated in once a week for a period of three years was unethical.

even by the standards of the time, even by standards of the sort of Nuremberg protocols, there was, you know, the guinea pigs, the human guinea pigs were not, they were misled about what they were really studying. And in fact, it looks, appears that they selected people for the study who were already somewhat socially alienated. So they got sort of, what would you say? Vulnerable candidates that they determined through a psychological inventory and then they subjected them to emotional abuse basically by attacking not only their ideas because they were encouraged to talk about their philosophy of life but in very strident ad hominem arguments. were put down, they were shamed, they were treated badly and the study was aiming to show, at least as I understand it, how people would, very bright young alienated men would respond to emotional abuse. Put downs.

I didn't know about the study until Ted's defense attorneys told me they knew something about it. our family didn't know anything about it. My mother remembered that she had had to sign a permission slip because Ted wasn't yet 18. He couldn't sign himself into the study. And mom's thought at the time was, Teddy, these psychologists might help Teddy.

They might, you know, he has some social adjustment problems, maybe they help him work out how to relate to people better. In fact, it was just the opposite. And when Ted had, when I graduated from college, we'd met up at our parents' home at one point. And I remember Ted making a comment one time that took me aback. He said, you know, Dave, I think really smart people tend to have a sadistic streak.

And I was, you I didn't exactly argue with him. I wondered if it might be true, but, you know, looking back, it certainly seems like a telltale sign that maybe he had internalized some of the, some of what he saw in the behavior of these psychologists who were subjecting him to emotional abuse by attacking not only his ideas, but his very appearance.

David Kaczynski: So there's some speculation, strong speculation, that the study might have been part of a CIA-funded experiment. It was funded by the National Science Foundation, I think. Or, yeah, I believe that was what it was. some of the... We happen to know that that same government entity had funded a program called MKUltra, which was again secret abusive experiments of prison inmates and this perhaps college students. In fact, Henry Murray, who designed this experiment, this project had been employed in the OSS.

which was the forerunner of the CIA after World War II, before the CIA was established. So, I mean, there's a lot of telltale signs, you know, and again, I'm not one to say this is what caused Ted to become the Unabomber, but it's just, if you look at the multitude of possible factors, his childhood experience, skipping two grades, being alienated, being out of place.

Being teased a lot in high school, understand, then subjected to this experiment at Harvard, you could maybe understand why Ted had difficulty trusting people.

Tim Doyle: So adding all of that up and the culminating point, when did Ted start to really disassociate with you and your family and society as a whole and pretty much just go off the grid?

David Kaczynski: Well, he went off the grid before he kind of rejected the family. I remember when he wrote a letter to our parents. He prefaced it by saying, you're probably going to be really angry at me, but I've decided to quit my job and try to live a primitive lifestyle. My parents weren't angry. It's interesting. did give the kids us.

Ted and me, a lot of free range to do what we wanted to do with our lives. I mean, we both had Ivy League educations in here. I was working at a smelter in Montana and Ted ended up living off the grid and so forth. I remember mom's reaction at that point was a little different than mine. was, if you remember, well, you're.

quite a bit younger than me, but during the 60s, there was this phenomenon called dropping out. It was part of the hippie movement, the counterculture of the time, and I thought, well, Ted's just like these other folks dropping out, know, living the life he wants to live rather than the one that's been planned or set forth for him by others or by society at large. And I thought, well, this is tremendous. Ted's...

Ted's doing his own thing. And I remember mom telling me, she's more not angry, not necessarily disappointed, but worried. She said, you know, I think maybe Ted's running away from a world, a society, from people that he doesn't know how to relate to. And I don't know that that's going to be the best way to deal with that.

I think mom had a lot of wisdom in many ways. It was a few years after that that Ted, I was then teaching high school in a small town in Iowa and I got a letter from my parents. They had included a letter from Ted that was just, couldn't believe it. I it was like filled with anger and all kinds of recriminations against our parents.

David Kaczynski: You know, I guess I thought, okay, he's living alone. He must not be very happy. Life hasn't turned out like he wants to. What do we do when we're miserable? Sometimes we look for people to blame. And maybe that's all Ted was doing. And I wrote Ted a letter and said, you know, our parents love us. You know, look what all they did for us and look how much freedom they gave us. And, you know, there's no reason you should be so. I'm sure you just lost your temper.

You know, you should apologize. And I got a letter back from Ted that sort of repeated everything he'd said, basically underscored it and said, Dave, if you're going to defend our parents, our terrible parents, I'm going to have to cut you out too. And so at that point, he sort of forbid me to talk about our parents or try to defend them.

And so I had to kind of walk this tightrope. mean, he kind of stopped communicating with mom and dad, and they were very concerned. How's Ted doing? And so he and I corresponded. And so I had to keep alive both relationships with my parents, whom I loved, and Ted, I loved, but who, you know, Ted wouldn't communicate with.

David Kaczynski: So.

And again, I thought about what mom had said about the childhood hospital experience. Of course, I didn't know about the Murray experience. thought, well, maybe he really did feel abandoned as a child and blames our parents for that. Maybe this is what's going on. So the best thing I can do is just try to be as good good brother as I can.

Tim Doyle: So taking Ted's writing in a different direction and before getting into the larger impact of it, what are your thoughts on the content in your brother's manifesto, Industrial Society and its future?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, I mean, he makes this really telling argument that I kind of agree with, that the sort of the lure of technology is control. I mean, it gives us more and more control. We can move about, maybe we can cure some diseases. We can, but part of the cost is that you're turning the world into an it. You're objectifying everything. I guess that's more my philosophical approach than Ted's argument, but Ted's argument I think is really salient and has made converts of a lot of people in realizing that in the long run we build a system that erodes our autonomy and that becomes an end in itself. Technological development.

One of my favorite writers is Kazuo Ishiguro and his last, I think his last book was, I can't remember what it was, but it's about a robot. In a culture where there's genetic engineering to improve people's intelligence and you begin to realize, hey, you don't have any choice about this. You don't want to be a dumb person in a society of people who are smarter than you.

And this was actually a kind of argument that Ted had made that, you know, we don't, technology could really threaten our humanity by turning us into...

David Kaczynski: robots in a certain sense. Programmed.

Tim Doyle: read it for the full time just recently. I had always heard about it and you know, learn about it piece by piece just saying how there was a lot of truth in it. But reading it for myself, I mean, I think there is a lot of truth in it and a lot of it is played out in real time as we live right now.

David Kaczynski: AI, artificial intelligence, so many things happening. Yeah, no, think this was before the internet. had written this before social media, before the sort of elevation of...

propaganda. Anyway, yeah, I mean, think it's well worth reading.

Tim Doyle: Yeah, if you just if you focus just within the content, it is a must read and something that I found very interesting for someone so alone, so isolated and focused on his personal autonomy. Ted speaks in the first person plural a lot. It's always all we're trying to do here. What we're trying to get at. We argue. Why do you think he always uses we instead of I.

David Kaczynski: Well, I'd just be speculating, of course. It would be nice to think that he genuinely felt he was speaking for a wider group of people. think part of his strategy was to try to suggest that there was actually what he called it a freedom club. was, FC was how he signed.

some of his communications stood for Freedom Club and the idea that, this is a movement. I I think that was his hope that it would become a movement. So that was part of it. I think he also wanted to disguise the authorship too. mean, he thought it wouldn't be regarded as so credible if it was just coming from a lone hermit out in the hinterlands of Montana.

Plus, I mean, he didn't want to be discovered, I don't think either.

Tim Doyle: So getting into that, your wife Linda never met nor spoke to Ted, but was the pivotal piece that jumpstarted the investigation and planted the idea that Ted could be the Unabomber. What did she see that you and your family could not see about Ted?

David Kaczynski: There had been a slight reconciliation with mom after our father's death. He actually called to, from a payphone somewhere in Lincoln, Montana to console her, try to console her on the day of my father's memorial service. He resumed writing to her after many years and then...

His angry memories took over and he wrote this really, really, again, a very abusive letter to our mother. She sent me that letter asking, know, Dave, could this be true? What's going on with Ted? And I showed the letter to Linda. This was before we'd even heard of the Unabomber. This was maybe 1990.

one, something like that. And she's reading this letter. She looks up from the letter and says, David, your brother's sick. You know that, don't you? I mean, he's mentally ill. And I said, no, you don't understand. This is the way he is. This is the way he thinks. And she says, no, people who are healthy in their minds don't think this way. And she persuaded me at that point to take the letter to a psychiatrist we knew, someone she knew through her college, had a couple of meetings with the psychiatrist who said he couldn't diagnose Ted based on just some letters, but he had a strong suspicion that he was diagnosably mentally ill, probably with schizophrenia. At that point, we were looking at are there ways we could help Ted or get him into treatment or get him some help and...

Again, that was kind of dilemma because the law would, well first of all, Ted really did not want to acknowledge at all that he had any mental problems or that he needed help to try to force him into treatment would have been very difficult.

David Kaczynski: according to the psychiatrist, not even possible at that point because we would have had to prove in a court of law that Ted was a danger to himself or others, which he probably was at that point, but we had no evidence of that. So some time goes by, we're beginning to hear about the Unabomber, the Unabomber's Manifesto. It hadn't been published yet, but there was a sort of...

summaries of its content as an anti-technology scribe. Linda was the first one to approach me and say, you think this could be your brother? mean, your brother's, we know he's anti-technology. You've told me that many times. He's very angry and he's mentally ill. I mean, this could be the unibioly. And at first I was very, very dismissive.

To my knowledge, had never been violent, ever. And so, and of course there was an element of denial there. I didn't want to even consider the possibility. But Linda

encouraged me to read the manifesto when it finally was made public. you know, from the very first, I had to acknowledge that she might be onto something. That the voice and the manifesto kind of sounded to me like my brother's voice.

I don't know if I was projecting that, know, my fears, you know, seeing my fears, what I feared the most, or I couldn't quite pin it down because of denial. last thing I wanted was for my brother to be a... to be the Unabomber. But as time went on, I remember eventually I got to the point where I told Linda I thought it was based on careful study of 100 or so letters I'd had from Ted and the manifesto, including a phrase that kind of jumped out at me wherein he described modern philosophers as not quite living up to their reputation as cool-headed logicians.

David Kaczynski: I'd never quite heard that phrase before except in one of Ted's earlier letters. At that point I acknowledged it might be a 50-50 possibility. So at this point we're facing a horrible dilemma. Any choice we make could lead to somebody's death. We do nothing. Some innocent person picks up a bomb, is killed.

if it turns out to be Ted, is the Unabomber, would have to go through life realizing we were bystanders. We suspected we did nothing and as a result we have this person's blood on our hands. Of course the other hornet, the dilemma was the realization that whoever the Unabomber was, if he was caught and convicted, would be a prime candidate for the death penalty. What would it be like to go through life with my brother's blood on my hands? It felt like I'll get this in. Hell, no exit. No way out of this dilemma.

David Kaczynski: What do I do? And of course, it wasn't just me. mean, Linda had a sense of responsibility. We were talking about it constantly. She's a philosophy professor. We talked the ethics of the whole situation. And ultimately, I needed something a little bit more than his voice or that one phrase to move forward. And Linda got the idea of trying to find a professional linguist who could.

look at Ted's letters or some of Ted's letters and the manifesto and give us an idea. So she had a childhood friend Susan Swanson who was a private detective. We didn't tell her where the letters came from. She might have assumed it was from one of Linda's students, but at any rate she found somebody, Clint Van Zandt, former FBI agent who was analyzing manuscripts in this way and took him about a month but he came back, I guess he recruited some other experts and they said they thought there was a 60 % chance that the letters had, the author of the letters was also the author of the manifesto. So it wasn't just my projections or our fears. We sort of had realized.

we were really facing a tough situation.

Tim Doyle: So on April 3rd, 1996, your brother gets arrested in his Montana cabin and it also gets leaked that you were the one who connected the dots on all this. You thought that your identity was going to be confidential for someone like yourself who enjoys your privacy and solitude in nature and just overall peace in life. How did you process now your entire life quickly thrust into the public eye and being examined.

David Kaczynski: yeah. I mean, we had this hellish dilemma and we made a decision and then we ended up in a sort of a hellish realm. It was leaked. And so the

media surrounded our house. Our elderly mother, Linda and myself, we were in this house. The media really was.

They had like a siege. were around 24 hours a day for a week, hoping to get a glimpse of us. I remember Linda closing all the drapes. At one point, there was even somebody who got up on some guy with a TV camera who got up and tried to film something inside the house through our kitchen window. And I remember Linda putting carpets over every window on the ground floor of the house. It was such a private experience trying to process.

David Kaczynski: what Ted had done, what we had done, the choices we had made. And I didn't have words to describe that, certainly. I think I would have rather walked through fire than face those cameras at that point. And it felt like we were sort of falling out of the world. I mean, what are people going to think? We're family members of the most wanted person in America, a serial murderer.

And I'm the brother who turned in his own brother. I think there was a late night comedian who called me the Unismitch or something like that.

how do you begin to explain what this is like for you?

David Kaczynski: I think it was our attorney, it was our attorney who had helped us contact the FBI. Susan Swanson, Linda's friend had gotten us with an old law school buddy of hers, Tony Bissegoli. he was the one who started to sort of work on me and say, David, you I know you don't want to talk about this, but you know, your brother will be...

The story told by prosecutors in this case will be of a monster. If your brother's life is going to be spared, you're going to have to be part of that. You're going to have to humanize him. You're going to have to talk about his mental illness. You're going to have to talk about your family. You're have to talk about the impact on your family of turning in a loved one and then having that loved one executed.

So oddly enough, know, looking back, I mean, though it felt like a horrible betrayal that our names were leaked to the media, on the other hand, it really, that public knowledge really did give me a voice in advocating that my brother's life be spared. And so for the next year and a half, that was our main concern, to speak publicly.

David Kaczynski: to assist and work with the defense team too that had reached out to us.

David Kaczynski: to sort of give some background about my brother's struggles. We connected them with the psychiatrist who told us that he thought my brother was mentally ill and so forth. Yeah, in some ways, I look back on the whole situation, these hellish no exit boxes that we found ourselves in and realize, well, okay.

You know, my public outing as the person who had turned in his own brother actually gave me some moral standing to speak out against the execution for Ted and ultimately against the death penalty more generally. And the fact that Ted's life was spared gave him a chance to live, if not a happy life, at least a meaningful one. In prison, he was able to publish a couple more books analyzing technology. He developed lots of correspondence with people who were taken with his ideas and even for the first time

in his life formed a relationship with a woman and ultimately he and she considered themselves married, although they were never able to consummate that in the normal sense. They felt that close, that bonded. So in some ways, I look back and say, given the worst possible thing, that my brother was the unit bomber, looking back, I think the outcome was about the best it could be.

Tim Doyle: I find it.

David Kaczynski: But maybe I'm only telling myself that to make myself feel better.

Tim Doyle: I find it fascinating that being locked up in prison led to Ted being the most integrated into society in his whole life. Like you had said, writing books, started having connections with people and talking with people and then also getting a girlfriend. What are your thoughts on that? That him being locked up against his will turned into him being the most connected he's.

ever been.

David Kaczynski: That's interesting, isn't it?

David Kaczynski: You know, maybe he needed that kind of buffer, that sort of place, that refuge to withdraw into, not to call prison a refuge, I'm sure it has hellish aspects to it, but a place where he could always withdraw, be in control. I mean, he didn't have to answer a letter. didn't want to answer. Certainly he didn't answer any of my letters over the years or mom's letters before she passed away.

So in a strange way, and again, maybe I'm only trying to make myself look on the bright side of things. Maybe Ted felt enough safety in that circumstance to negotiate relationships with people.

often mediated through his ideas, which were really important to him, and at least in one case, on an emotional level with a woman who cared for him genuinely.

Tim Doyle: Your mom told you when you were a kid, you must never abandon your brother because that's what he fears the most. And you just said how when Ted was in prison and you would send him letters, he wouldn't respond. Did it ever feel like your brother abandoned you?

David Kaczynski: Hmm.

David Kaczynski: It would have meant a lot to me to be forgiven or at least to be understood for the decision that Linda and I had made together to go forward and alert the authorities about our suspicions. I think it would have been good for Ted to be honest with you. I mean one thing I've looked for in reading the books he's written is some indication of remorse for harming people. I mean, they killed three people, numbers of people were badly injured. Can you imagine the family members? I mean, at one point there was the wife with the little baby in the room of, I think it was Thomas Moser, his second to last victim.

was opening what he thought was a Christmas present on Christmas Eve and the little baby squirmed out of the mom's arms. She followed the little girl out of the room and then boom, Thomas Moser was blown to bits. Gosh, talk about trauma. What is

that little child, you what kind of memories does that little child carry forward, let alone the mother?

I looked for some sign that had experienced some remorse for what he had done. I don't think there was any. I never found any, nothing in his writings at any rate to suggest that he was remorseful. And I think without some degree of regret for the harm he caused to people, it would be really hard for him to forgive me. I think that had to come first.

Tim Doyle: James Noll wrote the afterword for your book and there's an interesting paragraph that he writes on schizoid personality and I just wanted to read it. He or she is trapped in an excruciating dilemma of sensitivity and hunger for meaningful intimacy versus a fear of humiliation and exploitation by others' emotions. Social engagement is desperately needed.

Yes, this desire is threatening and panic inducing. Such individuals inevitably choose the only reasonable route available, isolation and inwardness. It is a path that followed to intently leads to so much distance and inaccessibility that there can be no external checks on one's well-being. The only self-validation is the echo of inner struggles. So you've dealt with a lot in your life and you've had your life publicly examined on a national scale and can't even imagine how isolating and challenging that could be. Do you think any of the components that I just talked about there that James Noel describes on schizoid personality, obviously you don't deal with a schizoid personality disorder, but just the components of it. Do feel like you went through that?

David Kaczynski: Yeah, it's interesting. My life has been sort of...

veered back and forth between some extremes, you could say. I I lived a kind of counterpart Ted's life for eight years in the desert as a kind of hermit without electricity, without running water for a couple of years without even...

little building to live in.

David Kaczynski: And then, of course, I get married. I begin working at a runaway homeless youth shelter. And all of a sudden, I have to perform on a national stage. And then I intentionally, in the aftermath, take up a position in public advocacy against the death penalty as the of at least titular leader of New Yorkers against the death penalty.

which involved telling the very personal story over and over and over again with the view to sort of awakening people to problems with capital punishment. I actually think my time in the desert was good for me. And you see this in some spiritual traditions. mean, people go to the desert, and to bet they live in caves for a while.

I think the two are kind of, for me at least, that balance is needed. And sometimes when I was out there in the public, I almost felt like invisible. I've got to choose my words very carefully, but kind of like people are really, do they really see my heart? Do they see my soul? I don't know. But I would sometimes, during the worst of these crises, I would remember my time in the desert.

and the quiet and the peacefulness there. It became a kind of psychological refuge for me. I remember when I came out of the desert in 1989 to marry my old high school

sweetheart, Linda. She said, Dave, you seem different. You're changed. Like, who are you? But I think the changes she saw, at least from her point of view, were positive changes.

And I think they were.

David Kaczynski: Sometimes social interaction can sort of reinforce one's sense of ego, ego, ego. You're out in nature and your ego kind of melts in with the whole openness of the horizon, of the place. You're in relationship, but you're not an actor in the same way that you are in school or in business or in politics.

So I think in some ways that was really helpful for me. I don't think it was helpful for Ted. I think his anger got more and more extreme the more isolated he was.

At least that's how it appears from the outside anyway.

Tim Doyle: he did not turn away from the unfathomable fallout connected with his brother. Rather, he turned toward it and then inward to find the courage to open his heart. And so I want to explore that component of you turning inward and how writing poetry played a role in that process. Why do you think poetry was the thing that you gravitated towards for grappling with everything that you've gone through?

David Kaczynski: It's really interesting. I was a literature major in college and for years I sort of dabbled. I'm not very self-disciplined, but I dabbled at writing fiction. at one point at the home of a friend, I picked up a book of poems by Rilke in translation, of course. I it was the Duino allergies. And I was very struck by it. And I was like, wow.

I had been reading philosophy. My wife is a philosophy professor, so that's part of our connection, our interest in philosophy. And Rilke seemed like, wow, there's so much philosophy in this writing. I really love that. But kind of spiritual, know, it went way beyond the I-it into deep meditations of a spiritual character.

But I still didn't really try my hand at writing poetry. It was a strange time in the year or so after my brother's arrest to realize, okay, I kind of had put up a wall against the media. Our attorney helped us by letting the media know, don't talk to David unless you talk to me first. well, you know, so I kind of had some distance there. I think...

neighbors or even some friends kept a little bit of their distance too and I'm not sure exactly why. I mean it could be any number of things. could have been they saw the media, they didn't want to intrude on our privacy since we seemed to be insisting on privacy or maybe it was just the stigma of my brother's terrible crimes. They maybe helped kept them at at bay a bit or maybe they just didn't know quite what to say to us, whether they should talk about it or not talk about it. Anyway, it seemed like people were kind of keeping their distance from us and I felt strangely lonely. And one of my wife's colleagues, actually a husband of one of my wife's colleagues, a poet by the name of Malcolm Willison, was walking by in the street. I was painting our house. needed a...

David Kaczynski: paint job and he looked up at me, hi David, how are you? And he seemed so friendly, so open, so relaxed. I wasn't used to that. And I said, hi,

Malcolm. And he said, hey, we're having a poetry gathering in the community in a couple of days, you want to come? And I mentioned, well, I don't write poetry. And he said, well, you don't have to, you could just come and read it, see what you think.

And so I thought about it and I said, yeah, let me just go. A little bit different, a distraction, a different place to go to. And after a couple of monthly meetings I went to, I realized, you know, maybe I could do some of this as well. I'll always be so grateful to Malcolm for his invite and for his encouragement. I started producing some poetry.

And it was only sometime later that I realized that for me it was almost like a kind of therapy. know, without being confessional like you might be in a support group, I could still talk about my deepest feelings in a way that felt like meaningful beyond what's purely personal. And so...

That's when I, and then I ended up with a, you know, there's a more formal poetry seminar at the University of Albany. I ended up applying for that and being accepted. And so I had these two different poetry groups that I was part of. And as I was going through my advocacy against the death penalty in New York, you know, my sort of downtime, my quiet time was to sit and write poems. And the fact that we had, you know, I had a meeting every two weeks got me to, time to write something. And it ended up really, really being tremendously healing and satisfying for me. And those, I'm still part of, in contact with poets in both of those communities.

David Kaczynski: So, and I, know, looking back, I still try to write some fiction, or I have tried to write some fiction, you know, I tried with the memoir as well, but in some ways I sort of think that, you know, poetry is just really where...

David Kaczynski: I am most creative, I guess.

Tim Doyle: Writing plays a central theme in your family with your brother's letters and then the manifesto and now writing and writing poetry has played a big role in your life with your healing process and your own internal exploration. But is there any part of you that also feels like your writing is a way to almost try to counteract Ted's writing?

David Kaczynski: I don't think so. mean, some of it kind of meditates on my relationship with Ted. There are poems that sort of almost address him directly or are about him directly. And I think, you know, I mentioned that Ted and I had philosophical differences that we discussed over the years. He was very much into logic and positivism and verifiability that we see in science.

scientific exploration and I was very much into the arts and thinking, you know, the real search for truth has to pass beyond the implicit or explicit duality that we see in science and mathematics.

So in some sense, yeah, it shows the way our paths of thinking are sharply forked with Ted taking the more objective.

David Kaczynski: logical side and myself taking the more creative direction.

Tim Doyle: So getting into some of that poetry and your book is titled A Dream Named You, that's your poetry book. Your poem titled Excavation. I'm digging a basement under my house, hour after hour of sleepless labor. Night is consumed with

digging until I drop exhausted to sleep. Then I dream about digging. Luckily the stuff on my shovel vanishes or I'd have no place to put it. I'd only be moving dirt around. Even so, I make no progress. But every once in a while, I noticed something different, a tunnel, a recess, or an antechamber that I don't recall making. So that's a great poem that I love of yours. And then from your poem lost, you write, the worst madness is being homeless inside yourself. And then your last poem aspiration. I aspire to heal faces collapsed in hard knowledge.

What do you mean there when you say, I aspire to heal faces collapse in hard knowledge?

David Kaczynski: gosh. Well, I mean you could certainly look beyond my brother's life and his sense of despair.

even brought about by technology and his own personal problems to look at a world that's beset with division, violence, tribalism.

David Kaczynski: How do we get beyond this us and them? How do we get beyond our belief in self as opposed to other rather than being with other?

So I guess that would be part of the aspiration I've had in reaching out to some of Ted's victims and reaching out to other people who've been victims of violent crime. Even my work at the youth shelter with the kids, many of whom had gone through terrible traumas, abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse, parents on drugs or in prison. How do we... get beyond and find a kind of sort of antidote, the part of human nature that embraces rather than pushes away the other. part of, going back to Boober, the part that really understands the I, thou, and our sense of connection with other people.

David Kaczynski: Yeah, heel faces collapsed in hurt knowledge. There's a lot of that in the world today. How do we open ourselves? How do we open our hearts? How do we treat people with respect and kindness? We're on the verge of an election, which is just, again, so angry, so divisive. How do we understand?

our basic commonalities as human beings. How do we focus on what's the best in us rather than on what we fear?

Tim Doyle: David, really appreciate you for coming on the show.

David Kaczynski: Thank you for the opportunity, at least to give voice to the personal story. And hopefully it would have some meaning beyond the personal. That's my hope, both with the poetry and with my advocacy.

Tim Doyle & David Kaczynski
How The Unabomber's Brother Reclaimed His Identity
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