

Shrink Rap Radio #78, February 28, 2007. The Legacy of Dr. Timothy Leary

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews R. U. Sirius
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Jo Kelly)

Excerpt: *“I miss him more than anybody because Tim at his best could make you feel like the entire world was a fabulous party and that he was the gracious host. And the energy that you could get from hanging out with him for a day or a week could last you for months. It was almost mystical; it was almost like one of those gurus who puts his finger on your third eye and suddenly you are illuminated. Except he hated all that bull: and it was just his joy de vivre, but it was so powerful. And he could be a real cretin sometimes too.”*

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest **R. U. Sirius** reminiscing about his friend, collaborator and mentor, the inimitable and infamous Dr. Timothy Leary. R. U. Sirius (born Ken Goffman) is an American writer, musician, and cyberculture icon best known as co-founder and original Editor-in Chief of the first popular technoculture magazine, Mondo 2000, in the early 1990’s. His most recent book is *True Mutations: Interviews on The Edge of Science, Technology, and Consciousness*. His other books have included Mondo 2000: A User’s Guide to the New Edge, Design for Dying, The Revolution: Quotations from Party Chairman RU Sirius and Counterculture through the Ages: From Abraham to Acid House. In the 1990s, he wrote columns for Wired News, ARTFORUM International, and the San Francisco Examiner, and was a regular contributor to Wired Magazine and his writing appeared in Time, Rolling Stone, Esquire, Vanity Fair, San Francisco Chronicle, Salon, Village Voice and many other mainstream and alternative publications. He is currently the host of the “NeoFiles” and “The RU Sirius Show” podcasts on the MondoGlobo Network at www.mondoglobo.net and he’s a regular contributor to the online magazine 10 Zen Monkeys which you can find at www.10zenmonkeys.com

Finally, R.U. Sirius is teaching an 8-week online course about the work of Timothy Leary from Feb. 26 to April 27, 2007 which can be located at www.maybelogic.org/sirius.htm

Dr. Dave: R. U. Sirius, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

R. U. Sirius: Thanks for having me on.

Dr. Dave: It's a thrill for me because I've followed your by-line over the years in a number of publications; I think I was a reader of the magazine that you published some years back, Mondo 2000.

R. U. Sirius: Mondo 2000, popular in the early 90s actually.

Dr. Dave: Right; and then I've seen your by-line in Wired magazine; I'm a habitual reader of Wired. And then I'm a big fan of your two podcasts – like me you've got two podcasts – and I have to say they are right at the top of my podcast listening, so that's why I'm so excited to have you on here.

R. U. Sirius: Thank you.

Dr. Dave: And you are one of very few guests I have had who is not a psychologist, not in the world of psychology or mental health per se.

R. U. Sirius: I've been to a psychologist.

Dr. Dave: (laughing) OK, I think that counts. Also the reason why I wanted to have you on here is that first of all we are going to be discussing a psychologist who is well known to the world, and infamous and controversial psychologist, namely Timothy Leary. Also I know you to be a close observer of the culture and of popular culture and of a lot of stuff that intersects with psychology and sociology and culture and all of that. And I have invited you on because I see that you are going to be teaching an online course on Timothy Leary; and so I'm really interested to get your take on Dr. Tim and what his contribution has been, the plusses, the minuses and so on.

Let me start out by asking you what's led to you to want to offer that course?

R. U. Sirius: Well I have been involved with Leary's theories I guess you could call them, or the Leary-esque paradigm since the mid 1970s when he released something called his *Future History* series: the main two best known books from there being *Neuropolitics* and *Exo-Psychology*. And it seemed like he was moving into new ground. He was a proto-transhumanist or proto-posthumanist really working at the idea of technologies leading towards an actual evolution in the human species.

Dr. Dave: So is that what you mean when you say transhumanist?

R. U. Sirius: Well transhuman comes from the idea of the transitional phase, between human and post-human. All these terms are wavy because

even the post-human is probably basically still a human being. But it's a concept basically of expansion of the performance in some way, of what a human being is capable of as well as how she feels and that sort of thing. Leary was one of the first real proto-transhumanists and started dishing out his ideas at a very interesting time in his life.

His project came into focus at the very time that his reputation was at the bottom of the barrel. I don't know how many people know the biography of Timothy Leary; but part of my motivation in doing this course was the fact that there was a biography written about Leary that came out about 6 months ago by Robert Greenfield, that was very negative and also very well written and poignant at the same time, but which showed no understanding of Leary's project. As a result of the publication of that book there were reviews in all the major liberal intelligentsia outlets: Harpers magazine, the New Yorker, the New York Times.

All of them basically used the book as an excuse for attacks against Leary's character, which all in all may have some justification; but also for attacks against his intelligence, and his value as a philosopher and a thinker. In that case the author of the book and the authors of the articles that commented on the book were entirely clueless; and simply had no idea that he worked with ideas that people today are working with at the edge of technology.

Dr. Dave: Yes, well let me back you up, because I suspect that many of our listeners may be younger than you and me: I don't know how old you are – I know how old I am (laughing).

R. U. Sirius: I'm as young as I feel; I'm 54 actually. I'm a Boomer.

Dr. Dave: OK, you're a Boomer. I'm a Post-Boomer, that's as far as I'll go – or a Pre-Boomer, I'm not sure which – a Post-Boomer.

R. U. Sirius: Right.

Dr. Dave: I think a lot of our listeners probably only know of Timothy Leary in some vague way.

R. U. Sirius: They may even think of a baseball player named Tim Leary.

Dr. Dave: Oh really, I didn't know.

R. U. Sirius: Yes there was a pro baseball player named Tim Leary.

Dr. Dave: Would it be possible for you to step us through the high points and the low points of his biography; to hit the main touchstones, just briefly?

R. U. Sirius: Well there is no point going through his whole biography but in terms of his claim to fame in the early 1960s he started experimenting with psilocybin at Harvard under the aegis of Harvard University.

Dr. Dave: Well let me cut in at that point and give just a little bit more background to say: not only was he at Harvard but to be a psychologist at Harvard you've got to be intellectually very sharp, and he was at the top of the game in psychology. He had published extensively and he wrote a book on personality assessment – I don't know if it's still a standard in the field or not?

R. U. Sirius: It's one of the standards; he wrote a book on transactional analysis, he was a pretty progressive person in the field of psychotherapy; he believed in the so-called patient really the therapist or the psychologist acting as a coach more than as an authority – more of an equal and dynamical relationship.

And he developed tests; actually he developed a test that he wound up taking when he entered the prison system: it was called The Leary Test. It was a test that measured how well a prisoner could be trusted (laughing); whether he would be docile or troublesome. So he knew how to ace the test and portray himself as a docile prisoner, which allowed him to get sentenced to a minimum security prison from which he climbed over the wall on a high wire.

But I guess we are getting way ahead of the story here!

Dr. Dave: Yes we are getting ahead. So he is back at Harvard, and he's experimenting with psilocybin you said.

R. U. Sirius: Yes he is experimenting with psilocybin; he's got a program that he is running with students participating, with religious people participating in it. They are having various experiments to show that psilocybin can for instance change the behaviour of prisoners; that it can provide students working toward the priesthood with religious experiences; so he is looking at it in terms of a psychiatric drug in some sense, that's where it starts. At the same time he is having powerful experiences of other dimensions; and what seemed to him at the time to be spiritual experiences; .and he recapitulates evolution in his psychedelic experiences, trips down all

the stages of evolution. So he is starting to develop other theories that will emerge later on.

Dr. Dave: So we should mention that psilocybin is a synthetic derivative or duplication of the magic mushroom?

R. U. Sirius: Well it's the magic mushroom – at the time they were getting it in synthetic pill form from Sandoz Laboratories where Albert Hoffman, the inventor of LSD worked.

Dr. Dave: At some point then LSD enters the picture.

R. U. Sirius: Yes once he is into the psilocybin he becomes pretty interested in all psychedelic drugs, and a little bit of marijuana starts to get passed around. His friend Richard Albert who later becomes Baba Ram Das is already a bit of a pothead before all this, so it's not too big a leap for them to wind up there.

A British fellow named Michael Hollingshead shows up maybe around '63 '64 with a bunch of LSD. Tim is quite intimidated by it because it is active in microscopic, sub-microscopic doses; but Hollingshead seems like such a chipper and such a puckish and pranksterish, charming gentleman that he decides that he will take the risk and he will try some LSD. He called it the most shattering, profound experience of his life where he really tunneled into spaces that are perhaps beyond what he would call the game board of ordinary human relations. He developed a lingering suspicion that, in Eric Fromm's words, "the games that people play" really are something to be at least partially transcended.

Dr. Dave: OK, so sticking to the narrative part of it here, he began to share these with – some people might think indiscriminately – with graduate students and other people, and eventually this gets him into big trouble and he gets kicked out of Harvard as a result.

R. U. Sirius: Yes, right. They are conducting experiments, and they are being pretty scientific about it; and at the same time as you probably know and many of your listeners probably know, there is a Dionysian aspect to psychedelia and the psychedelic experience. And once tends to loosen up, and become pretty celebratory, and it's pretty natural that some people who dive deep into the psychedelic experience are not going to follow bureaucratic rules and regulations too closely. And frankly Timothy Leary was just that sort of person.

So yes there were parties that were out of the bounds of the experiments, beyond the sub clinical experiments; there were parties going on. So far as I know, nobody suffered from them; but a man named Andrew Weil, who many people probably know of right now, is a very famous natural health person was working at the Harvard Crimson at the time, the student newspaper; and he exposed the partying that was going on.

Dr. Dave: Oh really; I didn't know that.

R. U. Sirius: Yes; and apparently Richard Albert, aka Ram Das was using it to seduce some of the students (laughing), so that was part of the big crisis there at Harvard. Yes they both got more or less booted out of Harvard; it was a slow process and technically Tim wasn't booted out of Harvard, he was just put in a position where he decided not to return.

Dr. Dave: OK now sadly because they did have some serious experiments under way, and there was reason to believe that these substances might be useful in treating various psychological and psychiatric conditions; treating people with alcoholism; and treating people in prison; there was some very promising research directions and as a result of the negative publicity that got pulled down all around him all of that got closed down pretty much to this very day.

R. U. Sirius: There has been something of a resurgence starting in the 90s; you probably know the organisation MAPS out of Florida in the US has been hard at work helping to put together research experiments, some of which have been able to take place under the aegis of the FDA in US, and many more of which have been able to take place in Europe.

There have been different reports: one that was pretty widely broadcast and spread in the newspapers and particularly on the net, about some very positive results from psilocybin experiments out of Great Britain. I think that came out around the time the Leary biography was circulating actually, maybe about 6 months ago. There have been various bits of news; there has been an experiment with ketamine, at just barely active doses – a potential day to day antidepressant. The legitimate research, thanks to what some people think of as Leary's irresponsibility, also basically thanks to the fact that a rising hedonist counterculture that started really with the Beats in the 1950's had associated themselves also with psychedelic drugs. And I missed this; it was already happening before Leary experimented at Harvard. Alan Ginsberg the poet, and one of the leaders of the Beat movement, was one of the first people to come to Leary to check out some of his drugs. He

had his own drugs, and Jack Kerouac had been sent off peyote which had been legal.

So there was an entire narrative already of a hedonic, hedonistic, alienated, outsider counter culture involved with psychedelics before Leary got into trouble with Harvard. So it is a slight exaggeration that is made by many of the people who are trying to have a continuation of legitimate psychedelic research that Leary is to blame for the whole mess.

Dr. Dave: So just to quickly recap the arc of his biography: at some point he goes to jail, he escapes from jail, he escapes the country, he becomes a stand up comedian. Take us through some of that quickly (laughing).

R. U. Sirius: After he gets kicked out of Harvard he becomes an outsider and sets up his own psychedelic commune in Millbrook, New York; and a whole sort of hippy, free counterculture rises up and Ken Kesey is off with the Merry Pranksters dosing everybody on LSD, and The Grateful Dead are doing their thing, and The Beatles start taking LSD and start talking about it. And it all gets associated with the movement against War in Vietnam, and with even more left radical tendencies in the culture, and so forth.

So Leary is subject to very intense scrutiny and harassment by various police forces and winds up getting busted. The main thing he winds up getting busted for is just like two roaches of marijuana, but he is sentenced to something like 10 years in prison for those two roaches. It is generally understood that he is being sentenced for who he is and what he said and not so much for the marijuana; and the judge indicates, actually makes it very clear that he is being punished for being what the judge called: an indiscriminate Madison Avenue salesman for LSD.

It's such a long narrative, but he's in jail, he's out of jail, he's back in jail again for apparently a very long time; and decides to escape, and has his wife Rosemary help to make arrangements. So he does escape from a minimum security prison in California by going out on a highwire hand over hand, and getting over the fence. Little does he know that the arrangements that had been made was that a group of acid dealers called the Brotherhood of Eternal Love had paid the Weather Underground some pretty large amount of money to help with the escape. I guess people who don't know the history of Weather Underground can look that one up, but they were certainly considered the top terrorists in America by the US government and the FBI and even the National Security Agency at that time.

So Tim found himself in the hands of the Weather Underground and they helped him to get out of the country, where he was pressured and convinced to go join with a Black Panther party group in exile, headed by Eldridge Cleaver in Algeria. So he wound up in Algeria; and this was in 1970 when people talked about “The Revolution” the way we now talk about the Colbert Report or something like that.

Dr. Dave: Yes I knew lots of people who were talking about “The Revolution” and when “The Revolution” comes.

R. U. Sirius: So he and Eldridge Cleaver were deeply caught up in this fantasy at the time as was Rosemary Leary who really encouraged Tim to do this and get together with the Panthers. He had many problems with Eldridge Cleaver and the Black Panthers, and they put him under revolutionary arrest in Algeria and locked him up under armed guard in an apartment in Algeria. He managed to escape Algeria, and was at loose ends, and ended up being kept by a gun runner, outlaw, petty criminal, bon vivant named Hauchard who basically took care of him and helped to get him temporary residence and various cantons in Switzerland; while at the same time grabbing any money he could from Tim for various book contracts and so forth.

So he was basically subjected to multiple kidnappings; and then I can't remember the specific details of it, but he decided to travel to Afghanistan where supposedly the prince was a sympathiser. He was kidnapped against international law by the CIA in Afghanistan and flown back to California.

By this time, on top of his sentence for marijuana he was facing a sentence for escaping prison; and he had also been blamed for mass manufacturing of LSD and distribution, because he was the philosophical guru to the group the Brotherhood of Eternal Love that was involved in mass distribution of drugs. And even though Leary himself wasn't really involved in their business, the FBI tried to set him up as the mastermind of this huge hippy Mafioso thing. So his bail was the highest in human history up to that point: it was \$5,000,000.

He was delivered into the hands of the government, and went through a whole process there with very intense harassment and interest from the FBI and other forces, and eventually he agreed to testify in court in Chicago about The Weather Underground; and to tell quite a bit, if not necessarily everything about how he escaped from prison. And a result of that, and as a result also of a change in California that put Jerry Brown in the

Governorship – a person who had mutual friends with Timothy Leary – he was eventually released from prison.

Dr. Dave: And then didn't he become a stand up comedian for a brief period of time?

R. U. Sirius: He did something that he called stand up philosophy: he toyed with G Gordon Liddy, debating G Gordon Liddy; he did a whole bunch of stuff. Towards the end of his time in prison and right after prison, he did his most important written work: which was his *Future History* series, and his autobiography *Flashbacks*.

And he became involved in techno culture and very much around people who were working on all the software and all that kind of stuff, and he was very integrated into all that. At the same time he had a very weird Hollywood life as a B List celebrity, appearing in movies and hanging out in night clubs – which is what the biographer Robert Greenfield focussed on.

Dr. Dave: So at one level he seems like the archetypal Irish rogue with a silver tongue, and he has the most extraordinary life: everything you have just run through!

R. U. Sirius: It's only a fragment of the story really.

Dr. Dave: (laughing) It's got to be one of the most incredible lives. It's no wonder that he has some biographers, because this is certainly a life that cries out for that.

R. U. Sirius: Yes there are three films in pre production now: one of them being organised by Leonardo De Caprio; and a second one being organised by the film maker who made the film Pi, and I can never remember his name, but he is one of my favourite film makers; and then there is a made for TV movie. So clearly it is very cinematic; there is a long period of being underground in Europe that is incredibly cinematic. Tim saw himself as a psychedelic intelligence agent after a while, because that is kind of the world that he lived in through the 1970s, it was cloak and dagger.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I feel like he had an impact on me and on my life. I have tried to figure out for myself, how would my life have been different if there hadn't been a Timothy Leary; and I suspect it would have been different, and it would have been different for many people of my generation.

I'm planning to title this show The Legacy of Timothy Leary, because I'm kind of struggling to figure out what that legacy is. I assume that's some of what you will be examining in your course.

I am wondering, and maybe you could speak to this: what would be different if there had been no Timothy Leary? Would there have been a civil rights movement? Would there have been an anti-war movement? Would there have been an environmental movement? Would there be the mass interest in eastern thought and spirituality, yoga meditation etc? Would there be a war on drugs?

R. U. Sirius: Well I guess we have to take them one at a time. There would definitely be a civil rights movement; that came through Martin Luther King, and through left liberal activists, and through a lot of African Americans and so forth.

There would have been an anti-war movement; and there is great debate within people who were part of the anti-war movement in the 60s as to what the effect of the psychedelic counter culture was on the anti-war movement. People from the hard line left tend to claim that the use of psychedelics depoliticised people, and took them away from activism and revolutionary thinking and all that. The evidence is just the opposite actually; in 1967, 1968, 1969 the anti-war movement grew and flourished into a mass youth movement that was built around a cultural identity that included drugs and sexuality, and a kind of libertarian leftism that the hard line leftists don't like to recognise.

So I think the answer there is probably that the anti-war movement would not have been quite so powerful, without Leary's influence and the influence of psychedelic culture. Also probably wouldn't have been so crazy, which could have been both a good and a bad thing. Certainly some people will tell you that experience with psychedelics brings you into a place of instant peace and love for humanity; but on the other hand the CIA was taking LSD, and the Weather Underground was taking LSD and then blowing up army buildings and stuff like that.

Dr. Dave: Really?

R. U. Sirius: Yes of course there were very extreme riots going on as you probably know in 1969, 1970, 1971; people burning down the Bank of America and stuff like that. And all the people doing that kind of stuff were the freaks, they weren't the straight leftists they were the psychedelic freaks. You were in Ann Arbor, you had the White Panthers, and there's two

things to say about the fact that psychedelics might have made the anti-war movement act a little crazy. One is that it damaged the movement in terms of how most Americans who were turning against the war would relate to it. The second thing you could say about it is that it might have stopped Richard Nixon from nuking Hanoi. There is a historical record of Richard Nixon getting very serious about nuking North Vietnam during this time period and just being scared out of his wits about what the anti-war movement would do to America if he did that. And you know he wasn't thinking about the Quakers when he did that.

Dr. Dave: Right, and what about the environmental movement, do you feel that was at all...

R. U. Sirius: Yes I think the environmental movement and that sensitivity to the environment certainly was amplified by the psychedelic culture. All these movements exist probably without Timothy, and maybe even the psychedelic counter culture movement exists without Timothy, maybe it does. You know you can't really remove a single person from history and play the whole thing back and see what happens without him or her. But all these things were definitely amplified by his presence.

Dr. Dave: Yes it's hard not to wonder. Go ahead, I lost my thought, I was going to say something, I forgot what it was.

R. U. Sirius: Yes I'm not sure where we are at with this either (laughing).

Ken Kesey of course was turned on as a result of CIA experiments at Stanford University in Palo Alto, and very much without needing to have any influence from Timothy Leary. He grabbed a bunch of psychedelics from that place and started passing them around to his friends, and the culture grew in Palo Alto and San Francisco around psychedelic drugs.

Dr. Dave: So let's move now more towards the course that you are going to be teaching and some of the topics you will be exploring there. Why is it that we are still talking about Timothy Leary and that you would be teaching a course now, these many years later?

R. U. Sirius: Well this is where I want to get with the courses. One thing there has been a public fascination however limited because we live in a very decentralised culture and people don't pay attention to very much of the same stuff, but there has been at least some attention to his biography. And I want to take a look at how his biography and his experiences leak into his project and how his project is relevant to us today.

Basically Leary worked on ideas, and fostered ideas that are at the edge of the technological movement today: everything from the empowerment through the internet, the decentralisation and distribution of the power to convey and distribute information, giving that power to individuals and to small groups.

Dr. Dave: Yes the whole idea that information should be free?

R. U. Sirius: He actually delivered a talk in 1979 to a libertarian party convention about the internet, and everybody thought he was nuts and didn't know what he was talking about. But obviously if he was speaking to a libertarian group he was talking about the liberating possibilities of the internet and how it gives power from the individual and takes power away from centralised media and that is pretty much exactly what has happened there.

Central to his ideas in the 70s and beyond that is that the age we are moving into is defined by neurologic; that it is a neurological age. We will be able to control and activate and do things with our brain; we will understand the brain. And that definitely seems to be one of the places we are headed. If you look at my book *True Mutations* there's a whole section called This is Your Brain On Technology. There is an interview in there with Zack Lynch who – I can't remember exactly the name of the site he runs – but he shows how we are moving through the biotech age into the neurotech age and how intelligence enhancement, and neurological performance, and neurological reward will become primary metaphors probably in another decade or two.

He also dealt with human beings having power over our own biological evolution in the mid 70s and this is something that is just beginning to come to fruition. And there are numerous ideas that he dealt with way back then, that are dead on in terms of what's going on now with bioengineering, and germ line engineering: where basically we can manipulate human beings at the level of the seed, to create perhaps super humans and that sort of thing. And he dealt with molecular technology and nanotechnology before anybody really thought about it.

He implied molecular technology in the 1970s, and he implied a singularity; and some people will know there is a popular narrative now in technological culture about the idea that we are going to go through a singularity sometime in the middle of this century.

Dr. Dave: Yes, can you say what that is? Say a little bit more about that.

R. U. Sirius: Well there are so many different versions of it; but the most popular one is the technological singularity advocated by Ray Kurzweil; and it's the idea that basically the amount of information we can deal with is doubling at a continuously quicker rate of speed. And by some point maybe in the 2020s, 2030s, or 2040s we will be able to make machines that are smarter than we are. And one thing machines can do that we can't do is that as soon as one machine knows all the information it can possibly know, and has all the problem solving intelligence it can possibly have, every other machine has that same intelligence.

You or I sitting here can't be as smart about quantum physics, or about filing tax returns, or programming a computer, or bottled water or whatever you want to think of – as people specialised in that area. But if we were able to unite with silicon implants that are capable of downloading all the information that's available to one machine onto all machines we would all have all the same capacity. Once the machines get intelligent enough they start to resolve problems that allow them to get more intelligent still.

Kurzweil just sees machines as moving just unimaginable light years beyond human beings in terms of intelligence and capacity in a very little time. Other people really like the idea that human beings and machines will be integrated into one form. That is just one example of the singularity. The basic idea comes from physics and it's basically an event beyond which you can't comprehend what is going on there from the current point of view.

Leary talked about it in terms of his ace circuit of the brain; a whole other theory of the evolution of the human brain, of neurological evolution, a quantum level of neurological evolution.

Dr. Dave: Now this is probably too simplistic, but Timothy Leary: devil or angel? Where do you put him?

(laughter)

R. U. Sirius: Well Tim was against guilt and against authority and probably would have sided with Faust and with Lucifer I think in the various narratives there. (laughter) So it all depends on your perspective: he wasn't Henry Kissinger, he wasn't Idi Amin, he wasn't in the army, he wasn't out killing people, but he certainly was no angel. Some of his fans wanted to bestow sainthood upon him and he always hated that.

Dr. Dave: Will people still be talking about him 100 years from now?

R. U. Sirius: It all depends on how the future goes. In his *Future History* series, he did have an ego, and he imagined that humanity would look back and say: there was this guy in the 1970s who got it. I think there is about a one in twenty chance that he might be right; and otherwise he might be forgotten.

Dr. Dave: Yes. I wonder if there's anything else you'd like to say that we haven't gotten around to here?

R. U. Sirius: Well I just want to let people know I have this book, *True Mutations: Interviews on The Edge of Science, Technology, and Consciousness*. It is dedicated to Timothy Leary and because it deals with all the topics that he got me interested in, including the brain, including the potentials of biotechnology and nanotechnology, in quantum physics and evolutionary theory. I did forget to mention that really central to Tim's work in the 1970s were ideas that would eventually become called evolutionary psychology, and he nailed so many of those things. He was very DNA centric which was very much ahead of his time in those terms.

Dr. Dave: You're right.

R. U. Sirius: So I hope people will check out the book actually, because in some ways it's an update on his work.

Dr. Dave: Yes I have a copy here, *True Mutations: Interviews on The Edge of Science, Technology, and Consciousness*. So really it's very relevant to people who listen to this show; listen because they are interested in psychology one way or another, or they are interested in consciousness. We have lots of people who are interested in Buddhism for example.

R. U. Sirius: I think people who listen to your show will find Section 2 "This is Your Brain on Technology" very interesting: with Stephen Johnson who goes under fMRI and learns about how his brain functions; and there is a whole bunch of stuff in there and certainly discussions of psychiatric drugs and what some of the problems are with them, and how they might improve in the future. Definitely a lot of stuff that is happening now and in the near future in terms of cognitive sciences, and to some extent in terms of psychology.

Dr. Dave: That's why I like to listen to your podcast because you have guests who are talking about these very interesting, cutting edge things.

Particularly your NeoFiles podcast is right in this very domain that we have been talking about.

I forgot to ask you, did you ever meet Timothy Leary?

R. U. Sirius: Oh yes sure. He worked for Mondo 2000 and he was one of our editors; and he was always very generous and he did everything for free. We used to go and stay with him in Beverley Hills and he used to come and stay with us in Berkley, California.

I spent a fair amount of time with Tim, and I co-authored his last book which was called *Design for Dying*; and I actually finished it after he died which made it easy because I could make all the decisions myself. So I did know him pretty well. Tim had ten thousand best friends, and I put myself at the top of the list. (laughing)

Dr. Dave: What's your personal take on him?

R. U. Sirius: I miss him more than anybody because Tim at his best could make you feel like the entire world was a fabulous party and that he was the gracious host. And the energy that you could get from hanging out with him for a day or a week could last you for months. It was almost mystical; it was almost like one of those gurus who puts his finger on your third eye and suddenly you are illuminated. Except he hated all that bull: and it was just his joy de vivre, but it was so powerful. And he could be a real cretin sometimes too.

(laughter)

Dr. Dave: Well that's great; that's a perspective people don't get exposed to so much: the first part, not the cretin part but the first part that you said.

(laughter)

Also there's one annoyingly square question that I meant to ask you, which is about your name change from Ken Goffman to R. U. Sirius. How did that happen?

R. U. Sirius: Well as some people probably know, there was a writer who was actually a collaborator with Timothy Leary named Robert Anton Wilson who put out a bunch of wonderful books; just recently deceased a few weeks ago – I was just at a wake for him on Sunday as a matter of fact. He wrote about people who get messages from Sirius, from the Dog Star Sirius in his

book *Cosmic Trigger*; semi-seriously he wrote about it, and I made it even less serious by adopting the name R. U. Sirius.

Dr. Dave: OK great. Well it's a wonderful name because it kind of poses a metaphysical question in a way (laughing).

R. U. Sirius: It does do that, and it's an open invitation to alien contact from the Dog Star as well.

Dr. Dave: OK (laughing). Well we are eagerly awaiting that contact. I want to thank you very much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

R. U. Sirius: Thanks for having me.