

Shrink Rap Radio #99, July 7, 2007 – The Unabomber and the Zodiac

Dr. David Van Nuys, aka “Dr. Dave” interviews Doug Oswell
(transcribed from www.ShrinkRapRadio.com by Susan Argyelan)

Excerpt: *They appear to be sexually frustrated. Not only sexually frustrated, socially frustrated. And they're attempting to assuage their hostility against classes of people that they think have attributes that they desire but can't attain. And I think with Zodiac, it's very easy to see the sexual envy in his crimes because his first three sets of victims were young couples. They were in a position where they were thought to be trysting in a lover's lane. He basically just came up to them and he murdered them.*

Introduction: That was the voice of my guest, Douglas Evander Oswell. He submits the following biographical statement. He says, “I was born in 1952 to a military family and spent half of my childhood years in foreign places, notably Germany and North Africa. My family settled in Dover, Delaware, where I matriculated at Delaware State University, co-majoring in history and biology. Leaving college just short of a degree, I embarked upon a personal quest to understand the nature of artistic creativity. This quest drew me inevitably toward the study of extreme types of human behavior and a large body of fascinating case history regarding particular criminals and their crimes. Among those accounts was the strange and challenging case of San Francisco's legendary Zodiac killer, arguably the most enigmatic criminal in United States history. In the spring of 1995 as accounts of the yet-uncaptured Unabomber began to filter through the media, I immediately noticed a distinct set of similarities between the methods and motives of the Unabomber and the Zodiac. One year later, the arrest of Theodore Kaczynski and the consequent flood of information pertaining to his past did nothing to allay my growing suspicion that Kaczynski may have actually committed the crimes of Zodiac. In September of 1996, I appeared on NBC TV's 'Unsolved Mysteries,' beginning a process of research and investigation that has made Theodore Kaczynski one of the most promising suspects in a case called 'America's Jack the Ripper.' My latest production, *The Unabomber and the Zodiac*, is based on more than ten years' research into the methods, motives, and psychological attributes of its principals. I currently reside in Dover, Delaware, where between my career as a network technician, reading history, and playing the renaissance lute, I continue to explore the fascinating connection between the Unabomber and the Zodiac.” And now, here's the interview.

Dr. Dave: Doug Oswell, welcome to Shrink Rap Radio.

Oswell: Thank you very much, David. I'm happy to be with you.

Dr. Dave: Well, I'm so glad that you can be here. I have been enjoying – reading and enjoying – the book that you sent me, [The Unabomber and the Zodiac](#), in which you make some very interesting comparisons of these two very famous cases. And I must admit that when I first got the book, I was pretty skeptical about the case that you were going to make, but as I read through it, I find that you've really marshaled some pretty compelling evidence. But you know, I'm not sure that everybody else who's listening is going to be as familiar with these cases as you and I are, because you've written a book, and I co-authored a book on the Zodiac; however, I'm not as informed on the Unabomber case. So, why don't we start out with you quickly taking us through first, the main details of the Zodiac case.

Oswell: Okay. Well, David, the Zodiac case began in the winter of 1968, just about around Christmastime. The Zodiac killer wasn't known as the Zodiac killer at the time. He just accosted a young couple, a teenage couple, in a car just outside of Vallejo, California, in a lover's lane, and shot them to death. And there really weren't any clues in that case. Nothing else was heard of this particular killer until about seven months later, when early in the morning of the fifth of July, in a similar fashion to the earlier killing, he assaulted two more young people, once again parked in a lonely, isolated lover's lane at night. And he killed the young lady. The young man did survive that attack. Following that killing, he sent a barrage of letters to the news media, taking credit for those two earlier crimes. And after doing that, about two months afterwards he dressed in a garish costume, and he accosted a young couple at a lake just outside of Napa, California – that's Lake Berryessa – and he induced them to tie each other up under the pretense that he was going to rob them. And then he stabbed them numerous times with a foot-long knife. Once again, the young lady succumbed to the attack. She died a day later, and the young man survived. He wasn't able to give a very good description, because the killer was wearing a hooded disguise, an elaborate disguise. And then finally, Zodiac's last killing occurred two weeks after that one, in San Francisco. He flagged down a cab. He had the cab driver take him to Presidio Heights, which is a relatively wealthy section of San Francisco. And then he pulled out a nine-millimeter pistol, and he just shot the cab driver dead. And he got into the front seat, tore off a piece of the dead cab driver's shirt, and just very calmly proceeded to walk away. And he was never seen or heard from again. I'm sorry; he was heard from again; I'll have to take that back. He was heard from again, because following that incident, he began a bizarre series of letter writings to the news media, once again taking credit for the crimes and demanding that his materials – his letters, his threats, of which there were many – all be published in the news media on pain of further killings. No further killings occurred, and by 1974, he had pretty much faded away. His last really confirmed letter came in January of 1974, to the San Francisco Chronicle. And from that point on, he's never really been heard from since. That, in a nutshell, is a statement of the Zodiac killings and the Zodiac affair.

Dr. Dave: Yes, thanks for that quick overview, because the case, actually, is very complex, and you've managed to summarize a lot. Now, people might be wondering, my God, you're talking 1969, 1970, and that time frame. This is a case

that's well over 30 years old, and yet, it has captured people's imagination. Maybe we'll talk about that further on in the interview, about why this has sustained interest for so long. I should point out, too, that... You're in New Jersey, is that right? Do I recall that correctly?

Oswell: No, I'm in Delaware.

Dr. Dave: Delaware, I'm sorry.

Oswell: Very close.

Dr. Dave: Yes, you're on the East Coast, and so you don't live where all of that happened. It so happens that I do. I moved to Sonoma County – I came here in '71, January of '71, so I think we were just at the tail end of those murders. I wasn't terribly aware of them, but they were happening in Napa County, which is the next county over.

Oswell: Right.

Dr. Dave: And certainly San Francisco. So, it's right here in my back yard. It just seems like there are certain ways in which my life has kind of intersected with this stuff. I'll say more about that later. But before we lose focus here, let me have you take us through the Unabomber case now.

Oswell: The Unabomber case extended a little bit longer than the case of the Zodiac, in terms of the actual incidents that were perpetrated by Theodore Kaczynski. And of course, Theodore Kaczynski is a known quantity. We know he's the Unabomber. He's not an UNSUB. We have no doubt that he was the criminal who was known as the Unabomber.

Dr. Dave: Because he's in prison right now, right?

Oswell: Excuse me?

Dr. Dave: Because he's in prison right now. He was captured, and he's...

Oswell: Yes.

Dr. Dave: ...he's sitting in jail.

Oswell: Yes, he went to prison. He pled guilty to all the murders and all the incidents. So, I don't think there's...there really is no doubt. As with Zodiac – I mean, unlike Zodiac – there really is no doubt that he is the Unabomber. So that's something we needn't concern ourselves with, as to his actual culpability. But he began his career as the Unabomber in May of 1978 in the Chicago area. He began mailing package bombs to various people that were in the scientific and technological fields. The

early bombs really, they were half-hearted efforts. They didn't really injure anybody per se. But he showed his seriousness with his third bombing, when he actually placed a bomb in the mail that was scheduled to be flown airmail from Chicago to Washington, D.C. This particular bomb was set to go off when the airplane reached a certain altitude, and indeed, it did go off, once the plane reached a certain altitude. Fortunately, it was constructed in such a way that it didn't really produce a forceful explosion. It produced a lot of smoke in the baggage compartment of the airplane. The airplane was forced to make an emergency landing. It terrorized a lot of people, but nobody was injured in that incident. But, of course, the only reason an incredible mass murder wasn't perpetrated in that incident was simply because the bomb didn't work as it was intended. If it had worked as it was intended, about 78 people would have lost their lives. So, from that point on, the federal authorities began to investigate this case, and they associated the airline bombing with some of his earlier bombings at universities, and they gave him the moniker of "the Unabomber" for "university and airline bomber." From that day forth, he was known by the authorities as the Unabomber, although he called himself something different. He called himself "F.C.," for "Freedom Club." Perhaps more of that later, but he continued on his campaign. As he continued, his explosives got better, his detonating mechanisms got better, and by 1985, he was actually able to produce a device that would actually kill. He actually did kill the owner of a computer store in Sacramento, California. One thing I find interesting about that particular incident was directly after – within days after – that bomb detonated, killing a computer-store owner. He sent a letter to the editor of the San Francisco Examiner taking credit for the explosion and for several others that had preceded it. Interesting, because Zodiac did pretty much the same thing. Once he had actually committed a successful murder, he shot a letter off to the editor of the San Francisco Examiner in pretty much the same type of language that Kaczynski had used in his letter, which I thought was one of the very strong connections between those two. But moving on with the events, though, he continued to bomb until 1987, and he was actually spotted planting a bomb outside another computer store in February of 1987. From that day forth, he took a five-year hiatus, and I think the consensus is that he was afraid he had been seen. And I think probably what it was, is that he was nervous. He really didn't want to have to hand-place his bombs anymore. So he went to work and designed very lightweight, efficient package bombs that could be sent easily through the mails. He emerged in 1993 with those package bombs. There were a couple of incidents where he sent them to renowned scientists. One of them was David Galanter, the renowned computer scientist. The other was a Prof. Epstein. He was a behaviorist, if I'm not mistaken. They were both severely injured. At the end of 1995, he sent a bomb to an advertising executive, and the advertising executive was killed in that incident. It was lucky his whole family wasn't killed, because just before he was about to open this parcel in the kitchen of his house, his young daughter scampered out of the room, and his wife followed after her. And immediately afterward, the bomb detonated and almost literally blew him to pieces, right in the presence of his family. And then about six months after that, the head of the California Forestry Association, Gilbert Murray, received a package bomb at the Association

headquarters in Sacramento, California. He opened that package and he was literally – I read that his body was taken out in paint cans. The explosion was that devastating.

Dr. Dave: Oh, how horrible.

Oswell: Yes, it was really devastating. And the thing about it is, is that his secretary, who was pregnant at the time, was struggling to open the package, and it was something that he usually didn't do. He usually didn't open the mail. But he just took it from her and took it back to his office to open it himself. Fortunately, he went back to his office, he closed the door... Many more people would have been killed if he had not gone into his office and closed the door.

Dr. Dave: You know, one thing that occurs to me is how both of these guys foreshadowed current events in a certain way. This might sound morbid to our listeners, because we're so concerned about bombings today. And bombings have become, unfortunately, very routine. When the Unabomber was doing this, bombings were not a routine kind of occurrence. And it's interesting how both the Zodiac and the Unabomber, both of them kind of foreshadow this idea of terrorism.

Oswell: Yes, and I think going through my book, you'll probably see that yes, they are terrorists. I don't know if I, I didn't necessarily spell that out per se, but you can tell that that's what they had in mind. They take a great deal of delight in actually terrorizing the public and having the public in their thrall and under their control.

Dr. Dave: Right. Not just by the violence that they do, but by manipulating the press.

Oswell: Exactly. Exactly, and that's one of the highlights – that's one of the key elements – that ties them, is that they do want to use the press. They want to manipulate the press. They also want to be able to commit terrorism simply by, as you say, manipulating the press. And in both of those cases, it's interesting that after they had gained a certain amount of credibility through their actual killings, they actually turned to... Rather than actual bombs, they turned to bomb threats, more than anything else. Now, Zodiac threatened to bomb a school bus, a threat which he never carried out. The Unabomber threatened to bomb an airliner out of the Los Angeles Airport. And both of them retracted those threats in a very joking, sardonic manner, just a few days after, after the entire community had been stood on its head out of fear that they were actually going to follow through with those threats.

Dr. Dave: That's interesting. Now, before you get too far along in terms of drawing parallels between the two, I want to back you up just a little bit because in your book, you talk about the distinction between serial killers and mass murderers. I thought that was a very interesting point that you made, where you suggest that both the Unabomber and the Zodiac fall somewhere between serial killer – what we

normally understand as a serial killer – and what we normally understand as a mass murderer. And in fact, you suggest the need for a new category.

Oswell: I really think a new category is in order, David, because when we're talking about serial killers and mass murderers, those are generally considered to be the two main types of multiple killer, killers who take more than one victim. But the thing about those designations is that they're generally based on the number of killings that a killer perpetrates over a certain period of time. A serial killer generally, by consensus of the criminological profession, is someone who commits, who murders on at least three occasions, with a certain "cooling off" period in between each time.

Dr. Dave: Okay.

Oswell: And they define the mass murderer as somebody who kills four or more people in one location in one incident. That generally works, but it doesn't really tell you anything about the psychological attributes of those killers, why they're killing. What actually, what demon is driving them to kill? And I think in each case, you have a different psychological typology that's in play. And so I kind of thought that it would probably be better to have a different kind of designation. Rather than say a "serial killer," I prefer to say "recreational killer." And I'm basing that on the older designations of serial killer as a psychopath, a sociopath, or what they used to call the "sexually sadistic killer," somebody who really gets a thrill out of killing. To him, it's a form of almost recreation, and there seems to be a sexual element involved in it.

Dr. Dave: So that's the psychological...

Oswell: I don't know if I'm really qualified to say just what that is, but based on the definitions, and based upon what we know of people who commit those kinds of crimes... So, I like to call those "recreational killers." And on the other side, you have your mass murderers. Now, they take multiple victims. They usually take their victims all at one time; in other words, they commit a mass of murder. They commit murder in the mass. And that's good, but once again, it doesn't define, really, what makes them tick psychologically. For my part – and I go on and I define this in the book – I refer to them as "disaffected killers," because they're deeply disaffected. They're very angry; they have an axe to grind against the world. And that's pretty much it simplistically, and I think I go into a little more detail in my book. But just as a down-and-dirty definition, that's where I'm coming from there. They're really having an axe to grind; they're socially inept; they envy other people, and they're trying very desperately to assuage their feelings and to soothe their egos, as opposed to the recreational killer, who really is, he's a completely different animal altogether. He's out for – for want of a better word, and this is bizarre – but he's out for fun. He's out for fun and a kind of warped sexual stimulation. Now, the reason I'm making these designations is because Zodiac has been pegged as a serial killer, or a sociopathic killer. And I go through the book and I explain how this really isn't so, based upon his victimology and his

writings. If you look at the Zodiac killings, they're not sensational killings. Basically, they're just blitz-style killings that probably took no more than a minute or two minutes to actually carry out. Zodiac, he never attempted to touch his victims; he didn't try to sexually abuse them; he didn't even verbally abuse them. All he was interested in doing was going out and killing them, basically, just dealing death, with none of the signs that you actually associate with this recreational type of killer. And there's been a lot of confusion about that, especially when it comes to connecting Kaczynski with the Zodiac killer, because the classic line is, Kaczynski was more like a mass murderer. He didn't kill in a close up-and-personal manner, like Zodiac did. He killed in a completely different way, whereas Zodiac was supposedly this sexual sadist, what they generally call the serial killer. And I think I had to explain the distinction there and to show that both of those killers – both the Zodiac and Kaczynski – were actually closer to the mass murderer than they were to the classical serial killer.

Dr. Dave: One of the things that you say about the mass murderer in your book is that often, they are either consciously or unconsciously seeking to commit suicide-by-cop.

Oswell: Yes, many times that happens. I think that the classic case of mass murder in this country was [James Huberty](#), who walked into a McDonald's heavily armed and just cold-bloodedly gunned down just numerous people in this McDonald's, under the full realization that the police were going to arrive, and they were going to have to shoot him. And that did indeed happen. And more often than not, these disaffected killers, as I call them, they're at the end of their rope. They're really not trying to conceal themselves; they're not trying to make any effort to get away. They're basically suicidal; they have suicidal ideation, and they make up their mind that they're going to take themselves out. But at the same time, they're going to assuage their feelings against the society that they think has wronged them by taking out other people as well.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Oswell: And they're going to make this grand statement.

Dr. Dave: Yes, I think Columbine and the [Cho](#) killings at Virginia Tech probably both fall into that pattern as well.

Oswell: Yes, I would think very much so, particularly the ones at Virginia Tech.

Dr. Dave: Yes. Now, coming back to the Zodiac and the Unabomber, you see a common, underlying psychological dynamic between these two. Please describe that.

Oswell: Well, yes I do. They are people who appear to be sexually frustrated. Not only sexually frustrated, socially frustrated, and they're attempting to assuage their

hostility against classes of people that they think have attributes that they desire but can't attain. And I think with Zodiac, it's very easy to see the sexual envy in his crimes, because his three sets of victims were young couples. They were in a position where they were thought to be trysting in a lover's lane. He basically just came up to them and he murdered them. Once again, we don't see any of the pattern of the recreational killer here. It's more like the disaffected sort, the one who really has an axe to grind against these happy young couples, who were enjoying – or perceived to be enjoying – their sexuality, alone together in a lonely place. And I think if you compare that, if you look in contrast with some of the letters he wrote, in which he brings up [The Mikado](#) and The Lord High Executioner. The Lord High Executioner in *The Mikado*, his main function was to execute people that were caught in the act of flirting. I don't know if you remember *The Mikado*, but basically, the plot of *The Mikado* was that the emperor of Japan or the Mikado had decreed that in order to steady all the young male population, anybody caught flirting would be executed. And so we see the Zodiac killer ascribing this role to himself by making constant mention – especially – of the role of the Lord High Executioner. And we see that in conjunction with his crimes. We also see something interesting, too, a comment that he made which I think you remarked on in your [YouTube](#) presentations – his little remark that killing was better than getting your rocks off with a girl.

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Oswell: Boy, that just sounds like he's making a virtue out of a necessity there. It just doesn't... It rings false, and it's almost his way of saying, "This is actually, this defines me. This is really where I'm coming from."

Dr. Dave: Yes, let me just...

Oswell: Now, the Unabomber, Ted Kaczynski, he's an interesting study, and there's a lot of misconceptions about him, just on the basis of the fact that people don't really dig enough into his past. And if you look at his past, you'll see that he was a very intelligent person, and he was brought up by very intelligent parents, but blue-collar parents, who lived vicariously through his intellectual achievements. And he was kind of pushed through school. He had an IQ of over 160. He was very brilliant; he caught on to things very well. He was brilliant in a variety of subjects – not just mathematics, as everybody thinks. He was very good in literature as well. He went to Harvard at the age of 16 on a scholarship.

Dr. Dave: Wow.

Oswell: That was a National Merit Scholarship at the time. It was the beginning of the space race, and...

Dr. Dave: Sure.

Oswell: ...they needed to develop these intellects...

Dr. Dave: Right.

Oswell: ...and so a lot of scholarships were available to these blue-collar kids who showed intellectual promise. Well, he went to Harvard, and at the age of 16. And by all accounts, he had hardly ever even had a date. He was quite asocial. I wouldn't go so far as to say anti-social, but he was very asocial. He didn't really fit into any particular peer group, and he had very little peer-group contact. After Harvard – he graduated from Harvard in four years, and he got another scholarship for studies at the University of Michigan. And he spent the next four years doing coursework for his Ph.D. in mathematics. During all that four years, as far as anybody knows, he didn't have so much as a single date. He had no association with the opposite sex. In his fifth year, he basically was kind of footloose and fancy-free, because his coursework was done, and basically, all he had to do was get his doctoral dissertation written. But it was already written, because he had based it on an earlier paper that he had published. And so, at that particular time – right at the beginning of his fifth year – he was living in an apartment. And on the other side of the apartment, he writes in his journals, that the other side of his apartment was occupied by a group of jocks from the Michigan hockey team. And he could hear all of their goings-on, but particularly he remarks on their sexual goings-on. He could hear this, and it caused him distress. But not only did it cause him distress, he actually, starting at this point, went through a period of several weeks where he was incredibly frustrated sexually. He was sexually excited nearly all the time. And he ended up fantasizing that he was a woman and tried to get sexual release, but according to him, couldn't get any. So he decided that – and these are his words – if he could never touch a woman, he would have to *be* a woman. The only way he would ever touch a woman was to be a woman. So he made an appointment with a campus psychiatrist at the University of Michigan to talk about getting a sex-change operation. Bear in mind this is 1966, about two and one-half years before the Zodiac killings begin. He went to the psychiatrist, sat in the psychiatrist's office, and suddenly became overwhelmed with humiliation and shame about what his erotic desires were leading him to do. So he went in to talk to the psychiatrist and gave him the pretext that he was there because he was concerned about being drafted. And when he left the psychiatrist's office, it was at that juncture – precisely that juncture – that he decided that he would begin killing people, based upon the humiliation and the frustration that he had felt during that episode involving the psychiatrist.

Dr. Dave: Wow. Let me put in a footnote here, Doug, because to me there are just kind of amazing coincidences here, because listeners may not be aware I was at the University of Michigan myself, as a graduate student during the same period. We overlapped. And I had a good friend at the University of Michigan who was a professor in the math department. So that professor had to have known Ted Kaczynski, because I don't think the math department was all that large, and any math professor there would've known all of the graduate students there. And so it's

just so ironic. Then later, Kaczynski leaves Michigan after he gets his Ph.D. and goes to Cal Berkeley. I follow to California not long after, in time for the tail end of the Zodiac killings. And so there are those strange kinds of overlaps, and then, years later, I'm contacted out of the blue by somebody who says, "Hey, I wonder if you'd be willing to analyze some letters of a serial killer. At this point, you know, I'm Chairman of the Psychology Department at Sonoma State. I've never heard of this person who sent me the e-mail; I'm wondering if *he* might be a serial killer. And then, of course, that led to my co-authoring the book in which I analyzed the Zodiac's letters. And so that's partly how you and I get here talking now, and I've got this series that you mentioned up on YouTube. So to me, it's very interesting that I live in the county where those murders were, that I had that overlapping time at Michigan with Ted Kaczynski. I also went through a period of psychological distress as a graduate student. I did not consider a sex change (laughs) but I went to see the campus psychiatrist. I think we may have talked to the same man. Okay, you can get back to your narrative, but I had to share that.

Oswell: Yes, I have to say...(laughs) Well, first of all, well, my daughter's been a graduate student. She's a graduate student for quite some time. And I'll tell you what: It doesn't surprise me that any graduate student would want to get some kind of counseling at some period of time.

Dr. Dave: Oh, it's true.

Oswell: It just sounds like a very difficult thing to get through.

Dr. Dave: It was very stressful, and there were a number of my peers who...who went crazy, who flipped out, or who committed suicide. So there were very powerful psychological stresses among graduate students.

Oswell: There are. You wonder. I think you begin to wonder if you're ever going to get out of school and ever start doing it.

Dr. Dave: Don't get me started on that! So my entry into the Zodiac case was kind of unbidden, and yet, people might wonder, well, why are we talking about this and all? But this is all about psychology, and while these guys represent the extremes of a certain kind of psychology, they are not totally (laughs)...they are not totally different from the rest of us.

Oswell: No, no, no. They...believe me, I think it's just, it could just be a matter (?) of degree more than anything else.

Dr. Dave: Right. Now, that's what I think. But, so, in your book, you talk about the similarities that you see. You're pretty cagey in your book, because you don't actually come out and say, okay, this is the same guy. But the message clearly comes across that you think that the Zodiac and Unabomber are probably the same person. I think you're pretty persuaded of that. But at the very least, you say they

share common dynamics, and as you go through it, I guess we can't... I mean, to me, it seemed like I have a problem with the fact that there's a nine-year gap between the Zodiac killings and the Unabomber, but that doesn't seem to bother you. So, tell us why you connect these two.

Oswell: Yeah, it doesn't really bother me. If there were a shorter gap, then I think that would probably dissuade me more than if there were the nine-year gap, because over the course of nine years, assuming that Kaczynski was the Zodiac killer, he had a chance to get away from the milieu that was upsetting him, that was driving him to crime – that particular type of crime. Getting away from it – getting out into the wilderness where a lot of the things that were disturbing him weren't present. And trying to settle down and live what he considered to be a normal life, that is, a life away from human society. As he went on, other things started to bother him. Now, with his particular personality, there are going to be...anything that tends to really get his goat is probably going to incite his rage and make him want to take some kind of vengeance. Even if it's only symbolic vengeance – even if it's not direct vengeance against a particular person that's harmed him. And I think if you look at his Manifesto and you look at some of the things he says about human beings – and human behavior in particular – he says that people need, they require goals that require effort. And he refers to anything other than that as a surrogate activity. And I think he's really imputing that to himself. It's not just the broader society, but it's himself that he's imputing that to. And I think we see when he left Berkeley, when he dropped out of society, quit his job at the University of California, and moved out to Montana, he experienced a period where he was actually working. He had those goals that required effort, and he was working to attain those goals.

Dr. Dave: By the way, I have to tell you, I got my Master's degree at the University of Montana.

Oswell: Oh, did you really?

Dr. Dave: Yes, and also the Zodiac, when he attacks that couple at Lake Berryessa, he tells them that he had just escaped from Montana. So, I just can't help but identify with all of these elements that keep popping up in my life.

Oswell: Amazingly coincidental!

Dr. Dave: Yes.

Oswell: You know, there's a word for that. It's called... So far as the Zodiac is concerned, they call it "zynchronicity."

Dr. Dave: "Zynchronicity!"

Oswell: With a "z." As opposed to an "s."

Dr. Dave: That's great. That's a good one.

Oswell: It's really... If you go to the [Zodiackiller.com message board](http://Zodiackiller.com), there's an entire thread that's devoted to "zynchronicity." (laughs) You might want to go there and post all these things because they're amazing.

Dr. Dave: Yes, that's very interesting, and actually, I could go off on a long tangent about that, because that's one of the things that struck me about the Zodiac case, at least, is that so many different people seem to be able to construct plausible cases for a wide variety of suspects. And they have these circumstantial, synchronistic pieces of evidence that seem to support them.

Oswell: That's true, and you do get a lot of that. And I've always said that to really be a good suspect, it's not enough just to have a lot of circumstances. You've got to have the psychology right, I think. I think that's the most important thing, when you're looking at a good suspect in the Zodiac case. What kind of psychology does this person have? Is he the type of person who is angry? Is he envious? Does he try to assuage his feelings through violence? Does he have a known record of doing that? Has he been extremely sexually frustrated to the point, maybe, where he would want to kill? And I think if you get that right first, then you can proceed, and then you can go over the circumstances. Then you can look at some of these other things, like his whereabouts, his handwriting, his general appearance, and then you can make your case from there. But I think the psychology is the one thing you've got to have before you can really have a suspect.

Dr. Dave: Well, that's why I wanted to bring you on the show, actually, is because you do take that psychological tack, and this is a show that's about psychology and the realm of psychology. And there are lots of books out there about the Zodiac, and I'm sure there are some about the Unabomber as well. But it's your psychological approach that really intrigued me. Now, another thing that bothered me – and we're just not going to have time for you to fully make your case. I really want to urge people, if they have any interest in this and they don't think we're both totally whacko, and if they want to get into it more, they really should get your book at Amazon.com or I'll let you tell us other places if you want to, at the end of the show. Where was I going? (laughs) I was starting to say something here. Well, I was thinking you won't have a chance to make your entire case. So, I mentioned that I was bothered by the gap in time. The other thing that's bothered me is the gap, the seeming gap in education. Zodiac's letters to the newspapers are loaded with misspellings and make him look dyslexic. Now, he may be dyslexic – I sort of thought he was, but I was certainly open to the possibility: okay, maybe this is a super-bright guy who's trying to cover his tracks. I don't know. But certainly, the profile that I developed, I saw the Zodiac as probably somebody who maybe didn't have any college, or not much college; probably a lot of technical facility; probably working in a blue-collar, sort of technical job... maybe as an electronics this-or-that. On the other hand, we have the Unabomber, who gets a Ph.D. in mathematics at the

University of Michigan, who goes to Harvard at 16. To me, those...boy, that's hard to...I have trouble bridging that gap.

Oswell: Yes, that's a classical objection. I put the IQ, I think, at 115 and above. Because we can't really pin him down so far as his IQ, because he doesn't give us enough information.

Dr. Dave: The Zodiac...?

Oswell: I'm thinking at least 115. But one of the things I did was, I went over some of his writings. And if you look at his writings, yes, you do have those misspellings. To my mind, they're a big red herring, because his syntax is so good. His grammar is so good. He doesn't confuse homophones; he doesn't confuse contractions and plurals. He doesn't do all of those things that you expect a person to do who doesn't really have a good handle on grammar, syntax, and orthography. He does spell a lot of words right that you wouldn't expect a bad speller to spell. He seems to have a good eclectic knowledge, too. He has knowledge about some of electronics, a little bit of chemistry. He even has what appears to be quite a bit of mathematical background. When he mentions that he's written a code and the code involves radians, that's, I don't know...

Dr. Dave: That's a good point. You make a good point there. And I have to say all the things that you just mentioned about the grammar and the – what did you call them? Homophones?

Oswell: Homophones, yes. They used to call them something else, but...

Dr. Dave: Well, you do a very careful analysis of those details in your book, and certainly a more careful analysis than I did. And so I think maybe I was thrown off by that red herring. Now – and I really again refer people to your book. And I'm kind of moving this along here because we're going to run out of time pretty soon. Another thing that bothered me was the Zodiac's psychological signature in large part seems to be his need to brag and to flaunt his crimes. That's what he was doing in his letters to the newspapers, calling the police right after a crime and rubbing their nose in it. And so here we've got Ted Kaczynski sitting in prison, and if Ted Kaczynski were the Zodiac, I would think he'd want to brag and want to say, "Hey, I was the Zodiac, and you didn't even figure that out! You may have caught me as the Unabomber, but I really pulled the wool over your eyes all these years."

Oswell: On the face of it, that seems so. And I think probably, to himself, he's probably saying that. But I devoted a whole chapter to your very question. Why wouldn't he have admitted to that? And I think the answer is in, it's in some of his documents, especially when he started writing his journals, his elaborate journals. He wrote at the beginning that the reason he was keeping the journals was essentially so people would understand his motives and understand that they were not the motives of a sick person. But they were the motives of a very logical, rational individual...

Dr. Dave: Mm-hmm.

Oswell: ...whose actions were completely under his control. And that's the antithesis of what the Zodiac did, because the Zodiac killings are universally looked upon as a very sick type of killings, psychologically sick. You certainly wouldn't say that a person who kills minor children or threatens to blow up school buses or things of that nature... Those are sick crimes, and that's the kind of thing that Kaczynski said he wanted to disassociate himself from. At the same time, I don't think there's any doubt that he could have committed the Zodiac crimes, probably as impulsive acts of anger. Based on the immediacy of his sexual frustrations, he might've decided, "Look, I'm going to go out and I'm going to get some of these young people who are out there making love in these lover's lanes." It's all based on envy. I'm sure he had some other rationalization for it. But having done that, he probably stood back and probably wasn't very proud that he had done those things.

Dr. Dave: Hmmm... Now there was just a movie, as you know, of the Zodiac, and I'm wondering, why do you think this case has fascinated so many people for so long?

Oswell: It's probably because the Zodiac killer, he was such a cerebral killer. And he threw out so many hints as to who he was. He left his cryptograms, he left us all kinds of writings and words and phrases that might have double meanings, so many literary allusions. And I think people like to get caught up in that kind of thing and try to see if maybe they can figure it out themselves. It's the kind of thing that really – if you're into true crime, or if you're into mysteries, or enigmas – it's the kind of thing you just (inaudible) like to get yourself immersed in.

Dr. Dave: Well, what do you think it is about your own psychology that has had you working on this case for ten or more years?

Oswell: Well, with me, it was more or less an accident. Because when I was in my younger days, I was interested in creativity, the psychology of creativity. And I used to wonder, why are some people creative, and some people aren't? So that got me into a study of psychological types, and one of those types was the serial killers. And I started reading books about serial killers. I read about Ted Bundy and some of the, you know, Ed Kemper, and some of the other classical ones, quite a few of them, as a matter of fact. And then one day I came upon this yellow book by Robert Graysmith. It was titled Zodiac, and I thought, oh, another serial killer. I think I'll read about the Zodiac, and I read about him. I wasn't really too impressed with him as a serial killer. He wasn't really that exciting as a serial killer per se. But one thing, I was a little bit caught up in the enigma of the thing, and it never left my mind. When Kaczynski started demanding publicity back in 1995 and started demanding that his Manifesto be published, I started taking a look at him and thought even at that juncture, there were quite a few similarities between the two. So I said to myself, I'll just wait 'til they catch him – they're sure to catch him sooner or later – and look and see where he was while all of the Zodiac killings

were going on. Just take a look and look at him personally, just see if there's anything that would buttress the notion of connecting the two. And it turned out that there was quite a bit, even at the outset.

Dr. Dave: Okay, and there's Ted Kaczynski. He's caught; he's in prison. Have you ever tried to see him, or to write him?

Oswell: I did write him a letter one time, and I thought – just a sense of fairness suggested that I should send him a letter and ask him for some alibis for specific Zodiac dates. And I told him at the time that if he'd provide me with any of those alibis, I'd be glad to publish them on the Internet and make them generally known, and he never responded to me.

Dr. Dave: Hmm...what do you think about sending him a copy of your book?

Oswell: I've thought about that. I don't want to give him any ideas. (laughs)

Dr. Dave: (laughs)

Oswell: I'd like to keep him off his guard as long as I can.

Dr. Dave: Yeah...

Oswell: Because he still – even in prison now, he's writing, he's corresponding, he's got quite an active life in terms of just corresponding with people who either are fascinated by him or admire him, to their disgrace, I think.

Dr. Dave: Yeah...

Oswell: Why anybody would admire him, I don't know, but they do.

Dr. Dave: So you've sort of worried away at this case for ten years, and it's culminated in this book – very carefully written, very well presented, well argued book. Where do you go from here? Is this the end of the line for you?

Oswell: Not necessarily. I do mean to keep my website running, and I'm going to start updating it if any new information comes in, either pro or con. I plan to just update the website.

Dr. Dave: What is that website?

Oswell: That's Unazod.com, u-n-a-z-o-d, the first three letters of each killer's name, dot com.

Dr. Dave: Okay. Well, look, Doug, I think probably we should wrap it up here. Any last point that you would want to make, maybe, that you didn't get a chance to say here?

Oswell: One thing that I would like to mention is that we didn't get to literary allusion, but both of these killers were very keenly into getting hints about themselves through the use of literary works, great literary works like Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Agent*, *The Mikado*, *The Exorcist*; *Moby Dick*, in the case of the Zodiac killer, and particularly two of the Wagnerian classics, the *Ring*, and the opera, *Parsifal*. Those were two operas. Interestingly, both killers alluded to opera.

Dr. Dave: That's a good final point there, and anybody who's got that sort of detective itch like you've had, you've given them a bunch of good places, good jumping-off places. So Doug Oswell, thanks so much for being my guest today on Shrink Rap Radio.

Oswell: Well, you're quite welcome, and thank you for having me.