

# JEFFREY DAHMER

*Interview with Stone Phillips*

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Dateline NBC

Recorded: November 1993 — First broadcast: February 12, 1994

Re-broadcast: November 29, 1994 (the day after Jeffrey's death)

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The only network television interview Jeffrey Dahmer ever gave. Recorded at Columbia Correctional Institution, Portage, Wisconsin, in November 1993. Stone Phillips traveled to the prison with Jeffrey's father Lionel Dahmer and stepmother Shari Jordan. The interview was later expanded with never-before-seen footage into a documentary titled *Confessions of a Serial Killer: Jeffrey Dahmer* (2012).

*Note on this transcript: No complete official transcript of this interview has been published. This document compiles all known excerpts from the aired interview, press reports, and quoted material sourced from NBC News archives and published accounts. Some passages reflect paraphrase from secondary sources where direct transcription was unavailable. The full interview video is preserved at Internet Archive: [archive.org/details/JeffreyDahmerOriginalStonePhilipsInterview](https://archive.org/details/JeffreyDahmerOriginalStonePhilipsInterview)*

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*Archived at [jeffreydahmer.memorial](http://jeffreydahmer.memorial)*

## CONTEXT

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Jeffrey Dahmer was serving fifteen consecutive life sentences at Columbia Correctional Institution in Portage, Wisconsin. He had been baptised by Reverend Roy Ratcliff of the Madison Church of Christ on **May 10, 1994**. The Dateline NBC interview was recorded in November 1993 — six months before the baptism — and first aired February 12, 1994. It was re-broadcast on November 29, 1994, the day after Jeffrey's murder in prison. He was 34 years old.

*Stone Phillips later recalled: "When I met Dahmer and his father in this maximum security prison, he vividly described — in the most matter-of-fact way — the gruesome impulses that drove him to kill and cannibalize 17 young men."*

## TRANSCRIPT

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*[Stone Phillips opens the interview seated across from Jeffrey Dahmer in a prison meeting room at Columbia Correctional Institution. Jeffrey is calm, dressed in prison clothing, speaking in a flat, considered tone throughout.]*

### I. CHILDHOOD — ANIMALS AND THE ORIGINS OF FASCINATION

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**STONE PHILLIPS: You've talked about a fascination with dead animals as a child — cutting them open, looking at the insides. Was there some pleasure in the cutting open of the animal?**

Yes. There was. No — no sexual pleasure, but just —

**STONE PHILLIPS: Sense of power, sense of control?**

I suppose that's a good way of putting it, yeah. I suppose it could have turned into a normal hobby like taxidermy, but it didn't. It veered off into this.

*[Jeffrey also described the transition from animals to human beings:]*

It switched from animals to humans. I still don't understand it. I don't know why.

*[Separate NBC News / MSNBC account of the interview]*

## II. THE FANTASY — CONTROL, POSSESSION, THE DESIRE TO KEEP

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**STONE PHILLIPS: Was it the killing that excited you, or is it what happened after the killing?**

No, the — the killing was just a means to an end. That — that was the least satisfactory part. I didn't enjoy doing that. I had this recurring fantasy of meeting a hitchhiker on the road and of taking him hostage and doing what I wanted. Lust played a big part of it. Controlling lust.

*[In a fuller account of his motivation, Jeffrey elaborated:]*

The killing was a means to an end. That was the least satisfactory part. I didn't enjoy doing that. That's why I tried to create living zombies with uric acid in the drill — to the head — but it never worked. No, the killing was not the objective. I just wanted to have the person under my complete control, not having to consider their wishes, being able to keep them there as long as I wanted.

*[NBC News / MSNBC extended account]*

Killing wasn't the objective. I just wanted to have the person under my complete control to do with as I wanted.

## III. STEVEN TUOMI — "I HAVE NO MEMORY"

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*[On Jeffrey's second victim, Steven Tuomi, killed at the Ambassador Hotel in Milwaukee in 1987 — for whom he claimed to have no memory of the killing:]*

He was hanging over the side of the bed. And I have no memory of beating him to death, but I must have.

## IV. CANNIBALISM

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**STONE PHILLIPS: Why the cannibalism?**

That was — that was another step. It — it made me feel like they were a permanent part of me. Besides the just mere curiosity of what it would be like, it gave me a sexual satisfaction to do that.

*[He later elaborated on this:]*

It made me feel like they were a permanent part of me. Like they were more a part of me. I was becoming more of them — or they were becoming more of me.

## V. THE COMPULSION — "IT NEVER COMPLETELY GOES AWAY"

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### **STONE PHILLIPS: Is it still there? Does it ever go away?**

In part. No, it never — it never completely goes away. I wish I — there was some way to completely get rid of — of the compulsive thoughts, the feelings. It's not nearly so bad now that there's — there's no avenues to actually act on it. But no, it never seems to go completely away.

### **STONE PHILLIPS: So the thoughts still come to you?**

Sometimes, yeah.

*[Separately, on the compulsion overtaking his life:]*

Killing became a compulsion. After growing up being fascinated with the insides of dead animals, it became a compulsion.

## VI. FAITH, GOD, AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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*[Asked about his motivations and why he believed he had done what he did, Jeffrey spoke about his former atheism and his subsequent conversion to Christianity:]*

If a person doesn't think there is a God to be accountable to, then — then what's the point of trying to modify your behaviour to keep it within acceptable ranges? That's how I thought anyway. I always believed the theory of evolution as truth, that we all just came from the slime. When we, when we died, you know, that was it, there is nothing.

*[And on his conversion:]*

I've since come to believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is truly God, and I believe that I, as well as everyone else, will be accountable to Him.

*[These statements aired November 29, 1994 — the day after Jeffrey's death. He had been baptised on May 10, 1994, by Reverend Roy Ratcliff, Madison Church of Christ.]*

## **VII. LIONEL DAHMER — FATHER'S TESTIMONY**

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*[Lionel Dahmer was also interviewed separately by Stone Phillips for the same broadcast. Lionel had just published **A Father's Story** (1994):]*

*He fooled everyone. He fooled me... he fooled his probation officer, his attorney, the police... He had bodies in the next room when the police were standing in his outer room.*

*[On the hernia surgery Jeffrey underwent at age four:]*

*You know, the old Freudian castration complex might come to bear here. He was concerned about losing his penis. He asked his mother if he had lost it, if it had been cut off.*

## **VIII. STONE PHILLIPS — RECOLLECTION**

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*[Stone Phillips, reflecting on the interview in a 2007 retrospective:]*

*When I met Dahmer and his father in this maximum security prison, he vividly described — in the most matter-of-fact way — the gruesome impulses that drove him to kill and cannibalize 17 young men. He told me it began with a bizarre childhood fascination with dead animals and a teenage compulsion to dissect them. Chilling words from a serial killer in what turned out to be Jeffrey Dahmer's first, and only, network television interview.*

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## OTHER KNOWN INTERVIEWS

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The Stone Phillips / Dateline NBC interview was Jeffrey's only network television interview. However he gave several other interviews during his imprisonment:

**Nancy Glass / Inside Edition** (1993) — An interview broadcast on Bill O'Reilly's Inside Edition. Shorter, less comprehensive than the Dateline interview.

**Dr. Kenneth Smail / Milwaukee Forensic Unit** (1991, extensive) — Over 60 hours of recorded psychiatric interviews conducted at the Columbia Correctional Institution between August and November 1991. These form the primary source for Brian Masters's book *The Shrine of Jeffrey Dahmer* (1993). Partial transcripts exist in police files (Milwaukee Police Department File 2472) and in Masters's published accounts.

**FBI / Hollywood Florida Police Department** (August 13, 1992) — A 40-page taped interview conducted at Columbia Correctional Institution to investigate Jeffrey's possible connection to the kidnapping of Adam Walsh. Jeffrey was fully cooperative and cleared. The transcript is a public record and is preserved in this archive.

**Milwaukee Police Department Confession** (July 22–August 1991) — Over 60 hours of confession and debriefing with Detectives Dennis Murphy and Patrick Kennedy following his arrest. A partial transcript of this confession (230 pages) is preserved in this archive.