

deviant the shocking true story of ed gein original quotpsychoquot harold schechter

Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein, Original "Psycho" by Harold Schechter

The word deviant often evokes images of the unnatural and the grotesque, and few stories exemplify this notion better than that of Ed Gein. Harold Schechter's book, "Deviant: The Shocking True Story of Ed Gein," delves into the dark recesses of Gein's mind and his horrific acts that shocked America in the 1950s. As one of the most notorious criminals in history, Gein's life and crimes inspired a myriad of horror films and books, making him a cultural icon of fear and fascination. This article explores the life of Ed Gein, his gruesome deeds, and the impact of his story on popular culture.

Early Life of Ed Gein

Ed Gein was born on August 27, 1906, in La Crosse, Wisconsin. His upbringing was anything but typical, shaped by an overbearing mother and a troubled family dynamic.

Family Background

- Parents: Ed was the second of two sons born to George and Augusta Gein. His father was an alcoholic, and his mother was a fanatical Christian who instilled in her children a deep sense of guilt and fear.
- Brother: Ed's older brother, Henry, had a more rebellious spirit, which often put him at odds with their mother. Tragically, Henry died under suspicious circumstances in 1944, leaving Ed isolated.

Isolation and Influence of His Mother

Augusta Gein exerted an immense influence over Ed's life, instilling in him her strict moral values and beliefs about women, whom she taught him to view with contempt. After her death in 1945, Ed's mental state deteriorated significantly, leading him down a dark path.

Crimes of Ed Gein

Gein's criminal activities were not a mere product of his troubled past; they were deeply rooted in his disturbed psyche. His crimes included grave robbing and murder, and they revealed the extent of his deviance.

Grave Robbing

- Motivation: After his mother's death, Ed became obsessed with the idea of creating a "woman suit" that would allow him to become his mother. This led him to exhuming bodies from local graveyards.
- Discovery: In 1957, authorities discovered that he had been robbing graves in the area and had collected various body parts and items, including skulls, bones, and skin.

Murder of Mary Hogan and Bernice Worden

- Mary Hogan: A tavern owner, Hogan went missing in 1954. Gein was suspected but never charged during that time.
- Bernice Worden: The true turning point came in 1957 when Bernice

Frequently Asked Questions

Who was Ed Gein and why is he significant in true crime history?

Ed Gein was an American murderer and body snatcher whose gruesome crimes in the 1950s shocked the nation. He is significant because he inspired multiple fictional characters, including Norman Bates from 'Psycho' and Leatherface from 'The Texas Chainsaw Massacre'.

What are the main themes explored in Harold Schechter's 'Deviant'?

Harold Schechter's 'Deviant' explores themes of madness, the nature of evil, and the psychological complexities of Ed Gein's life. It delves into Gein's background, his crimes, and the societal reactions to his actions.

How did Ed Gein's upbringing contribute to his criminal behavior?

Ed Gein had a troubled upbringing, marked by a domineering mother who instilled in him a warped view of women and sexuality. His isolation and emotional trauma likely contributed to his later actions and disturbed psychological state.

What specific crimes did Ed Gein commit that shocked the community?

Ed Gein was responsible for the murders of at least two women, as well as the exhumation of corpses from local graveyards. His acts of body snatching and the macabre way he used human remains, such as making furniture and clothing from skin, were particularly shocking.

How does 'Deviant' differ from other true crime books about Ed Gein?

'Deviant' stands out for its deep psychological analysis of Ed Gein, providing a more nuanced understanding of his motivations and the societal factors that may have influenced his behavior, compared to other works that may focus more heavily on the sensational aspects of his crimes.

What impact did Ed Gein's crimes have on popular culture?

Ed Gein's crimes had a profound impact on popular culture, influencing numerous films, books, and television shows. Characters like Norman Bates and Leatherface were directly inspired by his life, leading to a lasting fascination with horror and true crime narratives.

What is the significance of the title 'Deviant' in Schechter's book?

The title 'Deviant' signifies Ed Gein's deviation from societal norms and the extreme nature of his actions. It reflects the broader themes of abnormal psychology and the exploration of what drives individuals to commit heinous acts.

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