

Mckenna: Hello and welcome to the first episode of Son of Sam vs. Son of Hope.

Audrey: This is a short, two-episode podcast that will discuss David Berkowitz's tragic beginning, unforgivable crimes, and whether or not he really is a changed man as he claims.

Mckenna: We're your hosts Mckenna Donald,

Audrey: And I'm Audrey Wilson.

Mckenna: Before we begin the show we'd like to thank Dr. Caparelli for being a huge supporter and inspiration. We'd also like to take a moment to appreciate his dedicated research and time in doing what he does. This wouldn't be possible without him.

Audrey: We would also like to remind you that we are high school students and are not licensed psychologists. This is merely a topic that we were deeply interested in studying.

Mckenna: We have done a large amount of research for this project and have used a majority of reputable sources. Of course, we do advise that you do your own research as well if you are unsure of something or would like to know more.

Audrey: If you find any faults or have any feedback, please reach out to us at mckennadonald09@gmail.com.

Mckenna: Lastly, this story deals with concepts of murder, sexual purity, mental illness, abandonment, etc. Viewer discretion is advised.

Audrey: There was one killer that stalked the 70's. Terrorizing women and men alike, David Berkowitz would go down in history with a new name, the Son of Sam, previously known as

Mckenna: the 44 caliber killer. But David wasn't always the notorious killer he is seen as today. He was once a very troubled child.

Audrey: David, originally Richard David Falco, was born to Betty Broder-Falco, a Jewish waitress, and Joseph Heinman, a businessman, on June 1st, 1953. His father was married to a different woman at the time of David's birth and was having an affair with Betty. Betty, however, was single, her husband having left her for another woman almost a decade before. Despite this, she was aware that Joseph was not available.

Mckenna: It is evident that from the moment David was born, he was introduced into a life of lying, cheating, and abandonment by those who should love him. It might not have affected him

directly, but it is an interesting coincidence to think about. How might this have affected his later years too?

Audrey: **That's not even half of it.** The affair between Joseph and Betty lasted three years. When it started, Joseph deemed it could continue only if one rule was followed. Betty could not get pregnant. This, as we know, ended up happening regardless, and Joseph was not happy, to say the least. He despised the child. He ordered that if Betty did not give up the newborn David, their affair would be over. And so, Betty chose to leave their child.

Mckenna: Can you imagine how traumatizing that must have been? To know that your father despised you, that your mother chose him over you. When David learned of these events, he must have been devastated. It was this knowledge that would later on contribute to the development of serious mental issues in David, such as loneliness and feeling as though he was abandoned.

Audrey: These mental struggles will come into play a bit later on, and will be very important in both understanding David's adolescent years and in uncovering him and the motives behind his killing spree.

Mckenna: **You're right, let's continue.** Just a mere three days after David's birth, his mother, with the pressure of Joseph, gave him up to the adoption system. David, however, wouldn't stay in the system for long and would soon after be adopted by a loving, middle-class Jewish couple, Pearl and Nathan Berkowitz. The couple lived in the Bronx, New York City, not far from where David was born. At this point, the couple would change David's name from Richard David Falco to David Richard Berkowitz. The Berkowitzs had no other children, and even after adopting David, it would stay that way.

Audrey: And it is understandable as to why because, as much as the Berkowitzs' loved David, there was no doubt that he had behavioral issues growing up. He was prone to temper tantrums and fits of rage throughout his childhood, lasting long after this childish behavior would usually stop.

Mckenna: And this was only the beginning of their troubles. David, according to his teachers, was a seemingly bright and intelligent boy, but despite this, he just couldn't seem to care about academics. His lack of interest in school brought him average grades, even though many knew he could do much better. Not only did he struggle with finding interest in school, but David was also severely bullied by other students throughout his entire school career. These other kids would make targeted jokes about his religion or weight, often calling him things such as a "fat little jew boy."

Audrey: Did David have anyone besides his mother and father that he was close to or supported by when this was happening?

Mckenna: Sort of. Friend-wise, David didn't have much luck. He had very few friends growing up, and the ones that he did have, he often preferred to be smaller or weaker than him so he could subject them to similar bullying to what he was dealing with.

Audrey: Could this be his way of coping with the harassment he was receiving from other students?

Mckenna: Most likely. It's found that people who are considered bullies often bully to gain some sense of control. David had little to no control over his situation, so maybe this was his way of getting some back.

Audrey: The need for control and power is a trait often found in serial killers. While this trait was found in David as a kid, as exemplified by the bullying that he was doing, this was not a big enough deal quite yet to deem that he would later on become a serial killer.

Mckenna: But David was starting to move beyond seeking control only in his relationships with others and started looking for power in other areas.

Audrey: As David was entering middle school, he was beginning to commit actual crimes. He was prone to acts such as petty theft and arson. The more prominent of these two would be the numerous fires he started. However, David did not escape all detection and was caught by the police after committing such a crime. In a journal of his that was discovered shortly after he was caught, it disclosed that he had committed around 1,400 fires.

Mckenna: That's an insane amount. Could he have started that many in such a short amount of time?

Audrey: It does seem like a lot. But the journal goes into detail about each fire, so there is a chance he did in fact light many of them.

Mckenna: We know he was caught, but did he face any charges?

Audrey: He didn't face charges, but his parents finally decided to bring him to therapy. However, even in therapy, he would continue to go undiagnosed for the rest of his adolescent years.

Mckenna: It's easy to wonder if the course of David's life would have been altered if he had been diagnosed with schizophrenia earlier on. It could have been possible for him to get help tailored

to him or the medicine he might have needed, but he sadly wouldn't be diagnosed with any mental health issues until after he had already committed all of his crimes.

Audrey: It's crazy to think about how one small diagnosis could have saved over a dozen lives.

Mckenna: Yeah it really is.

Audrey: In the midst of all this, tragedy struck David's life again. But this time, he wouldn't become aware of it until it was too late.

Mckenna: David's mother, Pearl Berkowitz, passed away from breast cancer in 1967. David was only 14.

Audrey: David was severely depressed by her passing, because not only was she his mother, but, because of David's lack of friends, she was one of the closest people to him. He later said, in regards to his feelings about her death, "After my mother's death, I lost the capacity to love." Because despite David's complicated relationship with his mother, he still cared very deeply about her.

Mckenna: Before we continue, I think it's important to mention that many of the female victims David would later kill resembled his mother in some way. This may connect to his mindset and motives later on.

Audrey: You're right, a majority of his victims did share common features with his mother. Do you think his killings could be connected to any anger or resentment towards her?

Mckenna: It's quite possible. Continuing the story, after Pearl's passing, David's grades began to drop immensely, despite how smart he was. His grades would stay like this throughout the rest of high school, until his final year when he began to pull himself back together.

Audrey: After high school, David enlisted in the army, and with them was sent to Korea. While in Korea, he started taking psychedelic drugs, specifically LSD. At this time, he also started to send out letters (to who?) that discussed his growing support for pacifism, and the Black Panther Party in the US.

Mckenna: The Black Panther Party was an organization founded in the mid-1960s that fought for Black rights in America, and it was very present during the civil rights movement. Why do you think David was specifically supporting them? Don't the ideas of pacifism go against his later killings?

Audrey: That's true, it does. Maybe he was attracted to their movement because of what he was facing in the war in Korea at the time. He could have seen horrors when he was in the army, and felt the need for pacifism. This support also could have come from David's history of being bullied, and he could have appreciated how the Black Panther Party was standing up for their rights.

Mckenna: That's a good point. And after he returned to the US, he didn't show significant support for the Black Panthers again.

Audrey: When he was back in the US, David served the rest of his time with the army at Fort Knox, until he was honorably discharged.

Mckenna: During this time, he got a taste of Evangelical Christianity, and almost instantly developed strong ideas of sexual purity. He later claimed that these beliefs were the motives behind his killings.

Audrey: Do you think that is true? Could that be the reason?

Mckenna: I don't know for sure, but it seems like that reasoning, along with other factors, could have led to the killings. Anyway, after David was discharged from the army, he found out that his biological mom, who he had been told was dead as a teen, was actually still alive. And if that wasn't bad enough, he discovered that his biological mother had had another child. David was shocked to learn that he had a half-sister as well.

Audrey: These discoveries caused David to feel unwanted and abandoned by his biological mother, and forensic anthropologist Elliot Leyton actually believes that finding out about his birth details was the "primary crisis" of David's life. These discoveries had a large mental impact on David, and could be a large factor that led to his killings later on.

Mckenna: