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Dave pelzer mom and dad

By Bella English, Globe Staff | April 26, 2006 PLYMOUTH - Richard Pelzer's basement office in a professional building on a busy street is painted in brick red, and there are four plaques on the wall: Tranquility, Tranquility, Harmony and Peace. A black-and-white wedding photo hangs around. They're young and happy. There is no hint of the horror that would follow, about a household that would be only calm, calm, harmonious and peaceful. To look at this picture and think of the man my mother became is unthinkable, says the writer who lives in Plymouth. What she has become, according to Pelzer and his older brother David, is a monster who tortured them with unspeakable acts of violence and degradation. David Pelzer's books - including his first and most popular, *Child Called He* - spent years on the New York Times bestsellers list. That book details the horrific childhood he endured in Daly City, Calif., at the hands of his alcoholic mother Roerva. He says he was beaten, choked, kicked, stabbed and half-starving, had to sleep on the basement, and was forced to swallow ammonia, vomiting and feces. Richard says that when the state of California removed David from home in 1973, he, who was side by side with his mother before David, became her next victim. Why she did these terrible things, and why she initially singled out David among her five sons, was never clear. Roerva Pelzer died in 1992. Her husband, Stephen, a firefighter who also drank and failed to protect the boys, left the family when they were young; died in 1980. A year after his mother's death, David's first book was published. Richard's first book, *Brother's Journey*, appeared last year; his second is due for the following month. Ironically, it is Richard's words that most confirm David's version of events, which was questioned not only by some members of his family, including other brothers, but also by some journalists. Still, the weather between David, 45, and Richard, 40, is cold. They saw each other only once, briefly, from their mother's funeral. Cathartic In his first book, Richard admitted that he deliberately put David in trouble, tattling on him and making up stories. He also wrote that he was later beaten and kicked by his mother, that she poured Tabasco down her throat, left him at home alone with a small meal when she took the other boys on trips, and gave him comic books one Christmas while showering others with lavish gifts. At the age of 9, I went from predators to prey, Richard wrote on *Brother's Journey*. The sequel, *'A Teenager's Journey'*, tells of Richard's descent into drugs and alcohol after the family moved to Salt Lake City in his early teens. Is Roerva Pelzer started drinking from five to gallons of cheap vodka per week. Some family members are unhappy with Richard's books. Some believe that he is exploiting his brother's success. Others say they don't believe his tale of abuse, as some have questioned the veracity of David's appalling accounts. Richard started writing after being fired as a tax manager two years ago. He says that after years of hiding in these childhood horrors, even from his wife, Joanne, his writing was made cathartic. Today, he talks to students and social workers about child abuse. He and Joanne and their children moved to Plymouth seven years ago to be close to her family and hometown of Norwell. Five brothers Pelzer, who are scattered around the country, have not been close in many years. Richard was shocked when he first saw 'Kid called it stores' in 1993. He read the book at one meeting and was devastated by the memories she provoked. It started to open up the flood that I closed. I knew what was on the next page. But when others asked him if he was related to Dave Pelzer, he denied it. I was ashamed, he says of his portrayal as the Little Nazi, who helped and complicit his abusive mother. That was true. I couldn't deny it. [As a child] I had to find a way to protect myself, and it had to be on her side, not on her way. He was also angry that his brother opened the family closet and runs ghastly skeletons. It sold 3 million copies and was translated into 33 languages, says Richard. "The world has figured out what all the boys are hiding. In their books, both Pelzers use pseudonyms for their brothers. David lives in Rancho Mirage, Calif. The eldest brother lives in Indiana. The other two are in Salt Lake City. Their mother's funeral marked the first time they had all been together since David was removed from the house nearly 20 years earlier. They haven't been together since then. Within a week, they buried their mother and sold and emptied her house. It was indicated that her estate should be divided between the four boys, leaving David out. After paying the bills, little money remained, but the brothers decided to split things in five ways. They also donated their body to science. Her liver, says Richard, is at the University of Utah Medical Center, where it serves as an example of a coarse disease organ. Very sad family Why was Roerva Pelzer so offensive? David and Richard's explanations range from their mother's claim that she was abused by her mother - an accusation denied by their grandmother - to the possibility that she was mentally ill or overwhelmed by raising five boys alone. Her alcoholism undoubtedly exacerbated any mental health problems she had. It was a mess, a complete recluse, says Roerva Pelzer's cousin, who asked not to be identified. "They're a very sad family. Today says it's his dream dream Five brothers and their families gather over Christmas, which has always been a special time in Pelzer's home - usually a day his mother decorated, cooked, and celebrated. But the tension between the two writing brethren is palpable. "I don't know him, Richard says of David. Honestly, at the moment he is a person who just has the same surname as me. David says: 'I'll never say anything negative about my brother Richard. He says he never saw Richard being abused, but adds: 'I don't know what happened after I disappeared. But Richard says David expressed anger to him about Richard's publishing success. His words are such that I do not deserve to be an author because I have not worked hard enough. He thinks he owns the [family] name. But my writing is good, the thing is intriguing, and as a result people buy it. David says: 'I pray for Richard every day. I pray for all my brethren, but I have a special prayer for Richard. When David was in Boston to give a lecture last year, he and Richard met and chatted for several hours at the Ritz-Carlton in Boston Common, where David was staying. What about? "In a word, behavior," says David. "Richard and I are two very different people. From Richard's childhood role as the Little Nazi, he says he doesn't doubt it. "I think Richard was so scared. The worst thing Richard ever saw was the mom who was stabbing me, and I'm sure it had to really scare the shit out of him. Here's how Richard recalls the Ritz meeting: We were both a little standoffish. We talked about our books. I think he was very surprised that my book was successful out of the gate, and I know it's an attributable name and the work he did. Someday, says Richard, he hopes to apologize to his brother for his childhood complicity. But for that he thinks he has to meet him. I can say the words, but honestly it would be the same thing that would arise on someone's subway and say Sorry. I want to find a way to say words that make sense. I want to learn how to love him. Relatives weighing then are Ruth Cole, 'Gram, who is 96 and lives in Salt Lake City. Family members say that her relationship with her daughter Roerva was at best hostile. I was never allowed to see a lot of boys [when they lived in California]. Cole said in a phone interview because my daughter told me that I wasn't a family member. Alcoholism does strange things for people. Cole believes David has been abused but says his account is exaggerated. She doesn't believe Richard was abused, even though she didn't live in the same state as the family while he was in high school. When Richard was at school, I took him every Friday, and never once did he tell me about any abuse, she says. As for me, it's a lie. I think with Richard, everything is about the almighty dollar. It brethren do not approve of books that have also written. The youngest brother, Kenneth, 36, says he loves his brothers and doesn't want to 'get caught up in the book battle between Richard and Dave. Kenneth agrees that Richard was mentally abused by their mother, but finds a problem with some of his descriptions. 'He's got a completely different memory than mine,' says Kenneth, who is a warehouse superintendent in Salt Lake City. But he remembers the California incident when Richard was 13. Their second eldest brother, who was 17 years old and his mother's favorite, was in the basement of the chandeliers hanging on the ladder. For some reason, he hit Richard right in the mouth with a wrench, splitting his lip and nose. My mom grabbed Richard's shirt and ear cuff and screamed that he shouldn't have been messing around [with his older brother] when he worked, recalls Kenneth. Referring to Richard's drug addiction, Kenneth says: 'Richard wants to just blame it all on mom when much of what happened to Richard was self-induced. He sighs. "It's coming to the point where the whole story is getting older. I love Richard until his death, but you know what . . . Just deal with it, move first, and get through it. All the Pelzer brothers now have their children. Richard is four years old from 6 to 11 years old. It was this family that made it all over again, he says, although it was a difficult decision to have children. I had to ask if it was [offensive] something that is in my blood? Is that something you can't control? If so, I'd rather not bring a child into this world. He describes himself as a good father, and he says it's therapeutic to watch his kids build close ties with each other. In the middle of it two cystic fibrosis and is in and out of the hospital. He and his wife also open their homes to troubled teens who are aging out of the social services system, Richard says. At the end of the new book, he adds a poem he wrote to his mother after his death. "Mom - I love you. And more, I forgive you. . . Now, like you, please let the monsters under the bed be rested. © Copyright 2006 Globe Newspaper Company. Company.

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