

Even if you've hardly listened to the news in current years, you've probably have heard of the name Edward Snowden.

At times this name is mentioned with hatred, and at times it's mentioned with admiration.

Depending on the person you ask, he is either a traitor to his nation or a modern-day hero. How did a young, introverted tech nerd from Maryland turn to one of the most essential and debated figures in recent American history?

In the proud democratic tradition, Snowden blew the whistle on a circumstance that was immoral and illegal to him. While he was working as a tech specialist for the NSA and CIA, he handled the secret system of mass surveillance the US government created after 9/11, which enabled US intelligence agencies to gather the private communications of any of its residents and access them anytime they wanted.

When Snowden discovered that the US government was covertly spying on innocent residents, he chose to risk all and say to the world about this defilement of privacy. This book summary talks about how he was brought up and his profession as well as the views that made him the whistleblower he would turn to.

Chapter 1 – He was given birth to into a family of government officials, Edward Snowden was brought up on the internet of the 1990s.

When we talk about the word "Internet" nowadays, we consider Google, Facebook, and Amazon. These mega-companies have discovered a method to exploit our online time really efficiently that they have become to control the worldwide web.

However, during the 90s, the internet was still in its beginning. It was used almost completely by specialists and tech nerds, it was a place that lacked rules and has mostly extravagant amateur websites and forums, where people across the globe world came together to share unclear knowledge and attempt on different online identities.

This was the internet that brought up Edward Snowden.

Snowden was given birth to in Elizabeth City, North Carolina, into a family of public servants. Snowden's mother was a clerk for the government from a long line of military officials, while his dad was a technical engineer for the Coast Guard. When Edward turned nine, his mother began a new administrative job at the NSA and Snowden family relocated to Fort Meade, a popular US army installation in Maryland. Such secretive government works like that of his mother were usual for the people of Fort Meade.

However, despite the fact he loved spying on his big sister Jessica through his bedroom window, at first young Snowden had no intention of turning into a government spy. He loved technology first. From the tender Commodore 64 computer system his dad took home to his first Nintendo, Snowden enjoyed spending his time playing with — and taking apart— electronic devices of various types.

When his family acquired its first computer with an internet connection, Edward and the machine became close. He spent nearly all waking minutes online, reading about technology and politics and also playing adventure games.

On the internet, Edward discovered a community of people who had similar interests as his and were willing to answer his questions. Not too long, he was talking with tech nerds across the world, debating about hardware issues, cheat codes, or the death penalty. These communications didn't only increase his computer skills; it also assisted create his worldview.

His online friends didn't bother that in reality, he was only an awkward, introverted thirteen-year-old. As a matter of fact, they weren't even bothered. On the contrary to nowadays, when our online profiles have turned to be closely related to our actual identities, the internet of the 1990s was a place of anonymity.

Edward Snowden just had to change his username to turn to anyone he wished, a beneficial ability for the hobby he immediately selected: hacking.

Chapter 2 - Young Snowden began hacking systems and sabotaging the arbitrary instructions that adults obliged him to do.

You don't need to understand your way around computers before you become a hacker.

"Hacking" simply entails understanding a system really well that you can make use of its weaknesses to your advantage. This system can either be a computer system; however, it can also be another system of rules — like your bedtime routine.

Snowden succeeded in his first "hack" on his sixth birthday when he decided that he never wanted to go to bed anymore. Setting the entire clocks in his home a few hours back, he successfully misled his parents into thinking that it wasn't his bedtime yet—till he fell asleep on the living room rug from tiredness!

Sabotaging the arbitrary instructions adults obliged him to do by making use of their own logic against them turned out to one of Snowden's favorite hobbies.

Later, in high school, a teacher disclosed that homework only contributed to 15% of students' total grades. Snowden estimated that if he didn't do his homework again; but, did really well on his tests, he would still get a grade of B for the class. And therefore, he swapped homework time for more time with his computer.

However, his intention to spend his nights online and doze his way through high school was obstructed when he was diagnosed with mononucleosis during his sophomore year. The infection made him really tired to even use his cherished computer, talk less of going to class.

Four months after his absence from school, his high school wrote to authorize that Snowden would need to repeat the grade. The idea of having to go to high school even more than he'd expected shook Snowden out of his sickly, depressed condition. He started finding a hack, and he got one: he applied to college.

Without having a diploma, Snowden was taken at the local Anne Arundel Community College. He would only attend classes twice a week and used the remaining of his time recovering. A few months after, he was strong to write the exam for his General Education Diploma, which is the same as a US high school diploma.

At community college, Mae and older classmate of Snowden's got the attention of his computer abilities, who immediately employed him for her promising online business. From the basement of Mae's home, the two would create websites for companies; make the most of the increasing demand for tech-savvy freelancers and hacking the new internet economy together.

Chapter 3 - The occasions of 9/11 allowed Snowden to want to work for his country — and allowed his quick rise through the ranks of government agencies.

A lot of us recall where we were when we got the news on that crucial September morning in 2001.

Edward Snowden was at his friend's place and business partner Mae when the two of them received a call from Mae's husband. He worked at the NSA and was calling to inform them of the terrorists that had invaded the World Trade Center.

While Snowden was driving home to be with his family member, he passed by the NSA headquarters in Fort Meade and saw the hectic evacuation of the building. Witnessing how his fellow Americans were in some kind of panic, Snowden felt a devoted desire to support his country through this period of struggle. He decided to become part of the military.

However, only a few months into his basic training at Fort Benning in the southern US, Snowden broke his ankle, and his military career came to an instant stop.

While he was getting better on the couch of his mom, Snowden decided he could help his country better by utilizing the abilities he already had: knowledge of computers. He applied for

the security clearance needed to work in a tech position for the CIA or NSA. This acceptance needs a broad background check by the government that can take numerous months to finish.

While waiting for his clearance, 22-year-old Snowden encountered the love of his life — and where else than the internet? Lindsay Mills was a photography student from a different region of Maryland. Immediately after they matched on a site known as Hot or Not, the two began dating

Eventually, Snowden got his clearance and he passed the polygraph tests needed to work in intelligence for his nation's government. For some months, he operated as a night-shift security guard at the newly built NSA facility in Maryland that had funded his clearance process. However, this boring job was only a first little step on what would be a really steep career ladder.

Snowden's rapid rise through the ranks of the intelligence community would not have happened before 9/11. However, in the name of the War on Terror that came after the attack, the US government was quickly increasing its security efforts. Intelligence agencies were always searching for new talent to employ, particularly in the rising field of cybersecurity. If an applicant looked promising, agencies such as NSA and CIA were keen to ignore some job requirements —like a college degree, which Snowden didn't have.

This is the reason why, by advantage of his extraordinary computer skills, Snowden would immediately have major positions at the world's leading intelligence agencies.

Chapter 4 – Although at times he still questioned the rules, Snowden's computer abilities assisted him to get high-level works in the CIA and NSA.

After his short-term entry-level time as a security guard, Snowden was searching for a better means to help the government with his skills.

He started to go for government job fairs, where companies such as Dell, Intel, and Lockheed Martin employ talent for specialist government works done in their name. On paper, these

workers work for alleged companies; but in reality, they regularly report straight to the government agencies that are paying them.

Through a company known as COMSO, Snowden got his first contracting job as a systems administrator at CIA headquarters in McLean, Virginia. There, he was in control of handling the agency's private servers. After working in a basement that didn't have light for numerous months, Snowden was ambitious to witness of the world.

He chose to become an official government worker, which would let him live and work overseas.

In order to do this, he registered for a six-month CIA program to be a Technical Information Security Officer or TISO. TISOs are in charge of handling the technology behind any intelligence operation, from developing computer networks to fixing appliances. They are hired at all US embassies around the globe.

While he was his training, Snowden demanded that his first work after his graduation be at an embassy in the Middle East — he needed to work in new and challenging surroundings. However, he made a huge mistake: he confronted the authority of the CIA.

Snowden and his classmates had become exhausted from the living circumstances in the shabby CIA training center, a transformed motel where they had to use each waking minute. Snowden took it as his responsibility to write long emails to the school director and his superior, the Director of Field Service, to complain about the condition and request action. Surprisingly, this worked: immediately after, the class was changed to a new training facility.

However, during the last day of his on the training, Snowden was requested to go to the director's office. The director of Field Service said to Snowden that by messaging him directly, he had violated the chain of command.

The CIA moved him to work as a TISO for the NSA in Geneva as a punishment for breaking the law. This classy Swiss city was different from the field experience Snowden had wished for, however, it ended up becoming a huge stepping stone. When he and Lindsay relocated to Geneva, Snowden got himself a tech specialist in the middle of the US government's change to technology-based intelligence.

Chapter 5 – While planning for a conference in China, Snowden first became wary of how much the US government was spying on its people.

After a few years of working in intelligence, that was when Snowden first understood what the technology he assisted make and maintain could be utilized for.

While he was working as a systems administrator at the NSA's Pacific Technical Center in 2009. When a colleague bailed out at the last minute, Snowden was requested to go for a conference in Hong Kong to deliver a presentation on China's surveillance of private communications. Within hours, he had to read up on the technology China utilized to check its citizens' online activities, emails, and phone calls.

While he was doing that, he had thought that: If China were spying on its people, why wouldn't the US do the exact thing?

He'd already heard of incidences where the US intelligence agencies had exceeded their boundaries. A few years before, whistleblowers had exposed the President's Surveillance Program, or PSP, which enabled intelligence agencies to bug phone calls without consent. The agencies had since given a report to the public describing the issue. Interested in the incidence, Snowden searched the NSA system for the classified version of the report —however, he didn't find it.

Months after, the classified PSP report got to Snowden's desk mistakenly. He was surprised; besides the name, it was nothing related to the report that had been released to the public. It had full information of a program known as STELLARWIND, which intended for the "bulk collection" of anybody's and everyone's phone and online activities, as well as intimate info as a person's browsing history.

Recruiting the assistance of private telecommunication companies like AT&T, the agencies were curious in gathering the metadata of people's discussions – when, where, and who they had taken place. That type of metadata disclosed not just where a person was at any point in

time and who the person was with; however, it also disclosed where the person visited and the next place she was going to.

In brief, STELLARWIND was a mass surveillance program allowing the US government to spy on its people anyhow it wants it

Initially, Snowden attempted to vindicate his findings. Then he attempted not to bother about it at all. However, in 2011, when he got back to the US to work for the CIA again, he couldn't pretend anymore that he wasn't aware of what he discovered. He became more and more depressed. To top it all, he started experiencing epileptic seizures.

Troubled by ill health and a secret he couldn't reveal to anyone, Snowden made a choice to take a long break from the work he once valued.

Chapter 6 - Snowden planned to probe the US government's system of mass surveillance — and then made a choice to disclose it systematically.

After using some months to get better, Snowden got an NSA position in Hawaii. He wished a new life living in paradise with Lindsay would enhance both his physical and mental health.

Both, financially and professionally, the work was a step-down. Although, Snowden didn't bother. He used his free time to check the NSA's readboards, which are internal news feeds that have the entire reports coming out of a particular department. Snowden had made a choice that he needed to know everything he could about the NSA's surveillance program. In order to browse well, he even made a program known Heartbeat, which accumulated all new and essential reports on the readboards to a single newsfeed.

Handling the NSA's digital calendar was one of his works in Hawaii. 2012, on Constitution Day, he let himself the joke of leaving behind a printed copy of the US Constitution on the desks of every one of his colleagues — the printed paper was an uncommon scene at his place of work, as the majority of the documents were top secret. However, when he read the Constitution

himself again, Snowden was surprised by how plainly the Fourth Amendment mentioned US citizens' right to privacy.

In the digital era, what was more private than someone's browsing history?

Snowden concluded that the government and its institutions were not living by the rule that had directed their creation anymore: safeguarding the freedom and safety of US citizens. In its place, intelligence agencies were boldly infringing people's freedoms and hardly making them safer. He thought and decided that the people had a right to know what was happening.

However, for him to hack the system and reveal its lies, he had to act systematically.

Firstly, he had to get a lot of significant information he could without jeopardizing intelligence agencies' other operations. Afterward, he would have to share the information with select journalists, who could be trusted to disclose the information to the public cohesively and in context.

After a long hunt for journalists with whom to work together, Snowden selected two reporters who had already come under fire from the US government for disclosing its violations: Laura Poitras, a documentarian who had done numerous films about US foreign policy after 9/11; and Glenn Greenwald, a civil liberties lawyer who had published the NSA's unclassified PSP report from 2009. Snowden got in touch with the two through coded emails from his home computer.

Now the question left was who could collect and reveal classified documents to them without being caught?

Chapter 7 – In order to get classified documents out of NSA headquarters and to the journalists' hands, Snowden depended on ploy and ingenuity.

Immediately, Snowden had decided to reveal the NSA's mass surveillance program, he encountered an issue: How can you steal top-secret documents from one of the world's greatest secure institutions?

With the Heartbeat program he had created, gaining access to documents was easy. The difficult part was looking at the files for the type of information that would be beneficial to Poitras and Greenwald. Snowden was aware that anything he did from his NSA work computer would be watched by the agency; therefore, he couldn't just go browsing through classified material. Therefore, under the pretense of "compatibility testing," he started transferring the files to a lot of abandoned computers in the office. Snowden could safely look and organize the documents on these old computers.

Then, he encrypted and copied them to SD cards — a process that could use about eight hours! In order to get the SD cards out of the building, Snowden had to hide them under the tiles of a Rubik's cube he had begun carrying about. To the unsuspecting guards, he became identified as the "Rubik's Cube guy."

Back home, Snowden copied the files to his personal hard drive and transferred them to the journalists from his car, which he drove to various places whereby he could hack into strangers' wifi.

Snowden was aware that immediately the documents got to the public, the NSA would be able to pinpoint him because he was one of the minorities of people with access. He thought of meddling with the documents to obscure their source; however, that would have risked their reliability.

He thought that the public good was really essential than his personal safety, and therefore he shared the original documents.

As the last coup, Snowden requested the NSA for relocation to the National Threat Operation Center in Hawaii. He needed to discover more about a program that is known as XKEYSCORE, the search engine that enabled NSA officials to access the data gathered through STELLARWIND. Snowden was assigned to Fort Meade one final time, where his co-analysts taught him for the new work and taught him how to make use of the system.

XKEYSCORE was really powerful than Snowden had thought. His co-agents only had to just type in a name or IP address to view that person's whole online history. After a time, it was obvious that a few analysts were secretly using the database to read the emails of their relatives, partners or listen to their phone discussions. However, what shocked Snowden was not that jealous government workers could now spy on their partners from their work desks — it was that they could spy on virtually anybody at any time they needed to.

Chapter 8 - When the documents got to the public and the US accused him of espionage, Snowden ran into exile.

Back in Hawaii, Snowden had a sense of certainty. He was aware that the government would find him eventually, and therefore, he began getting ready to leave the US — forever. The really painful part of this idea was not being able to say to Lindsay anything about it since he didn't want to put her into any trouble. After a painful last few weeks in Hawaii, Snowden ran away from the country while she was on a camping journey with her friends.

Initially, Snowden met Laura Poitras and Glenn Greenwald in Hong Kong, where he assisted them to compile the articles and videos that would disclose everything.

On the 6th of June 2013, Greenwald's first part about the NSA program was revealed in The Guardian. A few days after, Snowden decided to out himself as the whistleblower, defeating the US government to the punch. After he'd exposed his identity, a lawyer friend of Greenwald's helped him get a safe house close to Hong Kong.

Although the US has a law to safeguard government whistleblowers, Snowden was aware that he couldn't go back to the country. The documents he had revealed were top secret and that alone could lead to harsh punishment if he went on trial.

Afterward, on the 17th of June 2013, the US formally charged him with espionage, and Snowden had to find a new country to call home. With the assistance of a rising team of lawyers, he applied for asylum in many nations; however, all his applications were rejected— no nation wanted to jeopardize its connection with the US. WikiLeaks editor Sarah Harrison eventually

planned for Snowden to try to find refuge in Ecuador, which had formerly offered asylum to WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange. To avoid being arrested, he would fly there over Moscow, Caracas, and Havana.

However, during their stopover in Moscow, the authorities stopped Snowden. The US state department had annulled his passport, which meant that he and Harrison were stuck in the Moscow airport. After using 40 nights sleeping at the airport – surrounded by journalists – Snowden was given a temporary asylum by a Russian government tired of the condition.

Now, Snowden stays in Moscow, and Lindsay – now his wife – has since gone to join him. From exile, he has sustained his activism, creating numerous online privacy apps. He wished to go back to the US one day.

Permanent Record by Edward Snowden Book Review

Edward Snowden was brought up in the shadow of Fort Meade when the internet was still a free and anonymous community. While Snowden was a child, he liked hacking the systems surrounding him, particularly when he sensed they weren't functioning. After 9/11, he had an extreme sense of responsibility to his country and desired to put his computer abilities into the service of US intelligence agencies.

However, in working for the NSA, Snowden understood how the system was spying on the private communications of US residents, and his anti-authoritarian sense of justice kicked in again. Snowden then thought to make use of his hacking abilities to disclose confidential documents that would tell the public about this violation of their privacy — revealing the US government's system of mass observation from within.

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