

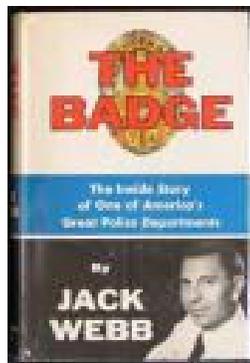
FAQ 7

7.1

In your book you have written a chapter called “The Dahlia Myth” where you claim Elizabeth Short was not a prostitute, and that she didn’t use drugs. Almost every other writer has portrayed her as just the opposite. Why should we believe your version? Maybe you are just seeing what you want to see?

Believe what you want. I’m not out to convert the world or to remake Elizabeth Short into something she was not. She certainly had her faults. Elizabeth frequently lied to a number of people about her personal life, as well as in her regular weekly letters, written to her mother. Like most of us, she was far from perfect. The real Elizabeth Short was immature and rather naive, and when it came to men, appears to have been a bit of a tease. Those are well documented facts.

But, what is not fact, and has been built into what I call the **Dahlia Myth** are the following descriptions. Over the decades, the reading and television viewing public have come to believe in a fictional “Black Dahlia”. A make-believe woman, conjured from the headlines of tabloid journalists, out to sell newspapers; hack “non-fiction” writers out to make a quick buck, along with sincere novelists, who never intended their “Virgin Tramp” to be anything but a character in a make-believe story. Here are some documented samples from the pages of just a few of the Myth Makers. Judge for yourself:



I. 1958- Jack Webb, known to millions of radio/TV audiences as, LAPD’s Sgt. Joe Friday, authors a non-fiction book- *The Badge*- It’s front cover reads, “True and terrifying crimes stories that could not be presented on TV.”

THE BADGE. opens with ten-pages on *The Black Dahlia* murder, (creating the impression that actor-cop Jack Webb was given special access to the secret LAPD files) and his vivid descriptions reinforce both the Biltmore myth, as well as help create and reinforce Elizabeth’s -- “bad girl” image:

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...She [Elizabeth Short] was a lazy girl and irresponsible.
 ...To the sociologist she is the typical unfortunate depression child, who matured too suddenly in her teens into the easy money, easy living, easy loving of wartime America.

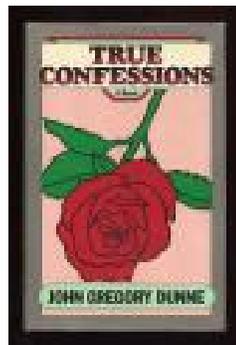
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...Once the Dahlia changed a dollar bill at the hotel [Biltmore] cigar stand and made a phone call, maybe two. Then she waited as though expecting a call back. When none came she walked out the front door, smiling at the doorman as he tipped his cap. He observed her trim form swinging south on Olive Street toward Sixth, the slim legs striding easily, the red heels¹ tapping purposefully on the sidewalk. ... And there the investigation stood still. Five days, from the doorman's last salute to the living, up to the discovery of the mutilated thing, remained a blank.

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...Was it perhaps a woman who had taken The Dahlia as wife in Lesbian marriage? Was that why the body had to be bisected, so that she could carry out the parts to her car?

1975- WHO IS THE BLACK DAHLIA? TV Movie-- Efrem Zimbalist Jr. as LAPD detective Harry Hansen and Lucie Arnaz as the Dahlia. (Technical advisor to this made-for television movie was the real life, but then retired, LAPD detective Harry Hansen, who along with his partner, Finis Brown, conducted the original Dahlia investigation. In public interviews, Hansen admitted that many of the real facts were changed and altered.)



novel-1977



film-1980 starred De Niro & Duvall

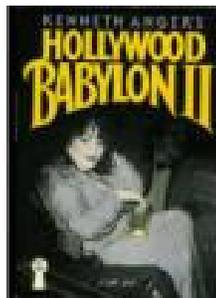
- II. **1977**-John Gregory Dunne's novel, TRUE CONFESSIONS is published. The Dahlia Myth is strongly reinforced when Dunne throws both facts and fiction into the blender. Elizabeth Short, The Black Dahlia becomes, Lois Fazenda, "The Virgin Tramp." Both are age- 22, both born in Medford, MA. Both Hollywood wannabes. Neither has the money to pay for dental care, so each uses candle wax to fill the cavities in her teeth. Lois in her Arab-girl costume is an extra in Warner's new film-- CASABLANCA. Lois was a prostitute, giving blowjobs to the manager at the Military PX in Santa Barbara, where she worked, before coming south to Hollywood. Lois, young and beautiful is hired by Madam Brenda Samuels (Brenda Allen) and becomes

¹ SKH-NB: In truth the shoes worn by Elizabeth Short that night were black, and were recovered by LAPD, but never mind, better to make them red, we all know what kind of woman wears red shoes.

part of her stable and “escort service.” Lois becomes involved in lesbianism, and makes porno movies. She has a rose tattoo on her vagina. LAPD corrupt cops on the take, protect the prostitution ring. Lois is found tortured and brutally murdered. Her body had been surgically bisected--cut in half-- and carefully posed on a vacant lot in Los Angeles. Her murder becomes headlines for months. As a joke, the primary detective nicknames her “The Virgin Tramp,” Knowing the catchy name will sell thousands of copies, the L.A. Press decides to run with the sobriquet. (Dunne’s novel was made into a Hollywood film in 1980, starring Robert De Niro and Robert Duvall.)

- III. **1984-** Kenneth Anger’s- photo-journal- HOLLYWOOD BABYLON II –
A follow-up to his original 1960 book, the *New York Daily News* blurb on the back cover says it all:

‘OUT TRASHES THE ORIGINAL IN GOSSIP, GORE, AND GROSSNESS..
SO MORBIDLY FASCINATING, IT’S HARD TO PUT DOWN!’



In Anger’s book, for the first time the public is shown some of the actual Black Dahlia crime-scene photographs, depicting the brutal cuts to the mouth and the clean surgical bisection of the body.

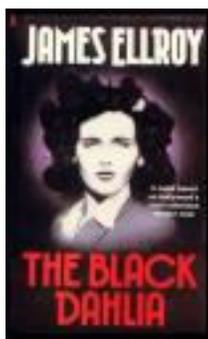
Below are some verbatim excerpts from his book, which helped to further mystify and mythify.

“Slashed breasts covered with cigarette burns” “deep gorge in thigh had once been decorated by a rose-tattoo”. . . ., torture session last three days” “It was not long before she slid into prostitution.” Last seen at Biltmore by doorman... Corpse when discovered had red hair. Hennaed... Although she never in her life used henna—“she died a Scarlet Woman.” “After the blood had been drained the pieces had been cleaned, and the hair shampooed, hennaed, and set...”

(SKH- NB: Again “the Scarlet Woman.” This time it is not her shoes, but her hair! In all of the above descriptions, The ONLY FACTUALLY ACCURATE statement relates to—the washing of the body. Everything else, including the comments that the suspect washed dyed-red and set her hair-- are all untrue.

Kenneth Anger’s book with its brutal images of sadistic torture visually seared the Black Dahlia murder into the collective psyche. Forty years after her murder Anger had this to say in 1987:

“Her story belongs to L.A.’s Shadowland, a twilight zone haunted by the mystery of her murder to this day.”



IV. 1987- James Ellroy's *THE BLACK DAHLIA* –

Ellroy's bestselling novel, written nearly twenty-years ago, mixed real names, real locations, and a real police investigation, with fictitious ones. It is impossible to distinguish his imagined created story from real events. That was his intent. Ellroy never meant it to be real. He has always maintained it is a dramatic work of pure fiction!

Ellroy's novel has recently been made into a major motion picture and is scheduled to be released in either September or October, 2006. The film is an adaptation of his fictional novel and does not purport to offer a real solution to the Black Dahlia murder.

The current BLACK DAHLIA film rights were optioned by the studios from Ellroy nearly twenty-years ago, shortly after James published his novel. The original story and current film have absolutely nothing to do with myself, my 2002 investigation, or my father, Dr. George Hill Hodel.

Below is a verbatim excerpt from the CBS television special, *48 HOURS, BLACK DAHLIA CONFIDENTIAL*, which aired November 27, 2004. ***On the record, unconfidentially speaking, and not so very hush-hush***, here is what James Ellroy had to say about the REAL LIFE-- ELIZABETH SHORT.

Erin Moriarty/James Ellroy interview on *CBS' 48 HOURS- BLACK DAHLIA CONFIDENTIAL*, 11/27/04:



(double click to play Ellroy-Moriarty audio sound bye)

Erin Moriarty:

:

But that clean-cut image of Elizabeth Short did not sell newspapers. Crime novelist James Ellroy. How was Elizabeth Short portrayed in these years since she was killed?

James Ellroy:

Portrayed as a prostitute. It isn't true. Portrayed as a movie mad-girl who got a part in a lot of movies of the time, including *CASA BLANCA*. It certainly isn't true. Portrayed as a wild ass lesbian. It certainly isn't true.

7.2

Q: The below information is posted on another Dahlia website and the writer, who claims to be an expert and has studied the Dahlia crime for about ten-years, claims the cigarette burns are a MYTH. You say they are FACT. You both can't be right? I copied his exact words from the site. He say's:

Myth: She was covered with cigarette burns.

Fact: False. There were no cigarette burns.

Origin: A few weeks after the killing, a teenage girl disappeared and then returned home, claiming to have escaped from her abductor. To bolster her story, she burned herself with a cigarette, all of which was reported in the Los Angeles newspapers.

Your writer's information on this is **INCORRECT**. I stand by my original statement. It is not a myth. **During her captivity, Elizabeth Short was tortured and burned extensively. During her torture, the suspect, using either a cigarette or cigar, inflicted 8-9 separate burn marks to her back.** These are not visible in the previously posted public photographs.

7.3

Q: In your book (page 243 & 250) you make reference to a newspaper article in 1980 where you and your partner solved the Hollywood murder of an actor, Charles Wagenheim. Then your father in a letter to you made mention of his murder saying, "There must be a riddle inside a mystery there too." Did you know Wagenheim was quite a famous old time Hollywood actor?

Yes. Charles Wagenheim was one of Hollywood's best known "character actors." That was why the Hollywood Coordinating Council chose to honor my partner, Rick Papke and myself for solving the whodunit. Wagenheim acted in over 200 films for fifty years (1929-1979) and there is an especially nice tribute/bio written about him by Gary Brumburgh that can be found at IMDB Link-<http://imdb.com/name/nm0905688/>

In 1979, while working Hollywood Homicide, I was called out to investigate his murder. The 83-year-old actor had been assaulted and beaten to death at his residence in the Hollywood Hills. My partner and I after several weeks of investigation, were able to determine that "the maid did it." The suspect Stephanie Boone, was a part-time "caregiver" at Charlie's residence and he surprised her during the commission of a theft. She was charged and convicted of his murder.

How sad that after a long and magnificent career in film, and giving so much of himself to others, that in his eighth decade of life, he should fall victim to a brutal and senseless murder.

REST IN PEACE CHARLIE!



Charles Wagenheim as “the assassin” in Hitchcock’s thriller- *Foreign Correspondent* (1940)

7.4

Q: Mr. Hodel, Alex Trebek just asked this question tonight (21 July 2006) on the JEOPARDY SHOW. Don't know if you knew about it?



Double click for Jeopardy Question



Thank you for sending it. Yes, I did see the show. The staff that puts together the questions are very considerate, and call to verify name pronunciation and then follow-up with an e-mail advising what date the question will air.

7.5

Q: Has your book been sold and translated in other languages? If so, was it well received?

Yes, to both questions. BDA was translated by Mssr. Robert Pepin (Michael Connelly's editor) in France as- *L'Affaire du Dahlia Noir*, and published in 2004. (Robert's translation by all reports was spot-on, and captured all the subtleties between the investigation and the family linkage.) The book (both hardback and soft) has been a bestseller in France. I was privileged to make two trips to France in the last two years, most recently in June of 2006, where I spoke at the Pompidou Centre on BDA and presented a slide show. Personally, I find the French, a wonderful people who love to read, and to think. The French "get" the surrealism connections. (They should, after all, they were weaned on them.)

BDA has also sold and is currently being translated into: Greek, Japanese, and Romanian.

7.6

Q: Is your book available on audio tape?

Yes, through the NLS Program for the Blind, but not commercially. It is **available for free** to the blind and physically handicapped through the Library of Congress NLS. Los Angeles Braille Institute information listed below.

Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder RC 56255

by Steve Hodel
read by Ray Hagen
4 cassettes

Retired LAPD detective describes how he pieced together evidence that led him to conclude that his own father--a sophisticated Hollywood doctor who died in 1999--was a sadistic serial killer who committed the notorious, long-unsolved 1947 murder and mutilation of Elizabeth Short, known as the Black Dahlia. Some strong language. Bestseller 2003.

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