

FAQ 23

23.1

Q: I have just read the new CSI chapter printed in 2006 and my question has to do with “Mr. Barnes” and the “Unidentified Man” in the strip-photo. I want to be clear on this point. Are you saying the man you interviewed is the same man in the photo, and he is not “Mr. Barnes” or “Ed Burns”? Does LAPD know this? Does Larry Harnisch know this?

That is correct. The strip photograph shown below as “Exhibit 83” which the hotel managers, Mr. & Mrs. Johnson are looking at IS NOT “MR. BARNES”-- THE PERSON THEY IDENTIFIED AS CHECKING IN WITH ELIZABETH SHORT AT THEIR HOTEL ON 1/12/47, THREE DAYS BEFORE HER MURDER. [The separate photograph identified by the Johnson’s, who they informed the press was “a man connected to a foreign government”, [which I maintain was most probably the photograph of George Hodel, standing between two Chinese officers] has “disappeared” from LAPD files along with the Johnson’s original statements and written interview.]

The name of the man in the strip photograph is also, NOT --“Ed Burns”, To my knowledge the name Ed Burns has never had any official connection with the Elizabeth Short, Black Dahlia investigation. I believe this name emerged from independent speculations made by an anonymous writer presenting his own separate theory.

In 2004, I conducted a follow-up investigation and positively identified the young man seen in the strip photograph [Exhibit 83] and interviewed him. To protect his privacy, I gave him the fictitious name of “Gerald Moss”. At the time of my interview he was 83-years-old. He is NOT “MR. BARNES”. LAPD has known this man’s true identity since 1947, when they originally eliminated him as a suspect, after establishing he had never been to Los Angeles. Their interview, like mine some sixty-years later, established that he met Elizabeth Short in Indianapolis, Indiana in 1946, which is where and when the strip photo seen being held by the Johnson’s--was taken. The Johnson’s are only identifying Elizabeth Short from this photograph, and NOT THE UNIDENTIFIED MAN. [explained in chapter excerpt below]

Yes, LAPD detective Brian Carr knew the truth of this, and I would assume he likely informed his good friend, Larry Harnisch. [The Brian Carr-Larry Harnisch partnership goes back to at least 2001 when Carr tacitly endorsed Harnisch’s theory in the James Ellroy documentary, FEAST OF DEATH. This endorsement came two years BEFORE my book was published.]

I expect both Carr and Harnisch knew the truth and real identity of “Gerald Moss”, probably as early as 1997. What were their reasons for keeping this knowledge from the public? I suggest you ask them.

Below are pages 536-540 from the new chapter of BDA that address and explain the facts surrounding both the “Mr. Barnes” Washington Blvd Hotel, and “The Unidentified Man” [now identified as “Gerald Moss”] along with his personal account to me of how he met, had dinner with, and obtained the photographs taken of he and Elizabeth Short in Indianapolis, Indiana.

Street Receiving Hospital. She was dead in less than an hour. In the transcripts, with his perfect photographic memory, he even recalls the exact time of death: "Expired at 12:39." Rules required the hospital staff to call the coroner's office as soon as practical after death. Georgia Street Receiving staff called the coroner at 12:45 A.M., *only six minutes after her death.*

In his 1950 confession to his crime, my father not only admits his guilt in overdosing Ruth Spaulding, but also connects himself to the murder of Elizabeth Short. The meaning of "Supposin' I did kill the Black Dahlia. They couldn't prove it now. They can't talk to my Secretary anymore because she's dead" now becomes clear. Had he not overdosed Ruth Spaulding, she would have been alive some twenty months later, and available as someone the police *would talk to*: a living witness (and as a woman scorned, very willing) who would not only reveal that George Hodel and Elizabeth Short were dating, but possibly also reveal their patient-doctor relationship.

Washington Boulevard Hotel and "Mr. Barnes"

In an earlier chapter,¹ I identified two key witnesses and a specific location as playing an important role in the Black Dahlia murder in the critical first days of the investigation: Mr. and Mrs. Johnson, the owners of a downtown Los Angeles hotel at 300 East Washington Boulevard. As noted, on January 12, 1947 (three days before Elizabeth Short's body was found), they positively identified Elizabeth as checking into their hotel with a man claiming to be her husband. Using the name "Mr. Barnes," he informed the Johnsons that "he and his wife were from Hollywood." Check-in was the only time they saw Elizabeth. However, "Mr. Barnes" returned three days later, January 15, the morning that her body was discovered. Mr. Johnson made a joking remark to "Mr.

¹ This 1945 suspected overdosing of Ruth Spaulding by George Hodel is the first of three to be identified and documented in this investigation. The second was also a police-reported drugging of his girlfriend Lillian Lenorak in 1950. The third was the knockout drug given to his fourteen-year-old granddaughter Deborah at a Beverly Hills hotel in 1969, where he took her to his room to "recover" and then undressed the unconscious girl and took salacious nude photographs while she slept.

[†] Chapter 12, pages 158-159.

Barnes" that "he hadn't seen him in several days, and he thought he must be dead," whereupon the man immediately became agitated and nervous and fled. The Johnsons were shown photographs taken from the victim's luggage and positively identified both the victim and a *separate* male photo as being "Mr. Barnes." (The Johnsons would later inform the press that the man they had identified "was connected to a foreign government.")

In their competitive rush for a scoop, the L.A. newspapers initially created some confusion over the Johnsons' photo identifications.

In exhibit 83 we see the *Los Angeles Examiner* headlining the story on January 22, 1947. Page 2 shows the Johnsons holding and viewing

Exhibit 83



a strip photograph (seen at the right), which was enlarged by the newspaper. The caption reads, "Mr. and Mrs. William Johnson who identified photos of Beth Short and a man as the couple who registered in their hotel Jan. 12." In fact, the Johnsons' only identification was of Elizabeth Short. "Mr. Barnes" was identified from a separate photo found in her luggage. Because of the potential for confusion, the following day the *Examiner* reprinted the photograph with a caption clarifying that the ID related solely to Elizabeth Short. It read, "CLEW-The Los Angeles Examiner used this picture to enable owners of an East Washington Boulevard hotel to identify Elizabeth Short as having registered at hotel. Man is unidentified." The article went on to inform readers that police were continuing their search for "Mr. Barnes."

It is obvious that from the outset the Johnsons never identified, nor did the police and press believe, that the young man in the strip photo was "Mr. Barnes." Had the Johnsons actually identified the young man in the photo, he would have become Public Enemy No. 1. I believe the separate photograph the Johnsons identified was my exhibit 10, the photograph of Dr. George Hodel most likely mailed to Elizabeth from China in 1946 and subsequently found in her luggage. It shows my father in civilian clothes standing among the Chinese generals, which would explain the couple's "connecting him to a foreign government."

The "Unidentified Man"

Because the identity of the young man with Elizabeth Short in the strip photo has been kept secret by LAPD for almost sixty years, it has become part of the mysterious Dahlia lore. Some say he was Mr.

* Page 76.

† The Johnsons' reference to the "man being connected to a foreign government" most likely came from their identification of him in the photograph. LAPD detectives would not volunteer this information to civilian witnesses, so they had to have seen the connection. Exhibit 10 shows that connection. It is also interesting to note that in the DA transcripts, in the days immediately before he fled the country, George Hodel makes statements to Baron Herring about the Black Dahlia and a picture the police have of him and a girl, though he "thought he had destroyed all of them" (page 477). Is this a reference to exhibit 10, a picture in police custody, he had sent to Elizabeth Short?

Barnes, the actual killer; others believe he was the guilt-ridden writer of a suicide note left on the beach next to a pair of men's trousers and shoes, who in March 1947 allegedly walked out into the ocean and drowned himself. Others believe he was Elizabeth's secret lover. Actually, he was none of the above. My latest investigation has revealed his true identity. In mid-November 2004, I tracked him down and interviewed him. He is a midwesterner, a good and decent man who spoke with me openly. Here for the first time is his story, which tells of his brief encounter with Elizabeth Short as she passed through his city on her way to California. For the sake of his privacy, let us call him "Gerald Moss." He is now eighty-three years old. Gerald met Elizabeth in Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1945, at the end of World War II. He was twenty-four, she twenty-two. Attracted by her striking beauty, Gerald struck up a conversation with her:

I met Elizabeth Short in the Circle, which is in the downtown part of town. She was beautiful, and we started talking and sort of hit it off. Everybody was celebrating the end of the war. We went to one of those booths and had our picture taken together. You know the kind, where you put in fifteen cents and out it pops. Elizabeth was wearing a black dress and I had on a light tan sport coat, but no tie. I gave her the picture of us.

From downtown, the couple took a bus to a popular local eatery. As Gerald recalls it:

We stopped and got a bite to eat and were together maybe all of two hours before she went on by herself. I gave her my telephone number and asked her to call me when she got to California, but she never did. I was never in the military service. I had hay fever so bad that it kept me out. They were afraid if they let me in, I'd wake up the enemy. Back then I was working at General Motors as a machinist.

Gerald went on to say that a friend happened to see his picture in the newspaper with Elizabeth Short, read the story about her murder,

* His memory may be faulty on this, as my source information indicated they met in 1946.

and called him. Gerald immediately telephoned the L.A. police. As he tells it:

After my best friend Tracy told me about my picture being found in her billfold, I called the police right away and told them that the person the newspapers called “the unidentified man” was me, but I had never been to Los Angeles. I told them how Elizabeth and I had just met those few hours in Indianapolis, and that was it.

Gerald Moss doesn't remember being recontacted by the police since he spoke with them back in 1947. The nearly sixty-year myth and mystery surrounding the “unidentified man” is here reduced to its simple truth: a chance two-hour meeting, accompanied by some friendly talk and “a bite to eat,” as Elizabeth Short passed through a midwestern town.