

FAQ 53

(8/30/07)

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Q: I recently viewed CBS's television show, *BLACK DAHLIA CONFIDENTIAL*, and they showed an old 16mm film clip of a bunch of young women riding in a convertible and it said one of them might be Elizabeth Short. Was it really her?

The clip first surfaced during the preparation of an *NBC DATELINE* show on my investigation. that aired in 2003. Producers of that show found the 1945 footage while doing their own historical research on the Black Dahlia Murder.

If it is Elizabeth Short, it is likely the only film footage of her in existence.

Personally, I think there is a strong possibility that the footage IS ELIZABETH. My opinion is not based solely on the striking physical resemblance, but also takes into account other important facts:

They include:

1) Date/Time/Location-

The film footage was reportedly taken on VJ-DAY, (or the day after), August 15, 1945. Six or seven young women are seen riding in an open convertible down Hollywood Blvd. A sailor runs up and kisses several of the women, including the dark haired woman, believed by many to be, Elizabeth Short.

My research has resulted in documentation placing Elizabeth in Southern California in the following years: 1942, 1943, 1944, and 1946. In addition, witnesses place her in Hollywood in the summer months of: 1944 & 1946. DA files provide no specific location for Elizabeth Short during the summer months of 1945 and only indicate that, "she was in Florida during the winter months of 1945." (This wording would seem to suggest she was somewhere else earlier in the year, which allows for the real possibility she could have been in L.A. in August.)

We know the film was taken ON HOLLYWOOD BLVD, just a few blocks from where Elizabeth's would later (1946) be living and sharing an apartment with six women.

We also know that wherever Elizabeth Short was on VJ DAY that she would have been part of a parade and celebrating the war's end --with servicemen. Knowing her needs and habits, I think all can agree on that point.

The physical similarities speak for themselves, full curly hair, high forehead, and the shape of her face. (Author Note- For those readers who picture Elizabeth as painted by her myth,--"with thick Geisha like white make-up and jet black hair" you need to know that description is a Hollywood rendition. In reality, her hair was brown not black. (Elizabeth occasionally dyed it darker, but when she was found in Jan. '47, it was close to its natural brown color.) In the questioned footage, with the sun hitting it full on, we see the woman's hair is clearly brown, not black.

Quoting from his Foreword in my book, here is author James Ellroy's considered opinion:

Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder, Foreword page xxi:

...

A TV magazine show did a piece on Steve Hodel and his quest.

A researcher found a stunning stretch of archival footage. It's L.A. on VJ Day—August '45. Revelers pour down Hollywood Boulevard. It's one long traffic jam.

It's Technicolor glare and soaring spirits.

Girls lean out of cars and ride flatbed trucks. Soldiers and sailors run up and grab kisses. There's a pretty, dark-haired girl caught in close-up. It's most likely Betty Short.

I've screened the clip fifty times. I've chosen to believe it's her. Every viewing convinces me more.

There's Betty alive and unmarked by mystification. It's a gift to the man who wrote this brilliant and passionate book. It's a consolation prize for the man who destroyed his patriarchal bond. It's the love gift of a daughter.

There's Betty. She's young. She's vibrant. *She lives.*

--James Ellroy
1/23/04

August 15, 1945 Hollywood Blvd-- VJ DAY celebration







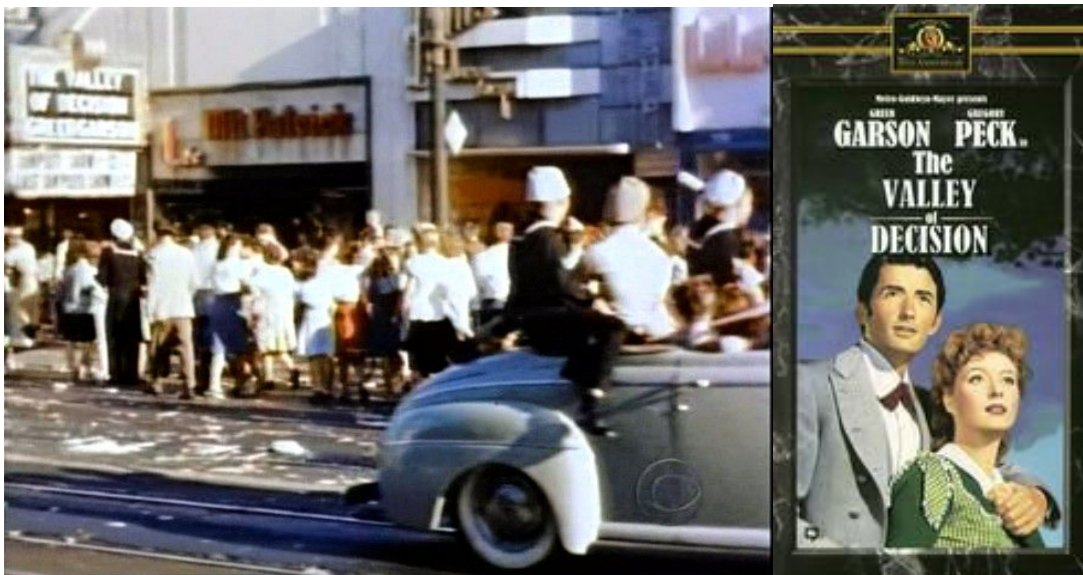


August 15, 1945 VJ Day Hollywood Bl., near Cherokee Ave

1940's Hollywood- "A Small World."

By viewing the VJ DAY footage frame by frame I was able to determine that it was shot from the north-side of Hollywood Blvd, looking south. A movie house can be seen in the upper left of the frame and the marquee reads, "*The Valley of Decision*". Local newspapers from the summer of 1945 list that film as playing in Hollywood at the RITZ THEATRE, at 6656 Hollywood Bl. (south side)

The Valley of Decision starred Greer Garson and Gregory Peck, and as so many times before in this investigation, in the "small world department" the film's director was- Tay Garnett. I referenced Garnett in BDA as a well known early Hollywood film director, whose filmography lists dozens of films, some of which became Hollywood classics, including: *Mrs. Parkington* (1944), *The Postman Always Rings Twice* (1946) and *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* (1949). In 1962 Kiyo and I would purchase Garnett's Laurel Canyon built hilltop mansion, and live there for three stormy years. A second family connection and even larger irony—Garnett's Costume Designer for *Valley of Decision* was none other than—the talented, Marion Herwood Keyes, the attractive personal secretary to--- Dr. George Hill Hodel.



August 15, 1945

The Valley of Decision playing at The Ritz Theatre, 6656 Hollywood Bl.



1. Dr. Hodel's Sowden/Franklin House
2. Florentine Gardens/Mark Hansen residence at rear
3. Columbia film studio (Fred Sexton's employer in 1940's)
4. Man Ray residence (1940-1950)
5. LAPD Hollywood Station (Hodel surveillance tapes recorded from basement Feb.18-March 27, 1950)
6. Ritz Movie Theatre (VJ film footage shot here)
7. Elizabeth Short's 1946 residence apt (dollar-a-day rent shared with six other women) Chancellor Hotel.
8. Four Star Grill (Probable "Hollywood Cocktail lounge" where Elizabeth Short met and befriended artist Arthur James. (Elizabeth posed for several paintings for him during Aug-Oct, 1944))



Article placing Elizabeth Short in Hollywood Aug-Nov. 1944

Update 9/15/07***

Regarding Elizabeth Short's movements since originally posting this FAQ I have received numerous e-mails claiming that the LADA REPORTS document that Elizabeth was absent from CA during 1944-5. They DO NOT. The below document is a true and unaltered scan of page 4 of Lt. Jemison's Oct 28, 1949 report to the grand jury. As can be seen (at least in this DA summary) her movement and whereabouts for the summer months of 1944 and 1945 --ARE UNKNOWN and UNDOCUMENTED.

Scan of page 4 of Lt. Jemison's Report to Grand Jury (Oct. 1949)

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Also the victim's doctor, as he is a suspect and he is unknown. (Victim has stated to several persons that she was taking treatments from a Los Angeles Doctor for female trouble and asthma just prior to her death.)

MOVEMENTS AND ACTIVITIES OF
ELIZABETH SHORT, VICTIM

- 12/15/42 She left her mother, Mrs. Phoebe May Short, in Medford, Massachusetts and went to her father, Cleo A. Short, and lived with him at Mrs. Yankee's house on Nebraska Street, Vallejo, California.
- 1/28/43 She and her father moved to ^{1028 1/2 W. Street} 36 ~~Long~~ and lived with Mrs. Yankee.
- 1/29/43 She went to Camp Cook and worked in the P.X. handling small store and confections.
- 9/28/43 She left Camp Cook.
- 12/1/43 She went to Miami Beach and worked at the Rosedale Delicatessen.
- * 3/ /44 She went to Atlanta, Georgia.
- * 4/ /44 She went to Miami Beach, Florida.
- * 9/ /45 She went to St. Clay's Restaurant and worked there at 175 High Street, Boston, Mass.
- * 12/ /45 She went to Jacksonville, Florida.
- * 2/ /46 She went to her mother, Phoebe Short at Medford, Mass.
- 6/1/46 She left her mother at Medford, Mass. and went to Indianapolis, Indiana.
- 6/24/46 She went to Chicago, Ill. and registered at the Park Row Hotel.
- 7/7/46 She left Chicago to go to Long Beach, California, saying she was going there to marry Gordon Flickling. She did not marry him, but did live with him.
- 7/22/46 She moved into the Washington Hotel, Long Beach with Gordon Flickling.
- 8/8/46 She moved into several other small unknown hotels in Long Beach remaining approximately the five-day