

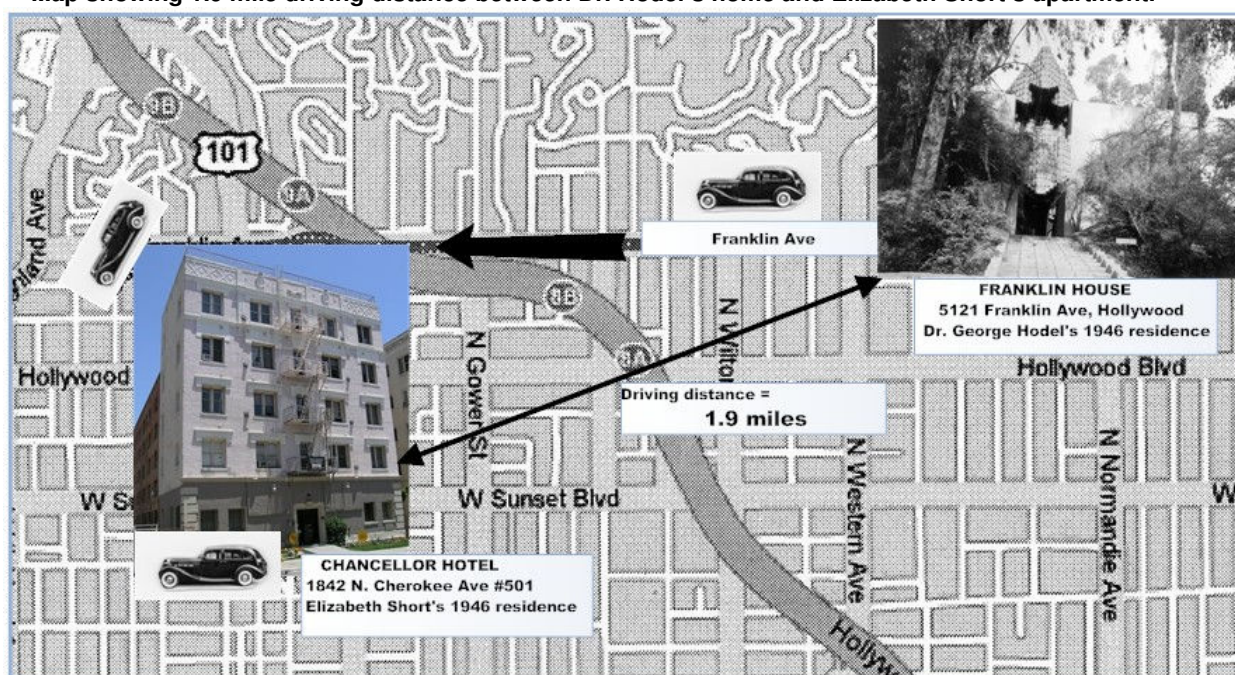
## FAQ 54

(Sept. 1, 2007)

### 54.1

Alex Constance, a 44-year old personal friend and hair stylist to Elizabeth Short in a 1947 police interview two days after her murder, described an earlier incident when he saw the victim picked-up, “on a date” at her Hollywood apartment by a jealous suitor, “that she feared, but was afraid to break up with.” Constance described the boyfriend’s car as a, “1937 black sedan.” (This description fits the car seen at the crime scene and is identical to the car owned and driven by Dr. George Hill Hodel.)

Map showing 1.9 mile driving distance between Dr. Hodel’s home and Elizabeth Short’s apartment.



Excerpt from the OAKLAND TRIBUNE, January 18, 1947:

...

Alex Constance, 44, Hollywood hair stylist who said he dressed the murdered girl's hair and sometimes took her out, said she had told him she was afraid of the marine but was afraid to turn down dates with him because he was so jealous.

Constance said he once saw the man arrive at Elizabeth's apartment driving a dark-colored 1937 sedan.

Residents near the lover's lane where Miss Short's hacked and severed body, scrubbed clean and fitted together was found Wednesday, reported seeing an old black sedan, stop at the curb.

...

At first glance, this appears to be a fairly insignificant account, made by one of many of Elizabeth Short's friends regarding a "jealous boyfriend." Just another scrap of information to add to LAPD's rapidly growing list of-- "possibles".

Apparently witness Alex Constance's statements for the most part-- went unnoticed.

In fact, in my extensive research of more than 200 Dahlia witnesses, over a nine-year period, this is the first time I have seen ALEX CONSTANCE'S name mentioned anywhere. To my knowledge, his statement did not appear in any of the local Los Angeles newspapers.

I only chanced upon it, a week ago, while reading the *Oakland Tribune's* reportage which focused on the fact that Mrs. Phoebe Short, Elizabeth's mother, was coming to their city to meet with her eldest daughter over the tragedy and to make funeral arrangements. (See photos below. Elizabeth Short's body would be buried at Mountain View Cemetery, just two miles from her sister's residence in Berkeley.)

Because of what we now know, Alex Constance's statement in 2007 takes on major significance and adds another link to the chain-of-evidence connecting Dr. George Hodel to the crime.

Had my father been arrested and charged with Elizabeth Short's murder, Mr. Alex Constance, without question, would have become one of the prosecutions star witnesses. Why?

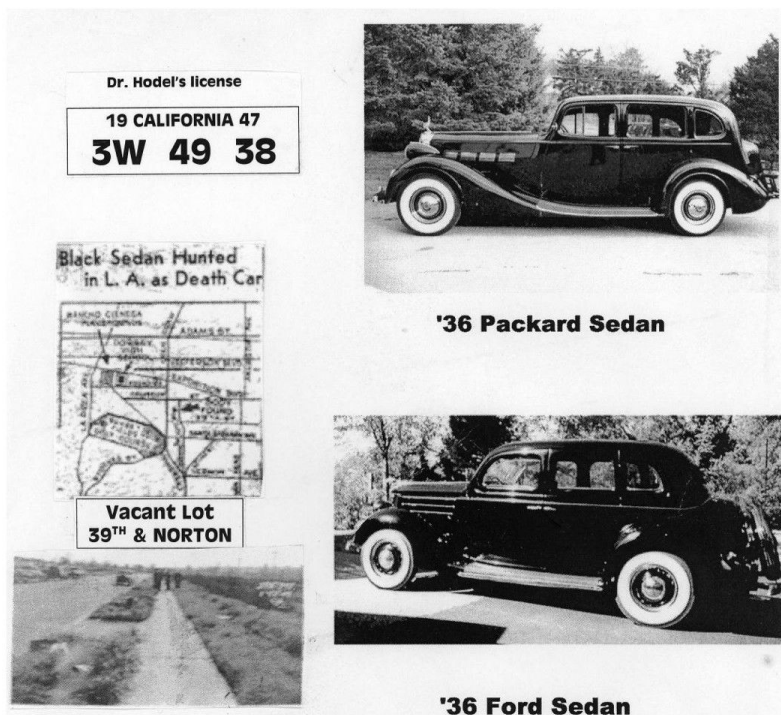
Because his testimony would establish that the man Elizabeth Short feared and continued to date in 1946, drove a vehicle identical to the one owned and driven by George Hodel, and which also fit the description of the murder suspect's car, seen parked for four-minutes, at the vacant lot, near where the body was placed.

The prosecution would argue the fact that while "black sedans" are in fact commonplace on the streets of 1947 Los Angeles, an older model, like a 1936-37 model, and the 1936 Packard driven by Dr. Hodel---WAS NOT.

Other witnesses' testimony would establish that Elizabeth Short had told them "she was dating a man named George, believed to be a lieutenant, who she was going to marry when he got out of an L.A. hospital on November 1, 1946." (It is believed George Hodel was discharged from the hospital in late October or November and returned to his Franklin residence.) Several more DA witnesses (Lillian Lenorak, Joe Barrett, Mattie Comfort) would be called to establish that George Hodel knew and dated Elizabeth Short and she had been to the Franklin House.)

(SKH NOTE- The article's reference to "Red, an ex-marine" as this possible suspect, is based on the fact that Robert "Red" Manley had not yet been picked up and interviewed by LAPD and three day's into the investigation, was thought to be "the marine and jealous former suitor." He was not. We know that he could not be the same suspect as he only met Elizabeth AFTER she moved to San Diego in December, 1946. "Red" was never at her Hollywood apartment, and he owned a Studebaker, not a 1936 black sedan. Within the next two weeks he would be picked up by LAPD and eliminated as the suspect.)

## GEORGE HODEL'S 36 PACKARD COMPARED TO 36 FORD MODEL



### BLACK DAHLIA SUSPECT VEHICLE 39<sup>th</sup> & Norton

On January 15, 1947, at 7:00 AM, just four-hours before the body of Elizabeth Short would be discovered, Liemert Park resident, Robert Meyer observed what he described as a "possible 1936-37 Ford sedan, black-in color," drive up and stop at the curbside, near 39<sup>th</sup> & Norton. The vehicle stopped for about four-minutes at the exact location where Elizabeth Short's body was posed. Because of weeds blocking his view, and the fact that he was approximately 1/2 block away from the vehicle, Meyer's was unable to get a clear description of the driver, or be absolutely positive on the make and year of the suspect vehicle.

Newly released DA reports (May, 2003) helped to establish that the victim was slain on January 15, 1947 at approximately 4:00AM, just two or three hours before this vehicle was observed by Meyers. Coroner's reports establish this time of death, by the fact that in examining the body at the vacant lot, "rigor mortis had not yet set in when officers arrived at the scene." (10:50AM)

DA documents show that at the time of the Dahlia and other late 1940s murders, Dr. George Hodel owned, drove and had garaged at his Franklin Avenue residence, a- 1936 Packard, sedan, California license 3W 49 38, black in color. (See above comparison of vehicle descriptions.)

#### Suspect vehicle description on additional serial crimes:

Kidnap/Rape of victim Sylvia Horan, 2/3/47- "Suave stranger in a black vehicle."

Kidnap/Murder of victim Rosenda Mondragon, 7/8/47- "dark colored sedan."

Kidnap/Murder of victim Jean Spangler, 10/7/49- "last seen seated inside a black sedan with a handsome man in his 30s at the parking-lot of the Hollywood Ranch Market." (Across the street from the Man Ray residence at 1245 N. Vine St.)



## WEATHER

Clear today and tonight; not quite so cold tonight; Sunday, partly cloudy; gentle variable winds.  
RAINFALL UP TO 4.38 A.M.  
Yesterday, 30.7; this year, 5.16; last year, 13.17; normal, 8.52.  
Complete Weather Forecast Page 3

# Oakland Tribune

ASSOCIATED PRESS...WIREPHOTO...WIDE WORLD...UNITED PRESS...CHICAGO DAILY NEWS FOREIGN SERVICE

## HOME EDITION

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OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA, SATURDAY, JANUARY 18, 1947

15¢ SUNDAY

NO. 18

## Ex-Marine Is Suspected in Torso Murder

### Victim's Mother Comes Here to Aid Search For Daughter's Killer

Los Angeles authorities today followed a trail of two dozen boy friends in their search for the murderer of Miss Elizabeth (Betty) Short, 22, whose nude body was found bisected and badly mutilated in a Lovers' Lane early Wednesday.

Police said their number one suspect appeared to be a red-haired ex-Marine, who was seen with the young movie extra—known as the "Black Dahlia"—a week before she was strung up nude and tortured to death, probably by a jealously-maddened suitor.

Acquaintances said they saw the girl with the red-haired man at San Diego, where police first came across her nickname, "Black Dahlia," which they learned was given her by friends because of her passion for sheer black dresses and her startling black hair.

The girl's mother, Mrs. Phoebe Short, 46, of Medford, Mass., is flying to Oakland today and is expected to arrive shortly after noon, to be met by another daughter, Mrs. Virginia West, 25, of 2614 Warring Street, Berkeley.

Pictures on Page 3

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Associated Press reports from Boston said Mrs. Short took off last night and would arrive in Los Angeles at 8:10 a.m. today. She is to confer with authorities there and then board another plane at 9:30 a.m. for Oakland.

The mother was accompanied to the plane in Boston by the Rev. Alexander Henderson, of the First Baptist Church in Medford. She brushed rapidly past reporters and declined to comment on the case, which has been described as the most sadistic sex crime in recent Southern California annals.

Her mission here, it is understood, is to consult with Mrs. West, oldest of her five daughters, and to arrange for funeral services in Berkeley for the slain girl.

Officers said that on January 8, the day Miss Short left San Diego, she received a telegram from Huntington Park, near Los Angeles, reading:

"Wait and I'll be down for you." It was signed "Red."

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### ANOTHER SUSPECT

Another suspect is an unidentified man who reportedly paid Miss Short's rent at a Hollywood hotel. He was said to own an old black sedan.

Another friend questioned in the case is former Army flier Joseph Gordon Fickling, now employed by Twentieth Century Airlines, Raleigh, N.C. Police said he is not a suspect.

Fickling disclosed he received a letter from Miss Short written January 8, the day she disappeared, in which she said she hoped to go to Chicago to model.

A wardrobe trunk of Miss Short's discovered in Union Station contained love letters from Fickling, which indicated he didn't know whether she was more interested in him than in any other of her 20-odd boy friends.

### VASTLY CHANGED

Described as lovely, innocent and shy in 1943 when she first came to California for her health, police said the black-haired beauty had changed to a man-crazy adventurer during three years of gay living in four Southern California cities.

Homicide officers piecing together her career discovered their list of suspects was as numerous as the men she attracted in Santa Barbara, Long Beach, Hollywood and San Diego.

Cleo Short, sister of the dead girl, was located today in Los Angeles and told detectives:

"I want nothing to do with this." He said that he had separated from his wife several years ago and left the family.

"Five years ago, Elizabeth wrote to me and I sent her some money to come out here. We set up house-keeping, but she wouldn't stay home."

"In 1943, I told her to go her way. I'd go mine."

The below photo is unusual in that it shows Mrs. Phoebe Short with three of her four daughters: Dorothea, Eleanor and Muriel. (Also, pictured below are Elizabeth Short's Hollywood friend, Anne Toth and her San Diego acquaintance, Dorothy French)

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pg. 3 photos

Oakland Tribune, Saturday, Jan 18, 1947

Mrs. Phoebe Short, 46 (extreme left), of Medford, Mass., mother of Elizabeth Short, 22, Los Angeles mutilation murder victim, leaves her home in Medford, Mass., to fly to Oakland, where she is to meet another daughter today. With her here are three other daughters. (Left to right) Dorothea, 24; Eleanor and Muriel, 18.—AP Wirephoto.

Aid in solving the murder of Elizabeth Short was sought from Dorothy French (left), of San Diego, and Anne Toth (right), British film actress. (Story, Page 1.)—AP Wirephotos.

## OAKLAND REPRESENTED AT JR. CHAMBER CONFERENCE

Oakland Junior Chamber of Commerce members will be among those present when 200 representatives of 26 junior chambers throughout Northern California meet at the Hotel Claremont tomorrow for a day-long Northern California Conference of Junior Chambers.

Weldon L. Richards, president of the Berkeley Junior Chamber of Commerce, conference host group, announced a luncheon meeting, to follow a 10 a.m. to 12 noon registration period, will have Robert Elliot, San Francisco newspaperman, as the principal speaker. His topic will be "Problems and Opportunities of Northern California."

Luncheon speakers also will include Stan Lowry, Glendale, state president, and Henry Frost, past state president. Other state officials to attend are Tom Holden, Santa Cruz, and Don Smith, Huntington Park, national directors, and Grover

How to