

Chapter Fifteen

The devil is in the details.

Gustave Flaubert

So far we've learned that, in the opinion of a court certified handwriting expert, the writings of Dr. George Hodel link him to L.A.'s Black Dahlia Avenger, the Chicago Lipstick Killer of the 1940s, and his 1960s California counterparts "Z" and Zodiac. Before we move on, let's take a minute to consider some of the numerous and distinct similarities between the various communications:

- cut-and-pasted letters
- block printing, appearing very similar in style
- multiple mailings (Avenger, 14; Zodiac, 25)
- taunting words and childlike pictures
- deliberate misspellings, feigned illiteracy
- double postage
- sadistic and misogynistic content
- addressed to police and press
- avenger theme (wronged or scorned by a woman)
- demands for publicity
- piece of victim's clothing and or personal effects mailed to press to prove he was the killer
- postmortem messages written in lipstick on the wall of a victim's residence, on a post outside "the murder room," on a victim's body and in marker pen on a victim's vehicle

There are, in addition, several fascinating anomalies found in the penmanship, word usage, and even type of paper used by Zodiac that are obvious even to the untrained eye. Since the common threads that run through the notes are so important, I'm going to take the time to illustrate these characteristics one by one.

I. Letters "C" and "G"

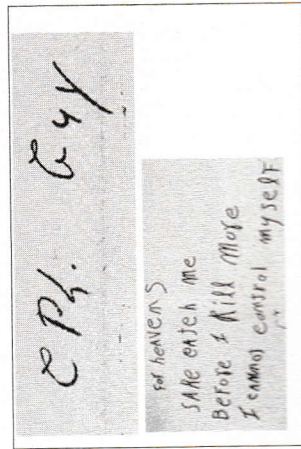
Figure 15.1 shows examples of George Hodel's highly unusual double-looped letter G in a 1999 document signed weeks before his death, and double-looped C's and G's and in two samples from 1949 (Figure 15.2). The same double-looped C's and G's appear in the "Corporal Guy" notation on an Elizabeth Short photo and the Frances Brown lipstick writings (Figure 15.3).



15.1



15.2



15.3

Figure 15.4 is the brown wrapping paper that contained a human ear that was addressed and mailed to Mrs. Degnan in 1946. At first glance the handwriting style, with its flared letters, appears quite different from George Hodel's. However, closer scrutiny reveals a curious similarity to the double-looped letter "C" in the word "Chicago." Compare that to the known cursive samples of the letter "G" in George Hodel and G. Hill Hodel, which also contain double loops.



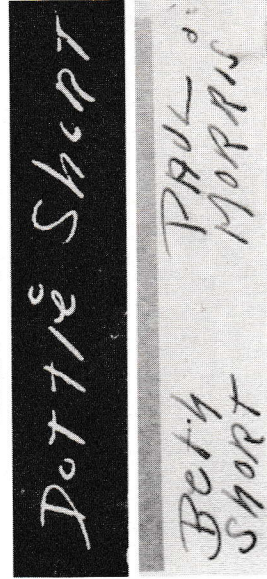
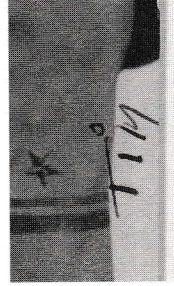
15.4

2. Dots and circles over lowercase letter "t"

Figure 15.5 illustrates the Zodiac's tendency to use a circle rather than a dot or period. Evidence of this is seen in the "Exorcist" and "L.A. Times" missives. Compare these to my father's notations in Elizabeth Short's photo album (Figure 15.6).



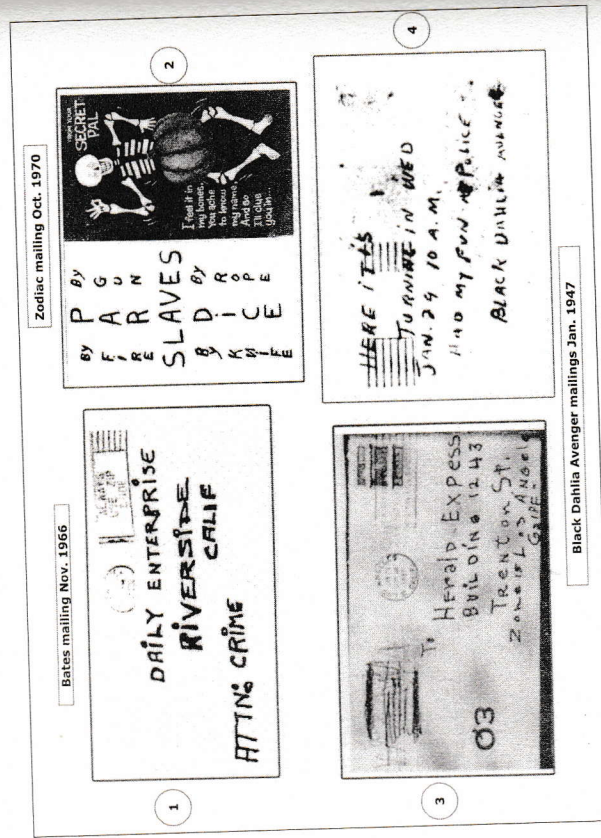
15.5 Zodiac handwriting from the San Francisco Chronicle and Los Angeles Times



15.6

3. Lowercase "i"

The following mailings from Zodiac and the Black Dahlia Avenger span more than twenty years. In each note the killer printed in uppercase with the sole (and unusual) exception of the letter "i."



15.7

1. Zodiac's Bates confession envelope—1966
DAILY ENTERPRISE RIVERSIDE CALIF ATTN : CRIME
2. Zodiac's Halloween Card—1970
BY FIRE—BY KNIFE—PARADISE
3. George Hodel "Avenger" envelope—1947
BUILDING
4. George Hodel "Avenger" surrender note—1947
HERE IT IS TURNING IN WED JAN. 29 10 A.M.
HAD MY FUN AT POLICE
BLACK DAHLIA AVENGER

4. Dot inside letter "O"

Figure 15.8 on page 179 shows examples of Zodiac's characteristic dot inside the letter "O" as seen in the Bates poem and various San Francisco mailings. Researchers have speculated that Zodiac intentionally

inserted the universally acknowledged symbol for the sun. But I believe there's a more mundane explanation.

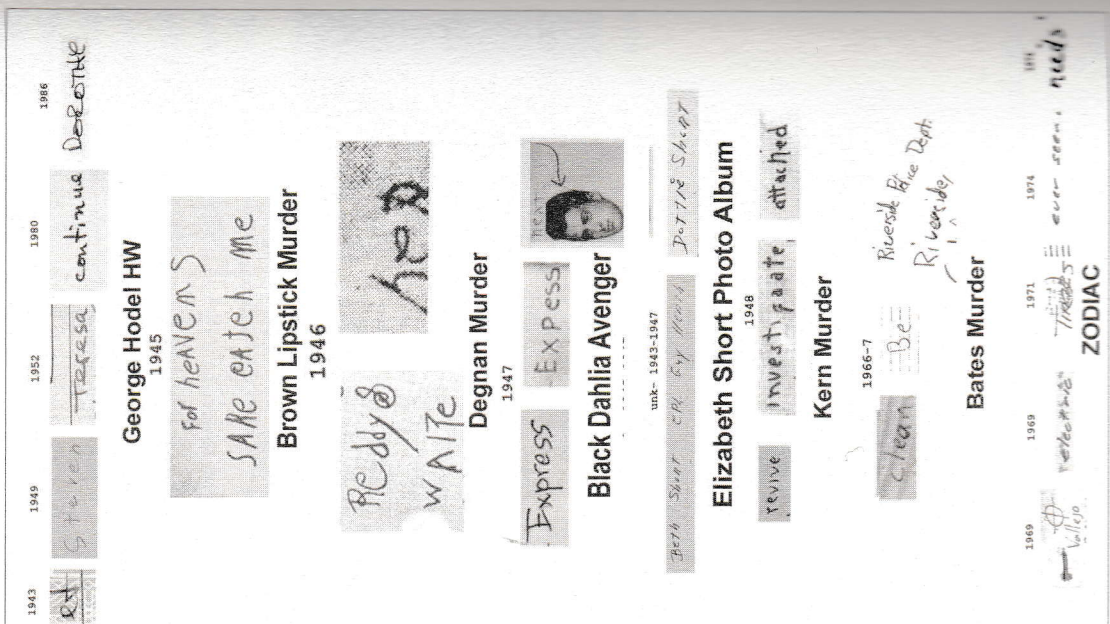
Figure 15.9 was written by my father on the back of a photograph, which he mailed to my mother, Dorothy "Dorero" Hodel, at Christmas, 1981.¹⁵ At first glance the letter "O" in the word "Love" appears to be a circle with a dot. Closer examination reveals that George Hodel formed the letter "O" beginning at the nine o'clock position and ending at the eleven o'clock, where it curves inward and terminates inside itself. Figure 15.10 was written by George Hodel and mailed from Manila to San Francisco in 1986. At normal size it appears to be a dot inside a circle, but when enlarged (as seen at the bottom of Figure 15.10), we can see that the dot is actually the termination of his letter O. Many of the Zodiac letter O's appear to have been written this way.



15 Dorero was my father's nickname for my mother—his own contraction of the Greek word dor (gift) and Eros (god of passion).

5. Typewriter "e"

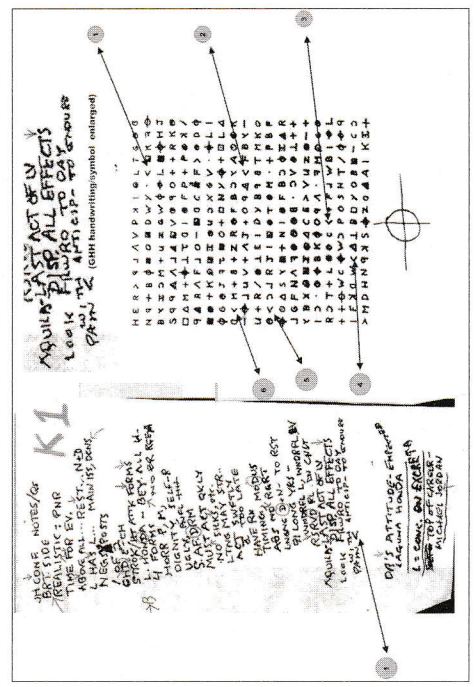
Handwriting samples taken from Brown, Degnan, Black Dahlia Avenger, Elizabeth Short's photo album, Kern, Bates, and Zodiac all show the consistent use of the "typewriter e," which matches the known handwriting of George Hodel.



15.11 Samples of the typewriter letter "e"

6. Mathematical < "less than" symbol

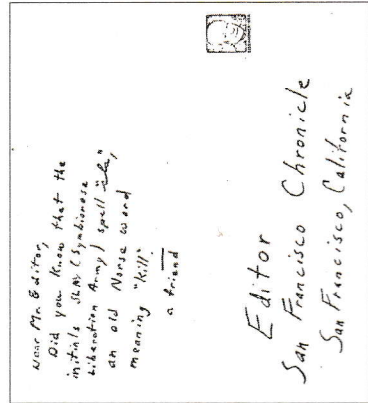
At the bottom of George Hodel's 1990 "June Hodel Conference Notes" (Figure 15.12) he uses this rather unusual symbol: "Look frwd to day with anticip- to endure pain <" Beside it is a reproduction of Zodiac's handwritten cryptogram mailed to the press in 1969 in which he employs the same symbol six times. Though rarely seen, this symbol is commonly used by two types of professionals: mathematicians and medical doctors.



15.12

7. "A friend"

Though their taunts to the press were separated by more than twenty-five years, both the Black Dahlia Avenger and Zodiac mailed letters to their respective city editors offering information and signing it "a friend." Both suspects also used a lowercase "a." In my opinion, the killer's use



15.13



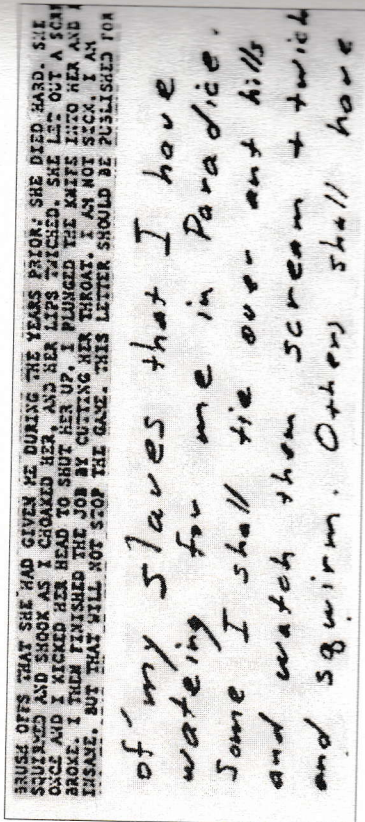
15.14

of this unique signature is neither casual nor accidental. He could be referencing the works of Edgar Allan Poe, who repeatedly used the term “a friend” throughout his short stories. See especially “The Murders in the Rue Morgue,” “The Gold Bug,” and “The Purloined Letter.”

8. “Squirm, Twich [sic] & Scream”

It wasn't enough for Zodiac/BDA/Lipstick to perpetrate his sadistic crimes upon his victims. He also delighted in extending his perversity by providing detailed verbal descriptions of his crimes to the public. In the cases of Suzanne Degnan and Cheri Jo Bates he even mailed letters directly to the victim's family.

The killer's message in the Cheri Jo Bates case shows a pattern of word usage and misspelling that was used again four years later by Zodiac.



15.15

Figure 15.15 shows a section of the typed Bates letter compared to Zodiac's subsequent (*Mikado*) “little list” letter written by hand.

Bates:

“She **squirmed** and shook as I **choaked** her, and her lips **twiched**. She let out a **scream**. . . .

Mikado:

“Some I shall tie over ant hills and watch them **scream & twich** and **squirm**.”

Not only does the killer use the same exact words in a single sentence in these separate writings, but he also misspells the same word “twich,” omitting the letter “t” in both.

9. Bates confession paper and signature

The original crime summary of the Cheri Jo Bates investigation states that the suspect typed his “confession letter” on teletype paper cut from a roll of a “UP model 15 Teletype machine.” He also typed “THE CONFESSION” at the top using all capital letters and, according to some investigators, included a signature line comprised of spaces for 12 letters, as shown below.

THE CONFESSION BY _____

Not having access to the original documents, I'm unable to confirm the accuracy of these statements.

Figure 15.16 shows three of my father's legal signatures. They read: (1) G. Hill Hodel M.D.; (2) Dr. G. Hill Hodel; and (3) George H. Hodel. All three contain 12 letters. It is not a stretch to imagine Zodiac, due to his megalomaniacal ego, would not be able to resist using the actual number of letters in his name.

or hope of receiving assistance in securing such

George H. Hodel
(Signature of affiant)

affirmed) before me this JUL 11 1942

The bearer should also fill in blanks below as indicated.

c/o DR. SARAH ELLER HODEL
Bearer's address in the United States

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement has been executed in three (3) counterparts, any one of which may be considered the original.

George H. Hodel
George H. Hodel

ONE SIX SAMPLE 12/21/92

15.16

Think/TWX

OZLAND LSA
RCA JAN 27 0314
OZLAND LSA

PCAKIL 906 1515
2120 LSP PH
MNL JAN 26 1978

STEVE! TELL DORERO NOT TO WORRY. ALL WELL HERE. JUST WORKING 36 HRS/DAY. WILL WRITE AM SENDING JAN-JUN NEXT FEW DAYS. HOPE DORERO DOING WELL.

ANXIOUS MEET MICHAEL SEAN. P. '3, B RJZJ8AT K'X'=-CO
JP HFSA
TV+SHIEQUEST.

AM WRITING SUGGESTIONS ON FIELDS YOU ASKED ABOUT.
LOVE TO ALL. DAD

OZLAND LSA

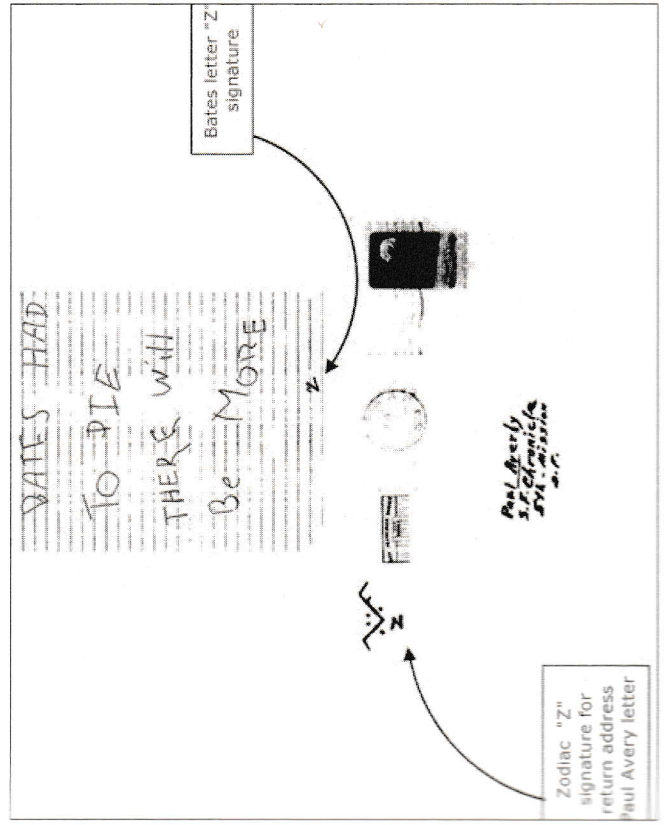
15.17

Figure 15.17 is a reproduction of a Telex teletype sent to me by my father in January 1978. I know for a fact that he had Telex machines (unknown models) installed in all of his fifteen branch market research offices throughout Asia, and received and sent dozens of teletypes a week.

Telex teletype paper would have been foreign and inaccessible to most people who were considered suspects (including past boyfriends and students) in the Bates murder. Yet it was a commonly used item, handled many times a day by business executive George Hill Hodel.

10. Use of "Z" signature Bates/Zodiac

The following is a comparison of the "Z" signature in the "Bates Had To Die . . ." message to the "Z" signature used by Zodiac as his return address for the "Paul Averyly [sic], San Francisco Chronicle" letter.



15.18

11. The Bates Poem

Compare the top line of George Hodel's 1998 "June Hodel Conference Notes" (which was really a poem of sorts, a collection of his thoughts justifying his intended suicide by pills) to the first line of Cheri Jo Bates's killer's poem, which he wrote just minutes before following her outside the library and cutting her throat. Both are divided by a slash "/".

George Hodel—"JH CONF. NOTES/Qs
Zodiac—"Sick of living/unwilling to die."

(George Hodel first line)

(Bates Poem first line)

JH CONF. NOTES/Qs

Sick of living/unwilling to die

JH CONF. NOTES/Qs
 REALISTIC: PNR
 TIME FOR EV. L
 ABOVE ALL... REST... NAD
 L. H. A. L. ... MAIN 152, 1008
 A BE...
 GIVE FOR MY ROOMS
 SING ROOM - BEY ALL W.
 4 ROOM M. 710 BK ROOM
 IDENTITY, SELF
 VALLEY, CALIF
 SAREPACT ONLY
 NO SURE, STR-
 LINE TWENTY
 A Q. TOO LATE
 TIME FOR MY ROOMS
 ABT NO REL TO EST
 LAMER CO. YES -
 NUMBER 120000
 ROSTER ACT BY NY
 ACQUISITION BY ALL STATES
 LEAD. 12
 400 810- 20 00000
 07/11/72

DR'S ATTITUDE: EMBARR
 LAMAR HONOR
 IS COM. BY EXERCISE
 MICHAEL JORDAN

Sick of living/unwilling to die
 cut...
 clean
 if feet
 clean
 blood spouting,
 dripping,
 all over the floor
 dress
 if was dead
 anyway.
 life draining in to air
 400 810- 20 0000
 show work
 die
 this time
 someone I find her.
 I not wait till
 next time. rh

12. Underscores and exclamations

Figure 15.20 shows the Black Dahlia Avenger's use of exclamation marks and underscoring (top row) and compares it to Zodiac's (bottom row).

the people of San Fran Bay Area. They have not complied with my wishes for them to

whome was ever justifiable
why don't you slow some
concern for public sensibility
& cut the ad?

I will be in Los Angeles. I Get

15.20

Taken on their own, any individual piece of the foregoing evidence may be explained away as a coincidence. But at what point does a preponderance of coincidence equal proof? That is typically up to a jury to decide. I, for one, based on twenty-four years as a homicide detective and experience on more than three hundred murders, believe coincidences as numerous as these are not accidental and should be examined further.

del appears to have solved one of the most sensational murders
the history of Los Angeles." —People on *Black Dahlia Avenger*

eteran LAPD homicide detective Steve Hodel discovered that his late fa-
nd known the victim in the infamous Black Dahlia murder case in 1947
geles, the ensuing three-year investigation became the *New York Times*
er *Black Dahlia Avenger*. Publication led directly to the discovery of
e of hidden documents, covered up for decades, that confirm George
had long been law enforcement's number one suspect in Elizabeth Short's
death. A lurid murder mystery that had endured for more than fifty years was
solved.

Steve Hodel, that revelation was only the beginning. With twenty-five years of
nce investigating homicides as an LAPD detective, Hodel's instincts told him
man capable of bisecting Elizabeth Short's body, arranging it in a gruesome and
tableau, and taunting the police and the public with notes and phone calls, did
gin or end his killing career with the Black Dahlia. A chance encounter in the wake
Black Dahlia Avenger's publication led Steve to consider a question as preposterous
s compelling:

**Twenty years after shocking the world in Los Angeles, could
Dr. George Hill Hodel have returned to terrorize California
as the killer known as Zodiac?**



WANTED

MOST EVIL

Avenger, Zodiac, and the Further
Serial Murders of Dr. George Hill Hodel



Steve Hodel

with Ralph Pezzullo

MOS

Avenger, Zodiac, and the Further
Serial Murders of Dr. George Hill Hodel

EVIL

New York Times Best Seller
BLACK DAHLIA