

The Black Dahlia's Three Greatest Myths Myth No. 1—"A Standalone Murder"

"The Black Dahlia murder was a stand-alone. Her killer never committed a crime before nor after her brutal murder."

LA LONE WOMAN MURDERS

IN MARCH 1947, LAPD believed a number of the recent lone woman murders were committed by the same killer, and released a written "11 Points of Similarity" summary to the daily newspapers to support their theory.

In this March 14, 1947 *Los Angeles Examiner* article, printed just eight weeks after the Black Dahlia murder, LAPD revealed its considered opinion that the murders of Elizabeth Short (January 15), Jeanne French (February 10), and Evelyn Winters (March 12) were all committed by the same killer and listed its reasons. Here are excerpts from that original article:

"Dahlia Case Similarities Checked in Fourth Brutal Death Mystery"

...

Checking similarities between the deaths of Miss Winters, and the Short, and French killings, police listed the following:

- 1) All three girls frequented cocktail bars where they sometimes picked up men.
- 2) All three were slugged on the head (although Mrs. French was trampled to death and Miss Short tortured before being cut in two).
- 3) All three were killed elsewhere and taken in cars to the spots where the bodies were found.
- 4) All three were displayed nude or nearly so.
- 5) In no case was an attempt made to conceal the body. On the contrary, bodies were left where they were sure to be found.
- 6) Each had been dragged a short distance.
- 7) Each killing was a pathological case, apparently motiveless.
- 8) In each case, the killer appears to have taken care not to be seen in company with the victim.
- 9) All three women had good family backgrounds.
- 10) Each was identified by her fingerprints other evidence of identity having been removed.
- 11) Miss Short and Miss Winters were last seen in the same Hill Street area.

In January 1947, the press suggested a link to four of the victims. Then by 1950, it was up to seven.

The 1949 Grand Jury issued a scathing report on the unsolved Black Dahlia and new Lone Woman Murders and ordered that the investigation of these crimes be taken away from LAPD and restarted by the District Attorney's Office.



LAPD and the L.A. County Sheriff's Department were both convinced that many of their unsolved 1940s slayings were committed by the same killer.

Posted below are two separate 1949 front page headlines where police and press both link a new killing, Mrs. Louise Springer, to the Black Dahlia's murderer and speculate that perhaps at least nine of the previously unsolved "Horror Murders" are connected.

"Mother Kidnaped, Slain; Seek Curly-Haired Man New 'Black Dahlia' Case" —Los Angeles Examiner, June 17, 1949

"Police are not overlooking the possibility that a single slayer committed all [nine] of the Los Angeles 'Horror Murders.'" —Long Beach Press Telegram, June 17, 1949

The *Long Beach Press Telegram* article provided details on the June 16, 1949, slaying of Louise Springer and then named the eight previous victims possibly killed by "a single slayer":

1. Elizabeth Short ("Black Dahlia")
2. Mary Tate
3. Evelyn Winters
4. Jeanne French ("Red Lipstick Murder")
5. Rosenda Mondragon ("Silk Stocking Murder")
6. Dorothy Montgomery
7. Laura Trelstad
8. Gladys Kern ("Real Estater Murder")
9. Louise Springer

Three months later, in September 1949, LAPD Chief of Detectives Thad Brown removed any question that LAPD suspected many of the L.A. murders were connected when he told the press

his investigators were checking out a sex-strangulation murderer named Ray Dempsey Gardner, age twenty-seven, arrested in Ogden, Utah.

In the *Los Angeles Times* piece, "Alleged Garroter May Be Linked to Killings Here," Chief Brown is quoted as saying, "...efforts will be made to trace his activities in the hope of forming a connection with local murders."

The article goes on to specifically name the suspected crime victims as: "...Elizabeth Short, Jeanne French, Louise Springer, Georgette Bauerdorf, as well as other similar cases.

Alleged Garroter May Be Linked to Killings Here

A sex killer who has confessed three garroting murders at Ogden, Utah, was seen as a possible suspect yesterday in Los Angeles' long series of violent sex slayings.

Asst. Police Chief Thad Brown, chief of detectives here, dispatched a written request to the Sheriff at Ogden requesting details of the story told by Ray Dempsey Gardner, 27, in jail there on the sex crimes.

Brown said that accounts from Ogden detailed Gardner's admitted strangling of Shirley Gretzinger, 17, in Ogden last July. He also took police to the body of a second victim, Sue Horn, 39, of Montana, and yesterday said he strangled a cellmate in a North Dakota jail.

Strangling and sex motives have figured in the murders here of Elisabeth Short, Jan. 15, 1947; Mrs. Jeanne T. French, Feb. 10, 1947; Mrs. Louise Springer, June 16, 1948, and Miss Georgette Bauerdorf, Oct. 12, 1944, as well as other and similar cases.

Brown said that if Gardner is unable to account for his movements during the times of any of the unsolved Southland murders, and if his record indicates possibility of his presence here during those times, efforts will be made to trace his activities in the hope of forming a connection with local murders.

Los Angeles Times, September 14, 1949

The fact that law enforcement suspected a serial killer from the get-go was eventually drowned out by tabloid accounts that created the Dahlia Myth. The truth was replaced by pulp fiction magazines and exploitation novels. Hollywood dream-makers and spin doctors have never really cared about facts. Nightmares are the stuff their dreams are made of—and so it went.

By the Nineties, even the cops bought into the myths and legends. "A stand-alone crime, none before, none after." None of the "new breed" had ever read the case files or did any in depth study of the original investigation. They were simply ignorant of what their "old school" predecessors, the original Black Dahlia investigators, had suspected all along—many of the 1940s' Lone Woman Murders were serially connected to the same killer.

LONE WOMAN MURDERS—UPDATES



LA Lone Woman Murders 1943-1949 Category I (definites)

In my original BDA 2003 and in the updated chapters published in the HarperCollins revised editions ["Aftermath" chapter, 2004 and "New Investigation," 2006], I broke the suspected crimes into separate categories: I-"Definites" [strong *modus operandi* and signature linkage] II-Probables, and III-Possibles.

Within the Category I range, I initially listed seven (7) victims, most of whom corresponded with LAPD's suspected list of serial victims. Those original seven were:

1. Ora Murray-1943
2. Georgette Bauerdorf-1944
3. Elizabeth Short-1947
4. Jeanne French-1947
5. Gladys Kern-1948
6. Mimi Boomhower-1949
7. Jean Spangler-1949

ORA MURRAY—"WHITE GARDENIA MURDER" UPDATE

Sixty-seven years after the crime was committed, I believe I have found another link to the brutal murder of Mrs. Ora Murray, one of the eight "Category I (definites) L.A. *Lone Woman Murders*, which was originally summarized in my 2003 publication of *Black Dahlia Avenger*.

Below is a brief summary of the crime M.O. (For those wanting a fuller description, I suggest you read BDA Chapter 23, pages 294-306.)

On the evening of July 26, 1943, forty-two-year-old Murray and her sister Latona Leinann went out for a night of drinks and dancing at the Zenda Ballroom at Seventh and Figueroa in Los Angeles. [The dance hall was just one block from Dr. Hodel's medical office at Seventh and Flower.]

The victim, married to an Army sergeant stationed in Mississippi, was only in town visiting her sister.

At the dance hall, the two women met and danced with a man named "Paul." Ora's sister later described Paul as being "tall and thin, very dapper and a very good dancer. He wore a dark double-breasted suit and a dark fedora." Paul claimed he was from San Francisco, "just down to L.A. for a few days." After several dances, Paul offered to drive Murray on a sight-seeing tour of

Hollywood. She accepted and after first driving the sister home, the couple then started their ostensible Hollywood exploration.

Some eight hours later, Ora Murray's partially nude body was found on the grass at the Fox Hill Golf Course in West Los Angeles. She had been severely beaten about the face and body and the cause of death was found to be, "constriction of the larynx by strangulation." Ora's killer had ceremoniously wrapped her dress around her body like a sarong and then carefully placed a white gardenia under her right shoulder. Based on this unusual signature, the press dubbed the crime "the White Gardenia Murder." Since the body was found just outside of the city limits, the case was handled by L.A. County Sheriff's homicide detectives.



Ora Murray- 1943 White Gardenia Murder victim

A COPYCAT CRIME—MURDER AS A FINE ART

I enjoy listening to *old-time radio* programs. In April 2010, I was reviewing an online index of the old CBS *Suspense Theatre* dramatizations, and one of the titles caught my eye: *The White Rose Murders*.

The show was originally broadcast from CBS's then relatively new Columbia Square Playhouse Studio in Hollywood, at Sunset and Gower. It starred the beautiful twenty-two-year-old actress Maureen O'Hara, and was first aired on July 6, 1943—just twenty days before the "White Gardenia Murder" of Ora Murray.

The radio mystery-play was written by a popular novelist and pulp-fiction writer Cornell Woolrich, who also used the pseudonyms William Irish and George Hopley.

During the 1930s and 1940s, Woolrich saw more than thirty of his short stories and several of his novels made into films. Two of the best known were *The Night has a Thousand Eyes* (1948), directed by John Farrow, and the Alfred Hitchcock classic, *Rear Window* (1954), which was adapted from Woolrich's original short story, *It Had To Be Murder*.

Woolrich's 1943 radio drama, *The White Rose Murders*, told the story of a homicidal maniac who frequented the city's downtown dance halls, where he danced with and picked up lonely women. The killer then lured them out into the night where he strangled them to death. As a signature of his kills the madman carefully placed a white rose next to each victim's body.

In the vernacular of the day, the police detective described him as a "chain killer." And as the story opens, the listener learns the city is gripped in terror as the unidentified strangler has just slain his fourth victim, and is about to kill his fifth.

Police called the fictional killer a deranged "avenger," a woman-hater seeking personal revenge on young women because he'd been rejected by them in his youth.

We recall that George Hodel, in his 1944 Georgette Bauerdorf murder note, informed the public that the reason he killed her was for "divine retribution." And, in his 1947 note, as the "Black Dahlia Avenger" he assured us, "the Dahlia Killing was justified."

The *Suspense Theatre* radio-plays, were hugely popular and always introduced by "The Man In Black." I am surprised that neither reporters or cops made the obvious connection between the radio show and the Ora Murray murder just three weeks later.

Those who've read my sequel, *Most Evil*, will have a fuller understanding of the importance of this newly discovered link. Why? Because in my father's later serial killings it became an important and recurring theme that he used as part of his murder-signature.

In his 1960s crimes, he expanded his *Murder as a Fine Art* from mere surrealistic mimicry of Man Ray's photography—as seen in his Black Dahlia murder—and splashed it on a much broader canvas.

In *Most Evil*, we discovered that George Hodel expanded his "masterpieces" beyond modern art and ventured into the world of music, film, and literature.

This is why this new discovery, demonstrating another example of his early mimicry of Cornell Woolrich's storytelling, is so important. It reinforces my theory that this was a signature act that George Hodel used in 1943, some four years before he imitated Man Ray's art in the macabre Black Dahlia murder.

Within two weeks of the fictional *White Rose Murders* broadcast, I submit that Dr. George Hill Hodel, as "Paul," the dapper businessman from San Francisco, made it real. He followed the original *White Rose Murders* script, seeking out and auditioning his own dance hall partner-victim, Ora Murray, for the part.

"Paul" danced with her, bought her drinks, and then wooed her out of the Zenda Ballroom with an invitation to "see Hollywood for a night-on-the-town." He then drove her to an isolated golf course, beat and strangled her, and with a final dramatic flair, carefully placed a "white gardenia" next to her dead body.

In *Most Evil*, I examined several separate murders that I believe my father "adapted from film," and used in his real life killings. One of these, Richard Connell's *The Most Dangerous Game*, was famously used by the Zodiac Killer as part of his signature M.O. and was subsequently mentioned in his letters to the press and police.

Among 1940s *Suspense Theatre* programs, *The Most Dangerous Game* was also listed as being performed at the same CBS Theatre. It aired in Hollywood on February 1, 1945, and starred Orson Welles as the psychopathic General Zaroff. (In 1969, the serial killer "Zodiac" costumed himself in the fashion of General Zaroff and terrorized the Bay area, informing the public that in committing his murders he was playing, "the most dangerous game.")

How many more of these fictional stories from literature and film might George Hodel have adapted and abridged into his real-life murders? So far we have documented four: *Charlie Chan at Treasure Island*, *The Most Dangerous Game*, *The Gold Bug*, and now, *The White Rose Murders*. I am aware of a fifth film, to be discussed in detail in an upcoming chapter of this book. I expect more will be found.

Since my last publication in 2006, based on new investigative findings, I am adding two more victims to that Category I list. I am upgrading one victim, Louise Springer, from a Category II "probable" to a definite, based on new information.

The second case appeared on my radar screen in 2009. Her name is Lillian Dominguez, slain in October 1947.

Here is a brief summary on both of these new Category I killings.

LOUISE SPRINGER—JUNE 13, 1949

"The Black Dahlia and the Louise Springer murders might be linked. Both crimes could have been committed by the same man." — Detective Harry Hansen, LAPD Homicide, *Los Angeles Times*, June 1949



Detective Harry Hansen reviewing Dahlia Files

At about 9:15 p.m., on the evening of June 13, 1949, Laurence Springer drove his new Studebaker convertible to pickup his wife. Louise Springer met him in the parking lot on Crenshaw Boulevard, near Santa Barbara, where she worked as a beautician. As she entered the car, Louise noticed that she had left her eyeglasses inside the beauty parlor. Her husband ran inside to get them for her and also purchased a newspaper and cigarettes at an adjacent drugstore. He was gone less than ten minutes. Upon his return, both his car and his wife, Louise, were gone.

The husband immediately called LAPD, which referred him to University Division Police Station, where the desk officer advised Mr. Springer he couldn't make a missing-persons report for 24 hours. The husband tried to convince the officers that his wife would not simply drive away, and that she had to have been the victim of foul play. Sadly, his pleas fell upon deaf ears. Frustrated and angry, the husband returned to his Hollywood home to be with their three-year-old son, and hoped his wife would call.

Three days later, Laurence Springer's fears were confirmed. Louise Springer's body was found in the backseat of their car, parked on a quiet residential street about an hour after her disappearance. Here is the investigative chronology and findings:

June 13, 1949—9:15 p.m.

Victim Louise Springer, a twenty-eight-year-old female, was kidnapped, in her own car, while waiting for her husband to return from a short errand.

Within forty-five minutes, her abductor strangled her with a pre-cut clothesline rope that he brought with him, and then sodomized her with a fourteen-inch tree limb.

The killer then placed her body in the rear seat of her car and covered it with a beautician's tarp that Louise kept in the car for her work.

The kidnap location was on South Crenshaw Boulevard, just north of Santa Barbara Avenue [now Martin Luther King Boulevard] and just 500 yards southwest of where Elizabeth "Black Dahlia" Short's body parts were found in the vacant lot at 3815 South Norton Avenue some two years before.



Springer – Short crimes 500 yards apart

June 13, 1949—10:30 p.m.

Four witnesses observed Springer's vehicle, a 1949 Studebaker convertible, moving eastbound on Thirty-Eighth Street. They saw it swerve suddenly to the south curb and quickly park in front of 126 West Thirty-Eighth Street.

They later said the driver turned off his headlights and slumped down behind the steering wheel.

Seconds later, an LAPD patrol car with flashing lights pulled over a teenage driver nearby. As the witnesses watched, the Studebaker's driver sat motionless while the officers got out of their patrol car and wrote a ticket for the teenager, who was standing just a few yards away.

The officers then got back into their patrol car and drove off.

But the witnesses continued to watch. They saw the man reach toward the Studebaker's backseat, as if he were adjusting something. At that point, their curiosity was apparently satisfied and they stopped watching.

Because it was dark, they could only describe the man as "a white male with curly hair."

This all happened about forty-five minutes after the abduction, but because the witnesses were unaware that any crime had been committed, nothing was reported for three days.

On June 16, a different neighbor grew suspicious of the abandoned Studebaker and called the police.

Officers checking the license plate number determined that it was the missing Springer vehicle and they soon found Mrs. Springer strangled under a tarp in the backseat. Homicide detectives canvassed the area and found the four witnesses who described what they had seen on the night of June 13th.

The below map shows the probable four-mile route taken from the abduction site to where the vehicle was parked at 126 West Thirty-Eighth Street.

Driving directions: 3960 Crenshaw Blvd, Los Angeles to 126 W 38th St, Los Angeles



A Start: 3960 Crenshaw Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90008-2543

A-B: 3.9 mi, 10 min
 126 W. 38TH St. - 4 miles [10 minutes] from abduction location



Los Angeles Examiner—June 18, 1949

“Police Missed Mad Killer, in Auto with Slain Victim, Parked Near Squad Car.”

The *Examiner* printed a diagram showing the relative positions of the police, the traffic offender, and the murder suspect on 38th Street.



Los Angeles Examiner, June 18, 1949

Los Angeles Examiner of June 17, read:

...

Body Violated

“And with a 14-inch length of finger-thick tree branch, ripped from some small tree, the killer had violated her body in such manner as to stamp this crime at once and indelibly in the same category as the killing of Elizabeth Short, “the *Black Dahlia*.”

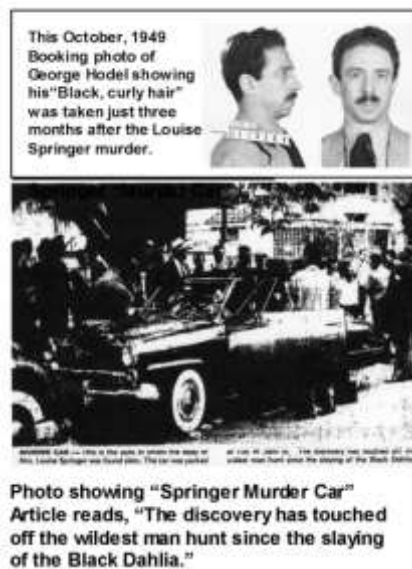
LAPD Criminalist Ray Pinker called in a botany expert who identified the branch as coming from a “Bottlebrush tree.”

The below photo shows a bottlebrush tree, which is indigenous to all neighborhoods of Los Angeles and the actual tree branch used by killer in the sexual assault. [Cropped by author from the original Louise Springer coroner’s photograph.]



Top: Bottle Brush Tree

Bottom: photo is the actual tree branch used by suspect in the sexual assault.



The autopsy was performed by Drs. Newbarr and Cefalu—the same doctors who did Elizabeth Short’s autopsy two years before. Their examination revealed that Louise Springer

suffered multiple blows to the head that would have likely rendered her unconscious. She was then strangled with a white clothesline cord, which the killer brought with him.



Autopsy photo [cropped] showing clothesline ligature

SOME ADDITIONAL INVESTIGATIVE FINDINGS:

- Police suspected killer might have known the victim. Possible jealous ex-boyfriend? Detective Hansen and his partner traveled to San Francisco for a weeklong investigation into the victim's background. Newspapers of the day hinted at a "possible romantic affair." No hard evidence believed found.
- Before the murder, a male called Laurence Springer's work telephone six times over six days, always hanging up. He also called the Springers' home.
- Although LAPD continued to suspect that the Springer, Elizabeth Short and other lone woman murders could be connected, Louise Springer's sadistic killer, like the others, was never identified.
- 1949 Grand Jury demanded a reinvestigation of the Elizabeth Short and other unsolved murders and Louise Springer's photo was added to the long list of unsolved murders in this 1949 story:

"L.A. POLICE BAFFLED BY NINTH WEIRD MURDER IN 29 MONTHS" —Long Beach Post-Telegram, June 17, 1949

LILLIAN DOMINGUEZ—AN OVERLOOKED 1947 LONE WOMAN MURDER

Based on my examination and review of the known facts surrounding the stabbing-murder of Santa Monica victim Lillian Dominguez, age fifteen, in October 1947, I am now adding her name to the list of Category I, Los Angeles Lone Woman Murders that I believe were committed by my father, Dr. George Hill Hodel.

On the night of October 2, 1947, Lillian Dominguez, a fifteen-year-old student at John Adams Junior High, was walking home from a school dance with her sister Angie and their friend, Andrea Marquez.

As the three girls approached the intersection of Seventeenth Street and Michigan Avenue in Santa Monica, a man approached in the darkness and walked past them. Seconds later, Lillian told her sister, "That man touched me." She took a few steps and yelled, "I can't see." Lillian staggered against the fence, collapsed, and died.

An autopsy found Lillian had been stabbed in the heart with a long, thin bladed "stiletto-type knife" or icepick. The half-inch wide blade penetrated three and a half inches directly into her heart. The only description police ever got was the teenager's exclamation that it was "a man."

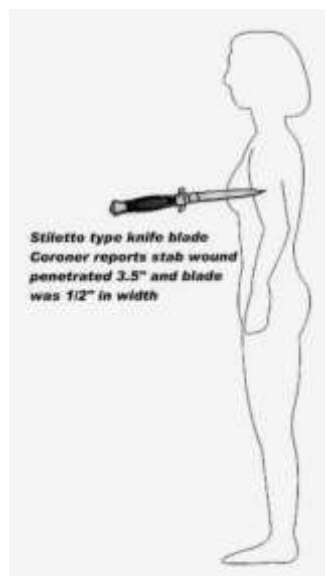
Santa Monica detectives had little to go on. They had a useless physical description and not motive. Lillian had no boyfriends and there was no trouble at the Garfield Elementary School dance.



AT INQUEST—Angie Dominguez, 17, left, sister of girl stabbed to death, and Andrea Marquez, 17, friend, testify at inquest for victim, where open verdict was returned.

LA Times October 7, 1947, victim's sister Angie Dominguez and friend Andrea Marquez

THE MURDER WEAPON



Stiletto-type knife or icepick used

Based on the limited information in the 1947 newspaper article, I sent an e-mail inquiry to my friend and fellow writer, Dr. Doug Lyle M.D., a forensic expert and heart specialist. Here is an excerpt from that e-mail:

May 9, 2010

Hi Doug:

...

In reviewing a press article on the stabbing/murder the info from the coroner's office printed in the paper reads:

"Dr. Frederick Newbarr, county autopsy surgeon, reported after performing an autopsy that the stab wound in the girl's left breast is 3 3/4" inches deep and a half inch wide and that it penetrated only the heart muscle, not the heart itself.

Death, he said, apparently was caused by internal bleeding. Severance of nerves could have numbed pain and caused the blindness of which the girl complained, Dr. Newbarr said."

1) Forgive my anatomical ignorance, but what is the distinction/difference between "the heart and the heart muscle?" What are they saying here?

2) Any thought on the blindness. Would that be unusual or common with the facts as stated?

Thanks,
Steve

And, here is Dr. Lyle's reply:

Howdy:

This shows you how far behind they were 70 years ago. The heart muscle is the main part of the heart and the part that would be stabbed in such an injury as this. Severing of nerves—of which there are no major ones in that area—would NOT cause blindness. Either she had some other injury or the blindness could be the hysterical type. Some people under extreme stress go blind—it is all psychiatric—and is called hysterical blindness. Or in this case she could have been in shock or her blood pressure could have suddenly dropped from the heart injury and if so the low blood pressure could cause blurred and then dim vision just before losing consciousness and dying. I'd suspect this latter is what happened since she died almost immediately after her visual complaints.

Doug

AVENGER NOTE

On the evening of October 9, 1947, exactly one-week after the stabbing, Lillian's killer left a handwritten note under the door of a Los Angeles furniture store.

The note, written in pencil on the back of a business card of a Mexican restaurant, read:

"I killed that Santa Monica girl. I will kill others."

While neither the furniture store nor the Mexican restaurant locations were identified by police, the information and threat from the killer was published in the *Santa Monica Evening Outlook* on October 10, 1947, which was George Hodel's fortieth birthday.

We do know that the furniture store was outside the city of Santa Monica and in Los Angeles. We recalled in some of the other Lone Woman murders George Hodel left or mailed the

Kern and Short notes just blocks away from his downtown medical office. Was either the furniture company or the Mexican restaurant also near his medical offices?

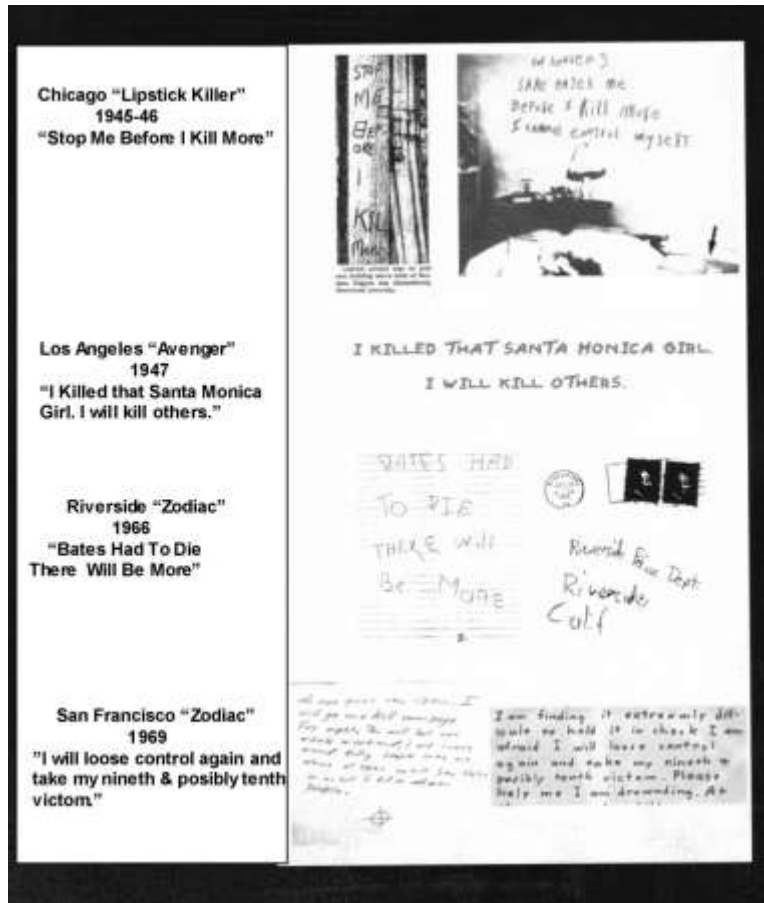
DOMINGUEZ “AVENGER” SIGNATURE

In my 2009 sequel, *Avenger, Zodiac, and the Further Serial Murders of Dr. George Hill Hodel* [Dutton], I explored the possible connections of George Hodel to three 1946 Chicago “Lipstick Murders.” In that book, I also examined the 1966 knife slaying of a Riverside student; the “Jigsaw Murder” in Manila, where my father was living at the time and where police suspected the killer was a trained surgeon; and finally, I explored and presented compelling evidence potentially linking my father to the 1968-1969 Bay Area murders committed by the killer calling himself “Zodiac.”

In this review, I am only going to present one specific and highly unusual aspect of the killer’s method—that being his “promise to kill more victims.” That act, combined with the fact that we are dealing with a serial killer, is so unique that I believe it qualifies as a part of his actual signature.

Let’s examine the photograph below, a reproduction of the separate notes left by the killer[s] in Chicago, Los Angeles, Riverside, and the San Francisco Bay Area.

THE NOTES



The Los Angeles Dominguez Note, "I killed that Santa Monica girl. I will kill others," was discovered after my 2009 sequel, *Most Evil*, and is here presented only as a "reproduction" of what the killer wrote. Law enforcement never released a sample of the actual 1947 handwriting. The Chicago, Riverside, and San Francisco notes are all actual copies of the killer's original handwriting.

Chicago, 1946—(written in lipstick):

"For heavens sake catch me before I kill more. I cannot control myself.
"Stop Me Before I Kill More."

Los Angeles, 1947:

"I killed that Santa Monica girl. I will kill others."

Riverside, 1966:

"Bates Had To Die. There Will Be More.
"Z"

San Francisco, 1969:

...

"I am afraid I will loose control again and take my nineth & possibly tenth victom. Please help me I am drowning."

In *Most Evil*, one of my most important signature links was the fact that the killer in Chicago, Riverside and the San Francisco Bay Area was an "urban terrorist," and left notes in each of those cities, threatening to "kill more." If this was an accurate assessment then why had he excluded this important signature in his many L.A. crimes in the 1940s?

He had threatened the citizenry before and after, so why would he choose to exclude them in his hometown of Los Angeles?

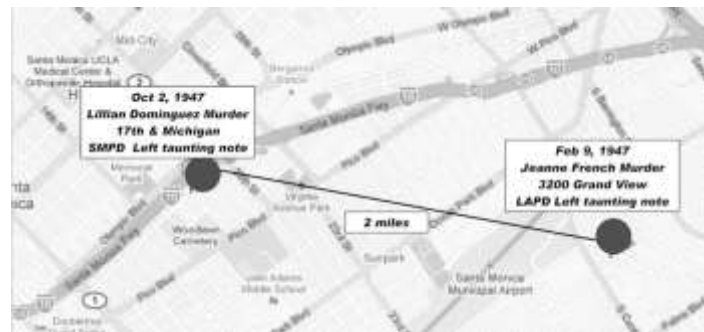
Until now, we had no answer. And the absence of a Los Angeles “urban terrorist threat” weakened my hypothesis. However, with this recent discovery of the Dominguez Note, we now have an answer. Fact is, he didn’t exclude L.A. The threat was always there, it was just overlooked. I didn’t make the connection until discovering the note in my recent review of the facts surrounding the Dominguez Cold Case which read:

“I Killed That Santa Monica Girl. I Will Kill Others.”

THE LOCATION

In the diagram below, we see that the Lillian Dominguez murder is just two miles away from another 1947 Lone Woman murder—Mrs. Jeanne French.

According to Head Deputy District Attorney Steve Kay, the French crime was committed by Dr. George Hill Hodel, and based on the evidence presented, had George Hodel still been alive and the witnesses available, he would have prosecuted the case, as a companion filing to the Elizabeth Short, “Black Dahlia” murder.



Two miles between 1947 Dominguez and French motiveless murders

AN AVENGER MOTIVE?

In the 1966 Cheri Jo Bates murder in Riverside, the victim was a teenager who had just graduated from high school.

Riverside PD investigated the possibility that her killer was a high school classmate. Detectives based their theory on a literal interpretation of a second typed note mailed by Bates’ killer on the six-month anniversary of her slaying.

[George Hodel mailed in both a lengthy handwritten and a typed letter in two of his 1940s L.A. crimes: Georgette Bauerdorf (typed) and Gladys Kern (handwritten).]

In that lengthy typewritten note taunting the police and press, Bates’ killer referred to his next victim and speculated on who it might be:

... “a babysitter, or maybe she will be the shapely blue-eyed brownett that said no when I asked her for a date in high school?”

In 1971, San Francisco police connected the Bates murder in Riverside to their Northern California Zodiac crimes.

Six of their seven victims were either teenagers in high-school or recently graduated. All were parked in “lover’s lane” locations, reinforcing the possibility of an avenger-type serial killer exacting revenge rejections in his high-school days by some young “shapely blue-eyed brownett.” (I hypothesize that George Hodel, the “super nerd,” could well have been rejected numerous times by girls both in high-school and in college, since he was one of the few fifteen-

year-olds at Cal Tech. He would very likely have been rejected by many college classmates because of his youth.)

The motive-less, cold-blooded killing of high school student Lillian Dominguez in 1947 fits quite well with what we know about these later crimes against high-schoolers, as well as Zodiac's stated need to avenge a youthful rebuff by a would-be girlfriend.

Based on the "hit and run" nature of the Dominguez crime and absence of any real physical evidence or witnesses, I doubt the crime is now solvable. But, it would be interesting to see the original note and compare it to George Hodel's known handwriting. Also, I am curious as to where the Mexican restaurant and the furniture company were located.

Regardless, I do think this crime might provide a missing piece in a much larger puzzle. Based on its unique signatures, location, and what is known about George Hodel's later crimes, I do believe it should be considered and included as a 1940s Category I Lone Woman murder.



Lone Women Murder Map [revised 2011]

In this updated victim map, I have added both the 1947 Lillian Dominguez murder [9] and the Louise Springer murder [10].

That makes a current total of nine Category I victims. All happened within a half-mile to nine miles from the Franklin house.

The black circles are 1940s victims where a letter or note was left or mailed by the "Avenger." This is an exceptionally rare signature act, and we find that in six of the nine Los Angeles murders (Short, Bauerdorf, Boomerhower, Kern, French, and Dominguez), he taunted police with such a note or letter.

A serial killer sending taunting notes to the police in the 1940s was so rare that before the "Black Dahlia Avenger," police would have to have gone back in time some six decades to London's "Jack the Ripper" (1888) to find a similar signature.

The author of most of the Avenger notes has been independently identified by a court-certified questioned document expert as Dr. George Hodel. To date, no certified expert has offered an opinion that the handwriting is *not* George Hodel's.

In the past seven years, two separate television documentaries have claimed that "an expert contradicted my expert." In fact, he did not; he simply stated that in examining the few samples he was provided, he was unable to offer an opinion either way. He told the producers, "His findings were inconclusive. He was unable to rule Dr. Hodel in or out as to having authored the notes." I will provide further details related to the handwriting evidence in a later chapter.



Elizabeth Short and Gladys Kern letters mailed from same downtown mailbox

Killer uses same downtown mailbox to post both his Elizabeth Short (January 1947) and Gladys Kern (February 1948) handwritten notes to police. The mailbox he used was across the street from the Biltmore Hotel and just 300 yards from Dr. George Hodel's private medical practice.

1950 DA FILES REVEAL INVESTIGATORS BELIEVED CRIMES LINKED

District Attorney Lt. Frank Jemison's 1950 investigative files show that his detectives were actively investigating connections between the Lone Woman murders of Elizabeth Short, Jeanne French, Jean Spangler, Gladys Kern, George Hodel's secretary Ruth Spaulding, and the suspected felony assault or possible murder of a Jane Doe heard on tape from the basement of Dr. Hodel's Franklin house on February 18, 1950

BY THE NUMBERS

As I pointed out in my original 2003 investigation, if one takes the position that none of these 1940s Lone Woman murders were connected then, statistically, at least half should have been solved. None were.

It's now obvious these murders were not committed by eleven different sadistic sexual psychopaths all operating within the same locales and tripping over each other's bodies. The reason none were cleared was because all were committed by the same killer.

Despite the fact that sixty-years ago law enforcement did not really think in terms of "serial killings," LAPD (with a lot of help from the press) still managed to go public with their belief that many or most of these killings were serial crimes.

With the June 13, 1949, murder of Louise Springer, police reaffirmed, as they had from the very beginning, their suspicions that many if not all of the crimes were connected.

"Police are not overlooking the possibility that a single slayer committed all [nine] of the Los Angeles 'Horror Murders'" —*Long Beach Press Telegram*, June 17, 1949



Long Beach Press Telegram, June 17, 1949

The newspaper article goes on to name the nine victims they suspect are related as:

1. Elizabeth Short
2. Mary Tate
3. Evelyn Winters
4. Jeanne French
5. Rosenda Mondragon
6. Dorothy Montgomery
7. Laura Trelstad
8. Gladys Kern
9. Louise Springer

[All of these names are included in my original investigation; however, some are listed by me as Category II and III.]