

The Missing Evidence and Hodel Files
Pompidou Centre, Paris France
June 1, 2006

In 2004, my book was translated and published in France as, *L'Affaire du Dahlia Noir*, and became a national bestseller in that country. That same year, I was invited to Paris by my publisher, Seuil and did a number of press radio and television interviews.

Two years later, in June, 2006, I was invited back to Paris, to speak at the Pompidou Centre.

My talk included an hour PowerPoint presentation followed by a second hour of audience participation—Q & A. A number of subjects were explored and the entire talk was videotaped.

One of the questions asked dealt with the subject of the LAPD. The questioner wanted to know what exactly they had done as follow-up in the three years since my investigation was made public.

Here is my unedited verbatim response to her question on the evening of June 1, 2006:

Q: Has the Los Angeles Police Department responded to your Black Dahlia investigation?

SH: Yes, and that response has been, NO RESPONSE. Its been very frustrating

Because frankly speaking, I was an honored detective. Highly respected. And, I thought the first thing that would happen... this was going to be a slam dunk case.

You've got DNA. They've got the envelopes. They've got the saliva where he licked the stamps. All of that. You do the DNA. It will be a slam dunk match and there were also some proof sheet papers, if you remember from the reading. Very unique, that I felt we would make to the notes that were mailed in.

So, I never thought that there would be any kind of closing down. So, initially LAPD took the stance of, "This is an active case, we are not going to publicly talk about it."

Then, the Press are the ones we really have to thank for forcing the door open to get inside the vault of the DA's office. Now, I don't know if this is

clear or not, but the DA is a completely different entity, agency than the LAPD.

So in fact, what we're discovered when we got there was that it was a different set of books. I came to the suspicion as you know in the book, that maybe they [LAPD] had sanitized it. Maybe they had removed everything from the LAPD files?

In fact, once the LAPD was backed up against the wall and had to "fess up" as we say they said, they admitted, "Everything is gone." They don't know when it vanished? All the evidence. All the potential DNA, the hair follicles, the envelopes, everything connected to the case, the most famous case LAPD has ever had, has vanished.

Now they said, their excuse was, "Well, it's a long time ago, these things happen and sometimes evidence gets lost." I would agree with that. As a supervisor in homicide, I saw detectives dispose of evidence that shouldn't have been. It happens. So, I'll give them that. Maybe, although there were very few that had access to these files.

But, the bigger question IS. Everything that linked George Hodel to the crime, from the LAPD files was missing. All of the fourteen interviews. His interview. All of the Tamar interviews. Everything that connected him. Now, these were not evidence that was disposed of...these were in a file, in a central file. Somebody had to take those and remove them. So that to me is really...and I'm not saying that it was today's LAPD. It wasn't done in modern times. This was done back then.

And the reasons for the ...the reasons they did this. I take three chapters to try and explain them. I don't think we have time tonight to go into all of that. But, what it really comes down to is a management decision on the part of LAPD. I'll try. I'll just say it briefly here, as I read it. LAPD had just overcome a major scandal about eight years before, where 68 officers were fired. 25 high-ranking officers.

Chief Parker, who was the Department's most famous Chief of Police, was just trying to turn the Department around and be progressive and get rid of all the corruption.

And, I think what happened in about 1950 was that a couple of....I'm not saying that Parker was involved in criminality, or Chief Brown was, but what happened I think was that a couple of detectives, Internal Affairs perhaps, came to them and said, "Look, we've got a problem. A couple of our Gangster Squad detectives turned away a possible suspect who was dating Elizabeth Short. A guy by the name of George Hodel. He's a doctor. As a result of that, it looks like maybe in the last couple of years

maybe he killed two or three more victims? He's now split. He's out of the country. We're not sure where he is? What do we do?

So, I think that Parker and Thad Brown, Chief of Detectives looked at each other and said, "Well, let's see. We could reveal this and if we do we're out of power. The city's coffers will be emptied by the lawsuits that come from it. And, LAPD's reputation will never recover. We could do that. He's out of the country. We probably can never bring him back. We may not be able to locate him. Probably have problems with prosecution. If he does come back, he's going to lay out a lot of information on a lot of different people.

"Maybe its best from a management standpoint that we just seal this off and leave it go at that." And, I think that's what happened. I think they said, "For a higher good they needed to be a couple of Machiavellian princes, perhaps....for the higher good. And, we have evidence to support that.

We know that Thad Brown, came out with a statement to Jack Webb, who was the actor that played DRAGNET, they had a conversation and he, Thad Brown, told Jack Webb, "Well, you know the Black Dahlia case was solved. It was a doctor that lived on Franklin Avenue in Hollywood."

Now, it may have been another that lived in Hollywood on Franklin, but I don't think so. [Laughter] So, that's a very damning statement. We have the second highest ranking officer on the Sheriff's Department, a Commander, actually a Deputy Chief and the Undersheriff who said that, "It was a doctor in Hollywood the case was solved."

We have lots of different after the fact indications that they knew who it was, and this was an inner secret that was kept a secret. Nobody in today's LAPD knew about it. That's why, when they searched the files to see and there was nothing there [about George Hodel] they felt fine in giving him a clean bill of health.

Next question?