

## FAQ 9

### 9.1

**Q: Thank you for the tribute to slain LAPD detective Russell Kuster. He must have been a great police officer. Do you have any other photographs of Lt. Kuster?**

Russ Kuster was truly one of the department's finest. Here is a photograph from 1983 taken at my Detective III, promotional party. Russ is presenting me with a plaque congratulating and thanking me for my 17 years service at Hollywood Division,



**Detective III's Steve Hodel and Russ Kuster-1983**

July 29, 2006

In memory of Elizabeth Short



July 29, 1924--- January 14, 1947

**REST IN PEACE ELIZABETH**

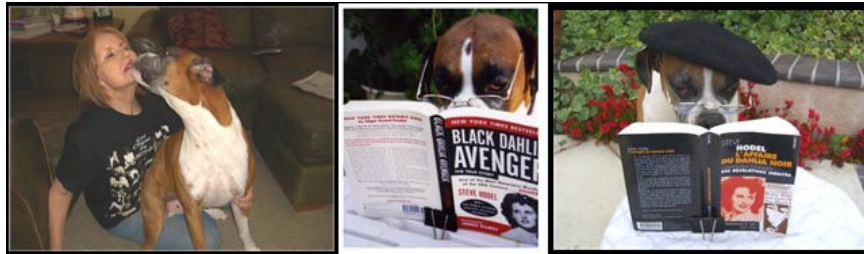


## 9.2

**Q: In your author photographs I notice you have used ROSCO on the cover of your books. What's his story?**

Rosco was an orphan. Shortly after birth he was adopted by a loving couple and raised in ELA's Hollenbeck district. He is fluent (and reads) Spanish, English and French. Rosco's uncle Felix was a prominent character actor in Hollywood. (Below you may recognize him in scenes from: *Godfather Part I*, *Unforgiven*, and *La Cage aux Folles*.)

Rosco is one tough dog. In his youth he spent a fair amount of time "in the streets". (See below photos) He got in with the wrong crowd, got "connected", and got busted. Rosco was pressured by prosecutors to turn State's evidence in a RICO (Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations) beef. He did his time and is now living in a SAFE HOUSE in a Southern California community. Rosco is "retired" and is an avid reader of books and loves classic film noir movies.



**Roberta McCreary visiting Rosco in retirement**



**Uncle Felix, a Hollywood actor**



**Rosco raised in EAST L.A.**

## 9.3

**Q: What do you think about FBI profilers like John Douglas and other “Mind Hunters” who work closely with the police in helping solve and identify serial killers. Do you think they could have profiled and identified your father?**

I would refer you to *Black Dahlia Avenger*, where I had this to say about profiling in general: (pages 421-422)

It has been my experience that at best, these “profiles” should be considered an investigative tool; at worst, they can be dangerously speculative, demographically overweighted, and misleading, and, if given too much credence, can actually misdirect and impair an investigation. Profiles or patterns of predictability, like one’s daily horoscope, often make more sense ex post facto. Human beings, especially human beings who murder, and above all those who murder and get away with it, are rarely predictable. Like wild beasts, they are cunning, predatory, and instinctual, and their environment has taught them survival and how best to avoid trappers.

In the Black Dahlia case, for example, John Douglas, former head of the FBI’s serial crime division, provided over the past five years several separate published profiles on Elizabeth Short’s killer. In virtually everything, his profiles were wide of the mark. He theorized: 1) that the killer was a white man in his late twenties; 2) he had no more than a high school education; 3) he lived alone and made his living working with his hands rather than his brains; and 4) though Douglas had made no review of any of the police files, he stated to a “certainty” that Elizabeth Short’s death was the result of a “stranger murder,” in other words that she was a victim of opportunity. (NB: In a 2006 Black Dahlia “suspect profile” by Gregg McCrary, another FBI profiler, McCrary contradicts and reverses Douglas’ “certainty” and tells us in his opinion the suspect very likely knew and was acquainted with Elizabeth Short.)

Douglas was not the only profiler to be wildly wide of the mark. More recently, in the 2002 Washington, D.C., area serial sniper case, profilers had a field day, theorizing in the media, among other things, that the sniper was white, that he had no children, and that he was from the D.C. area, none of which was true of the alleged perpetrators, John Allen Muhammad and John Malvo.

Here is a very recent email I received from a Clinical Psychologist, one of their own if you will, who makes a number of excellent points. I’m sure Dr. \_\_\_\_ would not mind me using his comments as examples. I will not use his name and will delete some info to protect his privacy. Here are his observations:

Dear Steve,

I am a 60 year old Clinical Psychologist who has been familiar with the Black Dahlia case since the 1975 NBC show. Thank-you for finally solving this crime, and writing such a fascinating book. While not trained as a forensic psychologist I was a referral psychologist for the \_\_\_\_\_ Police Department for 8 years during the 1990’s and have a little “inside” understanding of how the \_\_\_\_\_ Police Department works. Your description of the LAPD sadly sounds very familiar.

I was also very impressed with your psychological interpretations and explanations of a number of characters, motives and behaviors throughout the book. What I particularly liked was the fact that you did not over-interpret your data. Armchair psychologist, like armchair detectives

I would guess, frequently extrapolate far beyond the data or evidence. While they often make plausible suggestions, formulate fascinating hypothesis and provide insightful summaries of motivation, they all suffer from a lack of support in the evidence. It's easy to get seduced into thinking that we know why people do what they do. Far more often these creations are simply their projections, wishes and fantasies, rather than useful explanations as such. You work like a skilled clinician. You provide so much evidence that you lead the reader to the obvious conclusion, the most proximal explanation, without having to stretch the evidence. In psychology there is a clinical maxim that goes like this, "Do not make an interpretation or an explanation until the client is right at the point of seeing it themselves." The reader, like a client should come to the same conclusion just prior to you saying it. You did a masterful job with that. In many circumstances in my clinical work I never really knew why a person did what they did, felt what they felt or thought what they thought. At the end of the day I was frequently left just shaking my head.

I also think you did a great job managing the personal/professional boundary, which is never an easy task. The fact that you had to conduct this research on your father, both as his son and as a detective, must have been extremely difficult. You have my heartfelt empathy for what you have discovered about your father. For us the readers, who are simply looking for a good airplane book, it is easy to forget that for each and every detail you discovered about his behavior, there followed a concomitant feeling that you had to process and deal with. I can't imagine what that was like for you, but I hope, in the end, the process has been good for you.

Thanks again and good luck with your future endeavors.

Sincerely,

A.B.C., PhD

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The doctor's most excellent point that "armchair psychologists frequently extrapolate far beyond the data or evidence" is the weak link in the profiling chain. Especially when the profilers' extrapolations are based on bad data. Caca in-Caca out. In the case of both the Douglas and the McCrary "Dahlia profiles" both used non-police reports and mythical data and fictional accounts to construct their "analysis." While this may make for an "entertaining read" it has nothing to do with the science of detection and investigation, which is based on the careful assembly of known facts and empirical evidence.