

FAQ 63

(October 24, 2007)

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Life Magazine original coverage on Black Dahlia Murder. Feb. 1947 article focuses on witness Robert “Red” Manley being cleared and returning to his wife. Mar. 1947 article covers the “rash of psychopaths” coming forward with false confessions to the crime.



Life Magazine Picture of the Week Feb. 3, 1947

PICTURE OF THE WEEK:



Robert (“Red”) Manley is a salesman of South Gate, Calif. who is married to a very pretty girl. But recently Red wondered if he really loved her and thought a night with another girl would decide it for him. He selected a charmer (*in-set*) whose black hair and gowns led friends to call her the Black Dahlia. But a few days after Red left her, she was found in a Los Angeles field, gruesomely murdered and at once became the coast-to-coast tabloid sensation of the week. Red was seized and questioned and proved his innocence of the crime to the police. He proved his innocence of infidelity to his wife when he told her the Black Dahlia had spent the night sitting up in a hotel chair. When he added that the affair had proved to him he still loved his wife, Mrs. Manley promptly proved that she still loved him (*opposite page*).



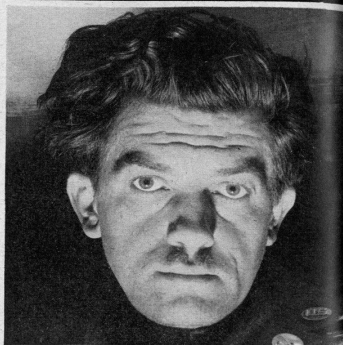
SHE (TO HER ERRING HUSBAND): HONEY, YOU'RE FORGIVEN.
HE: THAT'S THE LAST TIME I'LL EVER CHEAT ON MY WIFE.

Robert “Red” Manley & Wife



March 24, 1947

LIFE'S REPORTS



JOSEPH DUMAIS FALSELY CONFESSED MURDER TO ATTRACT ATTENTION

"I KILLED HER"

Black Dahlia murder case has produced a rash of psychopaths who insist they committed the crime

by LOUIS BANKS

A few days after the murder of Elizabeth Short, Los Angeles' attractive 22-year-old "Black Dahlia," two members of the homicide squad sat in a restaurant discussing the case over coffee. They got back to headquarters just as a frantic call came from somebody who thought he had just spotted the killers. The caller turned out to be a waiter in the restaurant; his suspects, the two detectives themselves.

This was a typical example of the misinformation in which the Los Angeles police department has been mired ever since the Black Dahlia met her end. It has flowed in an endless stream from hundreds of psychopaths, tipsters and plain kibitzers who wanted to inject themselves into the case. Some, driven by esoteric complexes, confessed to the crime although they could not possibly have committed it. Others sought to even old grudges by naming their enemies as suspects. To all of them the detectives listen patiently, because there has been no real clue in the case since the body of the Short girl was discovered on Jan. 15.

The characters who wanted to be helpful came in the greatest number and were the easiest to handle. One old lady walked five miles to suggest that if the corpse were buried with an egg in its hand, the way they did back in her home state of Alabama, the killer would be found within a week. An Altadena astrologer asked the hour and date of Elizabeth Short's birth and promised to provide the murderer's name in a few days. An amateur sleuth wanted the girl's right eyeball, explaining that he would photograph the final image reflected in it and return with a picture of the killer. A tipster suspected the man who had sat on the next stool in a coffee shop. "I'm certain he's the murderer," he reported. "He had an apprehensive look and ordered only a half cup of coffee."

Nevertheless most of the helpers were sincere and some provided information of real value. More sinister and maddening were the scores of calloused informers who tried to throw suspicion on the innocent for reasons of personal revenge. In police jargon this is known as a "roust." A blonde dancer telephoned in great

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secrecy one night. "I'm meeting a man at First and Temple Streets at 9 o'clock, and I have reason to believe he's the Black Dahlia killer," Homicide Captain Jack Donohoe sent two men, but instead of trailing the couple they arrested both at the rendezvous and brought them into the station. The man revealed himself as a home-loving corporation executive who had been placed in a wartime share-the-ride club with the blonde and had been dogged, chased, threatened and slightly blackmailed by her ever since.

In three cases landlords reported as suspicious the actions of tenants whom they had been trying to evict. In Barstow, Calif. an amazonish 160-pound brunette told a bartender, "I know who killed Beth Short and if the reward is big enough I'll talk." Two plain-clothesmen charged out from Los Angeles only to discover that she knew no more than what she had read in the newspapers but was trying to even the score with two boy-friends who had walked out on her by implicating them in the crime. The gentlemen were brought back to town. They were suspects all right—but in an automobile theft, not the Black Dahlia murder.

Run-of-the-mill criminals and even ordinary drunks soon learned to turn the Short case to their own uses. In several rape attempts the victims were warned they would "get what the Black Dahlia got" if they made trouble. The city's habitual inebriates found they could postpone the discomfort of the Lincoln Heights "Drunk Tank" if they would spin a plausible story about the murder.

But the headlines of the Dahlia Show have been the false confessions. Such types appear in nearly every major crime. They have kept the police as busy proving the innocent as busy proving the guilty.

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DAN VOORHEES said he had done it, later was jailed as mental case.

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cence of the innocent as trying to nail the guilty.

The greatest furor was caused by Cpl. Joseph Dumais, a curly-headed, mustached young combat veteran of Fort Dix, N.J. Dumais was reported to military police by another soldier who had quarreled with him over money. The corporal was just back from a 42-day furlough. Investigators found bloodstains on his clothing along with a wad of newspaper clippings on the Short killing. The idea that he might be the murderer fascinated Dumais. "It is possible that I could have committed the murder," he said. "When I get drunk I get rough with women." Police checked his story against known facts and sent him off to a psychiatrist.

Even the newspapers failed to become very excited over Daniel S. Voorhees, a 33-year-old ex-restaurant employe who telephoned the homicide detail to come and get him. He was brought in by a patrol car, mumbling, "I killed her, I killed her." When detectives asked for details he grew sullen. "Ah, I'm not going to talk to you any more," said he. "I want to see my attorney." He too was eventually jailed as a mental case.

In San Diego a lanky former Wac walked into the police station and announced, "Elizabeth Short stole my man so I killed her and cut her up." When she fumbled essential questions on location and method she admitted she had "made the whole story up." In Long Beach Chief Pharmacist's Mate John N. Andry, 30, boasted loudly in a bar about his deftness at cutting up bodies. When the police took him into custody, he at first insisted he had killed Beth Short, then grumbled, "Well, I'm capable of doing it." Finally he admitted he had just been kidding. There was some suspicion that Andry was due

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CAROL MARSHALL hinted her boyfriend had killed Black Dahlia.

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for a tour of overseas duty and wanted to stay at home.

Not long afterward another confessor was asked to pick out the Black Dahlia from an array of photographs. He picked the wrong girl and was jailed for drunkenness. Next morning he made a more valid confession. "I probably did it to show off," he said.

The most persistent drunk was a flophouse resident who would telephone from one bar, then race to another before the police arrived and telephone again. This game of bar tag went on for six jumps until a bartender held him for officers. They took one look at him and decided no woman would have anything to do with him. He never telephoned again.

Experienced detectives usually can spot the pseudo-confessor in a few minutes by asking trick questions. Generally a confessor's knowledge of the case goes as far as the newspapers' and no further. Since many details of the Short mutilation were unprintable, it has not been difficult to discover how little the confessor to it knows.

Why do people confess to crimes as repulsive as the Short case? Some detectives put it down to a lust for publicity. The staff psychiatrist of the Los Angeles police, Dr. J. Paul de River, has more complex theories. The doctor, who looks his part, with bearded chin, heavy black mustache, piercing eyes and Roman nose, concedes that drunken confessions may signify very little. But the confession of a sober man can arise from exhibitionism, from a guilt complex engendered by some forgotten incident of childhood or from masochism. He predicts that the confessors will keep coming and that the police will keep on talking to them. The type of mind which conceived the Elizabeth Short murder, he says, "will some day have to boast about it."



THE BLACK DAHLIA, brutally murdered in January, was Beth Short.