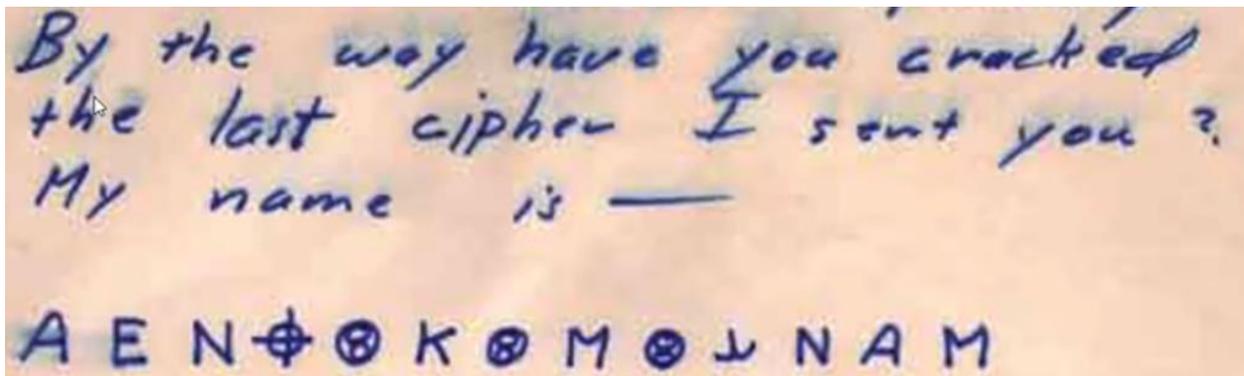


THE DATA:

Recently deduced 340 homophonic substitution cipher key

A ■ K O J † B □ 7 C 9 D ⊙ A S E ● B N B † I
F F G L H + I < H P X Y L Δ D L M ⊙
N • Δ > D Y O M R V Λ P ▲ T R ⊙ E T X Z
S P - J U T ■ □ φ † † † † † 6 U / □ ⊙ V ● W ⊕ W Y ⊙ C

13-Character "My name is" cipher



A POSSIBLE PARTIAL SOLUTION BASED ON THE Z340 KEY

Apply the 340 key & assume the novel 8-ball symbol (not used in the Z340) means wildcard (*). Gives:

DREA*A*O*LEDO

Pro: "DR" intro and "LEDO" fragment are suggestive of DRGEORGEHODEL, which as the right character count (13).

Con: Even with free rein to pick any desired letters to fill the three wildcard positions, we still don't get an anagram of DRGEORGEHODEL – at the very least, we're stuck with two As we can't use. We have to introduce somewhat artificial assumptions to make that problem go away.

AN IMPROVED PARTIAL SOLUTION?

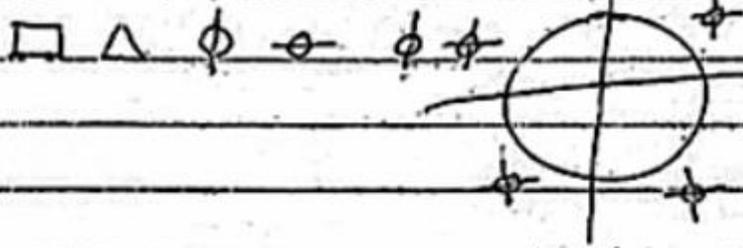
Note that the Z408 cipher was identified in the newspapers as a homophonic substitution cipher, where multiple symbols map to the same letter to defeat frequency analysis. Generally, it would be a hopeless task to decode a 13-character homophonic substitution cipher without a key. The idea of the first solution described above is that by deciphering the harder Z340, also a long homophonic substitution

cipher, we get the key and then it is just a matter of unscrambling a simple anagram to get the Zodiac's name. Only, as noted above, it doesn't quite work...

My idea to "bridge the gap" is inspired by the following observations:

1. Despite its short length, the 13-character cipher includes multiple repeated characters: 3 8-balls, 2 Ns, 2 Ms and 2As. That seems strange for homophonic cipher – even if the idea is that we get the key by solving a different, much longer cipher, why use the same cipher character from a group representing a particular character repeatedly?
2. The multiple instances of the same symbol could be a hint that this is actually a simple substitution cipher. That's logical – the Good Lord giveth and the Good Lord taketh away. We have a simpler type of cipher, but much less text to work with.
3. The idea that a simple substitution cipher is hinted at is reinforced by the inclusion of the 8-ball symbol, not shared with the Z340. That is the most frequent symbol, occurring 3 times in the 13-character cipher. As every schoolboy knows, the commonest letter in the alphabet is "E."
4. If we assume that the 13-letter cipher is a simple substitution cipher, then the number of repeated symbols is a big help. GEORGEHODELMD is a better fit than DRGEORGEHODEL – it's got a 3:2:2:2 pattern of repeats like the cipher, versus 3:2:2:2:2 for the latter.
5. For our simple substitution key, we can keep four mappings from the Z340 key (A => D, E => R, M => O, inverted T => L) and we assume that the 8-ball is E. Then that leaves us three new mappings we need to get H, M, and G from the Zodiac symbol, K and N. It doesn't matter which is which because this going to give an anagram. Would be nice if some reason drove those picks, but afraid I don't have anything to offer on that score as yet.
6. On that basis, we get the following clear text: DRGHEMEOELGDO. That is an exact anagram of GEORGEHODELMD.
7. On his blog, Richard Grinell has recently made a compelling case based on the Z340 solve that the Fairfield letters must be genuine and contain subtle hints to solving the 13-character cipher. I think the excerpt below might be a hint to think about repeated symbol counts. My thought is that the names of the places and the numbers themselves mean nothing – the idea is to prompt thinking on the lines I've suggested above.

you better print



you will not catch me

I will kill in

SF 3 times

SJ 1

Vallejo 6

Napa 8

Fairfield 3 (cops)

Sacramento 9 "

Oakland 8 "

ha! ha! ha!