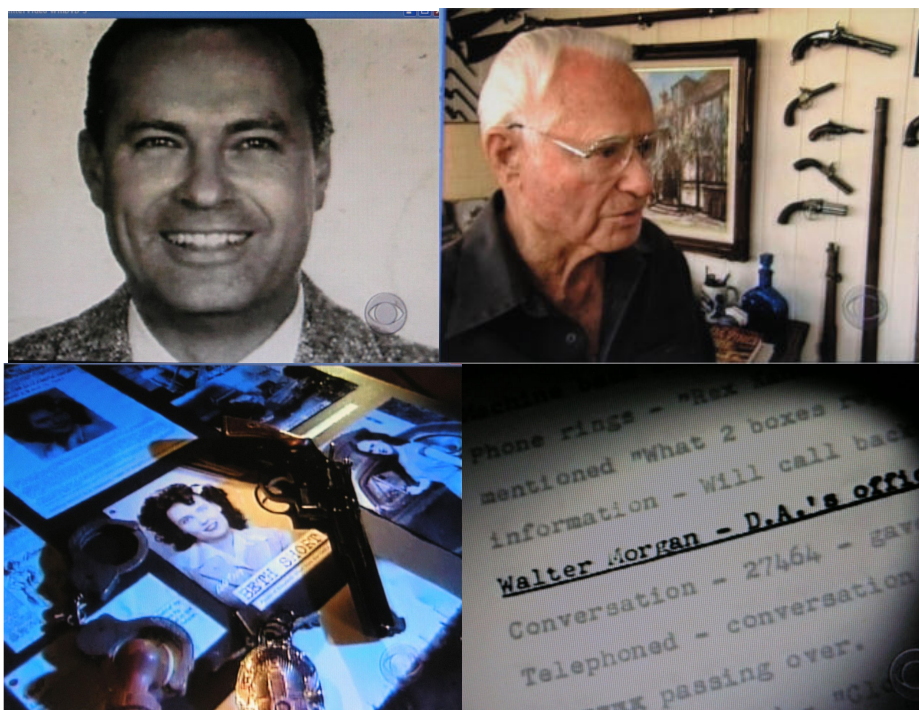


FAQ 57
(9-12-07)

57.1

D.A. investigator Walter Morgan, the Black Dahlia Murder's,
Last Coyote dies at 92

1915-2007



September 8, 2007
Los Angeles

By Steve Hodel

Walter Morgan, the Los Angeles District Attorney's, Bureau of Investigation "old school" detective, and the last surviving member of the 1950 Black Dahlia DA Task Force, in the final years before his passing, linked Dr. George Hill Hodel to the 1947 murder.

In a 2004 *CBS 48 HOURS* crime-special, Morgan publicly acknowledged bugging the doctor's private residence. He also confirmed the existence of secret surveillance tapes and transcripts, and that the DA's taskforce in 1950, was unexpectedly and summarily shutdown. In a surprisingly candid on-air response Morgan acknowledged that he and his fellow officers suspected the shutdown was the result of a payoff and cover-up.

For me, it ended as it began, with this morning's call from my half-sister, Tamar Hodel. "Steve, I just heard from my daughter, Fauna. Walter Morgan died this morning."

In my book, *Black Dahlia Avenger: A Genius for Murder*, published in 2003, here is how I originally described my introduction and first meeting with Walter Morgan, then an 87-year-old retired L.A. district attorney investigator.

Page 449:

My INVESTIGATION HAD BEEN COMPLETED for some four months. I was working on the final editing of the manuscript when on April 24, 2002, my phone rang. It was my sister Tamar. "Steven," she said, "I have the most amazing news. Fauna [her eldest daughter] has just spoken with a man named Walter Morgan." (I immediately recognized his name as a district attorney investigator, Lieutenant Jemison's partner from the 1950 investigation, and swallowed hard at hearing his name come from her lips.) "He was a private detective or something back in the 1940s," she said. "He was involved in investigating, guess who: *Dr. George Hodel*! He told Fauna that they put a bug in the Franklin House to listen in on Dad's conversations. Can you call Fauna and find out what this is all about?"

I assured Tamar I would check it out immediately. Contacting Fauna, whom I had not spoken to for ten years, I learned she was working in the San Fernando Valley and had been visited in her place of work by a casual acquaintance, Ethel. In her seventies, Ethel was with her boyfriend whom she introduced as Walter Morgan. Walter shook Fauna's hand and said, "Hodel?" That's an unusual name. I once worked a murder case on a Dr. Hodel. Any relation?" Fauna and Walter compared notes, and quickly learned that Morgan's suspect and Fauna's grandfather were one and the same.

Two days later, on April 26, I called Walter Morgan and told him my name was Steven Hodel, the uncle of Fauna Hodel, and the son of Dr. George Hill Hodel, who had died in 1999 at the age of ninety-one. I also informed him that I had retired from LAPD after working most of my career as a homicide detective in Hollywood Division.

Morgan greeted me warmly, in that unspoken bond that exists cop to cop, and proceeded to reminisce about the Hodel story.

Morgan, now eighty-seven, said he had worked for the sheriff's department from 1939 to 1949 on radio car patrol, in vice, burglary, and in other details. Then he left LASD and became a DA investigator in 1949, where he remained until retirement in 1970. He worked homicide on temporary assignment for a few months back in 1950. He was sent over to help out Lieutenant Frank Jemison, who he said "had picked me to be his sidekick."

Walter Morgan remembered well the day they had installed listening devices at the Franklin House, which he authoritatively informed me "was built by Frank Lloyd Wright." (As we know, the true architect was his son, Lloyd Wright.) Morgan continued:

"We had a good bug man, a guy that could install bugs anywhere and everywhere. He worked in the DA's crime lab. So the chief assigned me to take him over to the house on Franklin, and he was going to install a bug system at the Hodel

residence. My chief at the DA's office had me take him over there and we met the LAPD at Dr. Hodel's house. It was during the daytime and nobody was home. I remember there were some ranking LAPD officers outside, and no one could figure out how to get in. I suggested, "Well, have any of you officers tried a card to see if it would open the door?" They laughed, so I pulled out my wallet, and took out some kind of a credit card or whatever card I had, slipped it through, and the front door popped right open! They couldn't believe it. Anyway, our man went in and installed some bugs there. That was our job, to get the bugs installed so we could listen in."

Based on Walter Morgan's confirmations that my father was the Black Dahlia suspect and our Franklin House was bugged and secret tapes obtained, I closed the chapter (written in 2002) by publicly asking the following questions:

BDA page 454:

Standard operating procedure would have been to make transcripts of these conversations, as well as investigative follow-up reports documenting the findings. ***Where are these transcripts? Where are these reports? What do they say?***

A month after publication (May, 2003), those questions were answered.

Los Angeles District Attorney Steve Cooley granted me access to the locked and vaulted Hodel-Black Dahlia Files, which had remained unexamined for over fifty-years, and as they say, "the rest is history."

In June, 2004, the five-decade old surveillance transcripts and investigative reports along with photographs and copies of the DA Files were released to the public by way of a new chapter, THE AFTERMATH, added to the BDA HarperCollins paperback edition.

Now the Public would read for themselves the actual verbatim transcripts from the secret recordings. They would hear my father, in his own voice; admit to the murder of Elizabeth Short and to a second earlier 1945 murder of his clinic secretary, Ruth Spaulding. They would hear the real time conversations between George Hodel and a woman wherein he admitted performing abortions at his downtown clinic, "lots of them." Hear his boast to a visiting confidant at the Franklin house, "This is the best payoff between law enforcement I have ever seen." More braggadocio, "Only I know how everything fits together." Investigative pages in the file containing a witness interview describing the details of Dr. Hodel's afternoon meeting with an accomplice and his \$1,000 cash payoff to him for the man's "assistance" in the 1949 abortion performed on his 14-year-old daughter, my half-sister, Tamar. Included in the interview were the abortionist's horrific threats to, "cut out a piece of flesh from Tamar's leg and cook it and force her to eat it."

To my mind, the most disturbing of all the 1950 Franklin House surveillance recordings was the real life, real time recording of George Hodel and an unidentified man's assault and possible murder of a woman in the basement of the Franklin House, while LAPD detectives, were staked out and listening to the assault "in progress." In the transcript the officers document listening to the unidentified woman's cries for "help", then their hearing a pipe striking her, more cries for help, then silence – INCREDIBLY THEY

TOOK NO ACTION. (The two detectives were monitoring the assault, just two miles away, at Hollywood Police Station.)

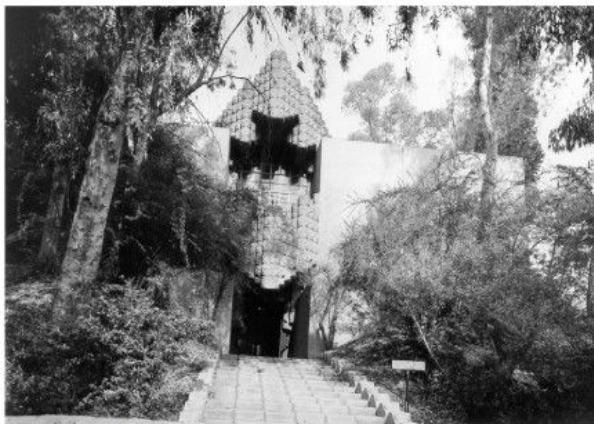


LADA Bureau of Investigation, Lt. Frank Jemison

Lt. Jemison in 1950 chose "rookie detective" Walter Morgan to be part of his select team of DA investigators. Jemison was the lead investigator, ordered by the 1949 grand jury to reinvestigate the 1947 unsolved Elizabeth Short, "Black Dahlia Murder."

D.A./L.A.P.D. Electronic Surveillance of Dr. George Hodel-1950

On February 18, 1950, Dr. George Hodel became the Los Angeles D.A. investigators "prime suspect." Detectives from both the D.A. and L.A.P.D. surreptitiously entered Dr. Hodel's Hollywood mansion and installed two live microphones inside the walls; one near the master bedroom, the other in the library area. Phone lines were run from the residence to the basement of the Hollywood Police Station, just 2 miles away. Eighteen (18) detectives, assigned to separate four-hour shifts, monitored Dr. Hodel's conversations (live not phone) 24/7, for the next forty-days. On March 28, 1950, George Hodel unexpectedly fled the country, forcing the DA/LAPD surveillance teams to end their joint "stakeout."



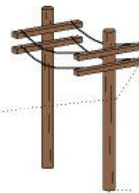
Franklin House 5121 Franklin Ave 1950



Dr. George Hodel inside residence 1950



L.A.P.D. Hwd Police Station circa 1950



Distance of Hodel residence to Hollywood Police Sta 1.7 miles (2.4 miles driving time approximately 5 minutes.)

D.A. Lieutenant Walter Morgan --Biography

- 1939- Appointed a deputy with the Los Angeles Sheriff's Department. Highly skilled in firearms, becomes one of the Sheriff's Department's "crack shots" after qualifying as a "Distinguished Expert" marksman".
- 1940-1949- L.A. Deputy Sheriff for nine years. Assignments included: patrol car, vice, and detective bureau. (Burglary Detail)
- 1949- Left the Sheriff's Department and appointed a detective with the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office, Bureau of Investigation.
- 1950- Selected by Lt. Frank Jemison to assist him in the Grand Jury ordered reinvestigation of the Black Dahlia case.
- Feb. 15, 1950- Morgan ordered by Lt. Jemison to coordinate a meeting between DA crime lab electronics' expert, and LAPD detectives, for the specific purpose of surreptitiously installing three separate microphones inside the Franklin House residence of Dr. George Hill Hodel. Morgan accompanied by "bug man" and "high ranking LAPD officers" proceeds to 5121 Franklin Avenue and personally "shims" the front door of Dr. Hodel's residence. (Dr. Hodel on the same date and time had been picked up and was being detained for questioning by DA investigators at the Hall of Justice.)
- March, 1970- Morgan retires from the DA's Office.
- April, 2002- Interviewed by me related to my Black Dahlia investigation and for the first time in fifty-two years, discloses his connections to the case and confirms George Hodel as the prime suspect and the "bugging of the Hodel residence."
- May, 2003- Agrees to be interviewed on *CBS 48 HOURS*, states publicly his involvement in the investigation, acknowledging he "shimmed the front door of Dr. Hodel's residence, and "electronic experts placed bugs in the walls." He confirmed that he and Lt. Jemison were unexpectedly removed from the case and it was returned back to LAPD for further investigation. In an on-camera statement Morgan indicated that in 1950, "a cover-up and payoff was suspected."
- September 8, 2007- Walter falls ill and passes away in Los Angeles.



REST IN PEACE

In my several meetings with Walter Morgan since our introduction in 2002, I became acutely aware that he was a man of many moods who held many secrets; most of them from a long time ago. In his prime, Walter lived and breathed *Chinatown* and *L.A. Confidential*. He was L.A. Noir-- only this gumshoe was no celluloid fiction-- *he was the real deal*. As you will read below, he was Philip Marlowe (before Marlowe got fired from the DA's Office for insubordination) and Dirty Harry rolled into one-- and in 1944 a couple of street thugs would "make his day."

In the mid-1940s Walter was close to the power that influenced and ran Los Angeles: gangster Mickey Cohen, Florentine Garden's owner, Mark Hansen, and his, "Mr. Show Business," M.C., Nils Thor Granlund, better known as--"N.T.G."

In 1945, Walter married the Florentine's lead showgirl, Tanya "Sugar" Geise. Best man at his wedding was no less a luminary than L.A. County's top-cop, Sheriff Eugene Biscailuz. Standing in Tanya's aisle, Lillian Cohen, the Mickster's wife.

Below I've included just a few press clippings from Walter's Feisty Forties, to give a sense of the man in his time.

In 1944, Walter, then still a deputy sheriff, was parked in a car with his fiancé, Sugar Geise on the Sunset Strip. The couple was approached by two armed robbers:

Excerpt from L.A. Times article 9/30/44:

Dead-Shot Deputy Foils Two Asserted Bandits

...

Suddenly one of them (Gallentine) shoved a pistol through a partly open window, rapped on the glass, and said, "O.K., give us the dough and the jewels"

Let "Jewels" Go

"I (Morgan) stepped out and said, "O.K., here are your jewels—and let go eight little "jewels" from my automatic."

(See complete article below)



SHARPSHOOTER—Deputy Walter Morgan, sheriff department champion shot, shows Dancer "Sugar" Geise gun with which he shot two bandit holdup suspects.

Two handily suspected were glom and seriously wounded earlier yesterday by a fast-thinking straight-shooting deputy sheriff who said they tried to hold him up as he sat in a car with his hameer, Tanya (Sugar) Geisnight club comedienne, in front of her Sun-set Strip apartment.

Sent to the hospital nred with a .44-caliber slug from the automatic pistol of Deputy Walter Morgan, 30, Sheriff's department crack shot, were Manuel Hlofro, 20, and Joseph Gallantine, 24.

In each arm had four wounds, one in the groin and each leg, while Gallantine was shot in the lower abdomen and twice in the left thigh.

Preparing for Test

Morgan and Miss Geise had driven from the Florentine Gardens, where she is chorus mistress, and were seated in the car, with the dome light on, running through a series of civil service and other regulations for a test he planned to take today.

"Suddenly Sugar turned to me and said: 'Honey, there's a man coming this way.'" Morgan related. "I told her not to worry or to stare at him.

*Suddenly one of them (Gallantine) shoved a pistol through a partly-open window, rapped on the glass, and said: 'O.K., give us the dough and the jewels.'

Let 'Jewels' Go

"I stepped out and said: 'O.K., here are your jewels'—and let go eight little 'jewels' from my automatic."

As the blasts from the heavy pistol awoke the neighborhood, Miss Geise ran screaming from the car, leading near-by resi-

dents to jam police phones with calls for help.

Riofrio fell under the barrage of four bullets, but Gallantime fled in a car to a hotel at 6721 Hollywood Blvd., where he went to the room of an acquaintance, Miss Helen Winters of San Francisco. When he declined to call police, she induced him to take a sleeping pill and then called officers, who took him to General Hospital.

Following Suspected

Riefrio told officers he had never met Gallantini before Thursday night and that the latter forced him to join in the holdup attempt.

Miss Gelse said she believed she and Morgan were followed from the night club after the suspects had seen her wearing a \$500 topaz ring and a jeweled wrist watch valued at \$1000.

Dep. Sheriff John Law, assigned to the case, said the pair obviously picked the wrong man when they chose to try to rob Morgan, who leads the Sheriff's pistol team with a score of 297 out of a possible 300 points.

Morgan had fired eight times—missing only once.

"I remember counting as I squeezed the trigger, 1-2-3-4, 1-2-3-4, four for each," he said.

Both suspects are held in the prison ward of General Hospital.



ARRAIGNED—Manuel Riofrio, left, and Joseph Gallentine, charged with attempting to hold up deputy sheriff and fiancée Sept. 28, shown at their arraignment. Times photo

Men Who Picked on Deputy as 'Soft Touch' Arraigned

Convalescing from gunshot wounds incurred when they assertedly attempted to hold up a cop, Sheriff Walter Morgan last Sept. 28, Joseph Gallentine, 21, and Manuel Roflorio, 20, yesterday were arraigned on attempted robbery charges before Judge Cecil D. Holland in Beverly Hills Justice Court.

Preliminary hearing for the pair, who are charged with attempting to rob Morgan and his lancee, Tanya (Sugar) Giese, night club entertainer, while the couple were seated in a parked automobile on the Sunset Blvd. strip, was set for 3 a.m. next Tuesday in Beverly Hills. Bail for each was fixed at \$5000.

Wounded four times by slugs from the pistol of the young deputy sheriff, Riosfrio was car-

Tanya "Sugar" Geise



Here's Sugar Geise, dancer and singer, left, and her mother, Mrs. Harry Geise, pictured

Tanya Geise's International Movie Data Base link- <http://imdb.com/name/nm0312015/>

Morgan & Geise Wed June, 1945 Sheriff Biscailuz Best Man

Sugar Geise Wed to Deputy Sheriff
Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Jun 8, 1945
pg. A12

Sugar Geise Wed to Deputy Sheriff

Dep. Sheriff Walter Morgan and Tanya (Sugar) Geise, Florentine Gardens night-club singer, whom he once saved from two bandits, yesterday were married in Superior Judge Edward R. Brand's court chambers.

Best man at the double-ring ceremony was Sheriff Biscailuz, with Mrs. Sam Katzman, wife of the R.K.O. producer, acting as matron of honor.

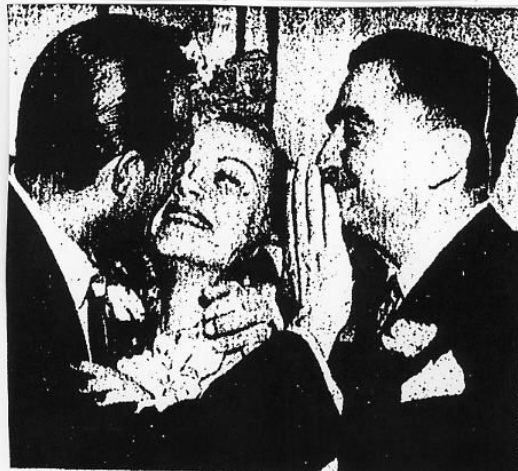
The couple met two years ago while Miss Geise was the star attraction at the Florentine Gardens. Last September, while Morgan was escorting her home, two bandits attempted to hold them up. Morgan leaped from the automobile and wounded both men in a blazing gun battle. Later they were convicted of robbery and sentenced to San Quentin.

"That convinced me I had met the right guy," Sugar declared yesterday after the wedding. She gave her age as 28 and Morgan admitted to being 30.

Other attendants at the wedding were Sugar's father, Harry (Pop) Geise, L.A. John Law, Morgan's immediate superior officer,

and Mrs. Lillian Cohen and Miss Pauline Davis, friends of the bride.

Immediately after the ceremony the couple left for a honeymoon trip which will include San Francisco and Reno.



THREE'S A CROWD—Dep. Sheriff Walter Morgan, about to kiss his bride, Tanya (Sugar) Geise, night club singer, following wedding ceremony yesterday, apparently intends to push Sheriff Biscailuz, best man, out of picture.

Times photo

Mark Hansen's "Flesh & Fantasy" Girly Review 1944

M.C. "NTG" states show assisted by "Durable Blond", Sugar Geise

Flesh, Fantasy Florentine Floor Features

PHILIP K SCHEUER

Los Angeles Times (1886-Current File); Dec 29, 1944; ProQuest Historical Newspapers Los Angeles Times (1881 - 1985) pg. 9

Flesh, Fantasy Florentine Floor Features

BY PHILIP K. SCHEUER

Reviews seldom begin with a salute to the girls—yet what would a floor show be without them? They are the ones the boys come to see; and in "Ecstasies of '45" at Florentine Gardens, their weight in epidermis, exclusive of costumes, is preponderant and overwhelming. If I had the space I'd name them, all 24. They work hard and even when they don't the effect is of an omnipresent saturnalia of flesh. Whoops!

John Calvert is the star of the show. He is always smiling, but he scared hell out of me. I suppose you'd call him a magician. He is also a hypnotist—either that or a super-chiropractor (are you listening, Ev?) He works mostly with servicemen, probably on the theory that they are tough enough to take it; but I have an idea some of them were happier under Jap fire. One, a sailor, even launched a tentative poke at his grinning host. I don't recall that it ever landed, though; Mr. Calvert merely summoned a little extra supernatural energy and stopped it cold.

Italian Opera, Too

Besides scattering the armed forces in confusion, this urbane gentleman demonstrated that extra-sensory perception is no laughing matter (eyes handaged and re-bandaged, he identified all kinds of articles, even to serial numbers) and officiated commendably at "the doom of Hitler." But by that time I was eyeing the nearest exit.

There is plenty of other talent in the show, but of a less disturbing nature. Evelyn Farney can sing and tap-dance and is a pretty and wholesome influence besides. Corinne and Tito Val-

dez are obviously at home in adagio and other fancy terpsichore, one of their numbers being the intermezzo from "Jewels of the Madonna," Producer Frank R. Bruni's favorite opera. Not without some misgivings, Mr. Bruni went further and introduced a whole "Neapolitan Nights" act, with music by Emil Baffa and the Florentine Gardens Symphony Orchestra (two more men.)

The Neapolitan and other singing was done by Charles Russell and Donald Green, two tenors who seemed to keep out of each other's way successfully. Mr. Russell (the one with the lungs) looks enough like Magician Calvert to be his brother—a circumstance that didn't contribute to my peace of mind. However, I must admit he can carry a tune, especially for those who enjoy having it carried straight at them.

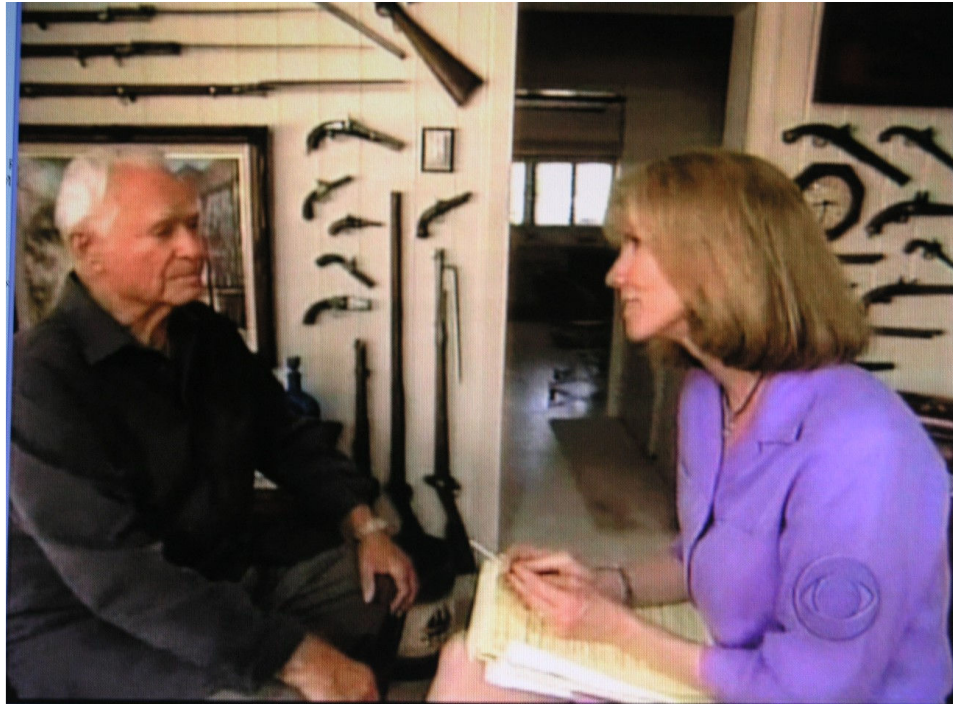
Ben Carter and Mantan Moreland, engaging Negroes who were signed at the last minute, repeat their amusing "unfin-

ished" routine from "Bowery to Broadway." There is also a team of "eccentric comedians," Christy and Gould, about whom the most noncommittal thing to say would be that they certainly are eccentric. And, of course, N. T. Granlund, the m.c., his line cleaned up and toned down for the better, assisted by durable blond Sugar Geise.

"Ecstasies" has been staged by

David Gould in a manner that clearly indicates there was no penny-pinching, among the eye-filling pictures being those created by "Parisienne Perfume Show" and "Arabian Fantasy." This brings us back to the girls, so if you'll excuse me . . .

CBS Investigative reporter, Erin Moriarty and Walter Morgan in 2004 48 HOURS
BLACK DAHLIA CONFIDENTIAL interview



Erin Moriarty questions Morgan regarding the case being closed down and turned back to LAPD:

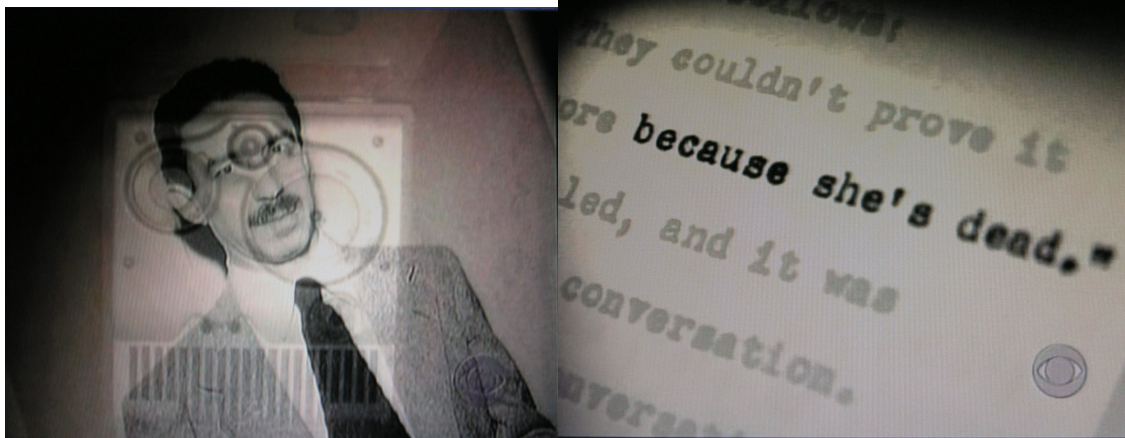
WM: The only thing I can think is that some money must have transpired between people.

EM: It sounds like you think it may have been a cover-up of some sort?

WM: Well, everybody thought that.

Dr. George Hill Hodel

Surveillance transcripts 40 days--(147 pages)



DA Detective Lieutenant Walter Morgan's legacy:

Lt. Morgan is one of Los Angeles's true heroes, and history should note that. Morgan is the only law enforcement officer actively involved in the Black Dahlia murder investigation that, in the end-- CAME CLEAN and gave a public statement.

LAPD Chief William H. Parker, LAPD Chief of Detectives, Thad Brown, LASD Chief of Detectives, J. Gordon Bowers, and Under Sheriff James Downey, all public servants and sworn law enforcement officers-- knew the truth. They knew that the case had been solved and Dr. George Hodel was the killer, but held their silence.

These men whispered the secret to each other within their corridors of power. They shared it only with a select few over drinks at their favorite watering holes. (Detective Thad Brown told the secret to his good friend, actor Jack Webb, who portrayed Dragnet's, Sgt. Joe Friday, "a cop's cop.")

The brass knowing the truth, pondered the situation. It demanded careful thought and Machiavellian strategy. "What can we do? The doctor is alive and well living in Asia. If we extradite him we may lose the case in trial, or worse, if we convict him, he might "tell all." LAPD's chiefs Parker and Brown rationalized their decision. "For the good of the City and the Department, better to sanitize the records and seal off the files. The order was given. Hundred of investigative pages, all of the Hodel related interviews, photographs, along with his confessions on the bugging tapes were removed. from the LAPD files. No civilians or reporters knew about the bugging and the forty-day surveillance at Dr. Hodel's home, and they would never know.

The secret held for more than FIVE DECADES, until Walter Morgan told me the plain and simple truth. He had personally shimmed the locked door at our Franklin House and stood by while the "bug men installed three microphones in the walls."

DA Lt. Frank Jemison was the back-up hero. Unbeknownst to LAPD he locked away a "second set of books" thus preserving the Hodel Dahlia Files and recorded admissions for a future generation to discover.

Walter Morgan, I want to take this opportunity to personally thank you for your service to the City of Angels and its people. Thank you for your honesty and your integrity. You did what others could not. You served the Truth and the People.

Rest in Peace, Walter