

2 San Francisco Chronicle ★★ Wed., July 10, 1974

Zodiac's Letters to The Editor

By Duffy Jennings

The killer who first called himself Zodiac more than four years ago changed his name to The Red Phantom yesterday in a letter mailed to The Chronicle.

It was the second message The Chronicle has received from the cryptic slayer since January 30, when Zodiac broke a silence of nearly three years with a note in which he boasted of having murdered 37 persons.

In a postcard sent to the Chronicle on June 4, Zodiac — signing himself only as "a citizen," urged the paper's editors to "show some concern for public sensibilities" by dropping an advertisement for a motion picture dealing with mass murder.

And in yesterday's letter, he launched a scathing attack on Chronicle columnist Count Marco, demanding his column be canceled.

Although he never identified himself as Zodiac in either of the latest messages, San Francisco Homicide Inspector Dave Toschi said:

"There's no doubt in my mind about either one. I took them to a documents expert and in less than five minutes he told me positively they were in fact written by the Zodiac."

"He's trying to slip letters and cards into The Chronicle without being detected. He's not fooling anybody — no matter what his game is."

Yesterday's letter was dropped into a mail box in Marin county sometime on Monday. It criticized Count Marco for his "superior" attitude and demanded the column be canceled.

It was signed: "The Red Phantom (red with rage)."

The postcard, although received on June 4, was mailed in Alameda county nearly a month earlier, on May 8. There was no explanation for its delayed arrival in The Chronicle offices.

Both messages were in the familiar hand-printed style Zodiac has used since he first wrote to The Chronicle under that name in October of 1969, claiming responsibility for the murder of cab driver Paul Stine.

Yet unlike all previous correspondence from the cryptic killer, the latest communications were devoid of any misspelled words or misplaced punctuation, nor was there any claim of new murders or barbs at the police for not catching him.

And much of the printing particularly in yesterday's

Sirs - I would like to express my constant consternation concerning your poor taste & lack of sympathy for the public, as evidenced by your running of the ads for the movie "Badlands," featuring the blurb "In 1957 most people were killing time. Kit & Holly were killing people." In light of recent events, this kind of murder-glorification can only be deplorable at best (not that glorification of violence was ever justifiable) why don't you show some concern for public sensibilities & cut the ad?

A citizen

This postcard was mailed to the Chronicle in June

letter, included letters with swooping tails and long flowing lines — in contrast to past messages, which featured a hastier, more cropped printing style.

"He seems to be taking more time," Toschi said. "He's more deliberate and careful in his printing now."

In his letter last January, Zodiac bragged of having

killed 37 persons, but only six slayings have ever been directly linked to him.

Five of his victims were killed in various areas of Northern California in a ten-month period that began in December 1968. The sixth victim known to be Zodiac's was a coed in Riverside in 1966.