

4 San Francisco Chronicle Mon, Nov 16, 1970

New Clues Link Zodiac to Earlier Killing

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minutes or so selecting three texts dealing with English composition and emerged into the autumn darkness at 8:30 p.m.

She turned the ignition key. The starter groaned and growled but the engine wouldn't catch.

PASSENGER

Suddenly, a man appeared at the passenger side window and, apparently, offered his assistance. He, too, failed to start the car. Then the man either suggested he drive her home or to a nearby service station. In any event, Miss Bates walked off with him toward a campus parking lot.

The next dawn, a college groundskeeper found the blonde coed's body.

The popular cheerleader had been brutally beaten, repeatedly stabbed with a short-bladed knife, and her throat slashed.

She had not been sexually molested. A heel print and a Times wristwatch — torn off in a fierce struggle — were the only clues the killer left at the scene.

Riverside residents had utmost confidence the killer would be quickly caught. The police of this city of 107,000 had until then boasted often the proud fact they have never failed to solve a murder.

What police felt was a major break came exactly one month later, on Nov. 30, 1966.

ENVELOPES

Two unstamped envelopes — one addressed in large block print to the Riverside Press-Enterprise, the other to "Homicide Detail" — were dropped into a rural mailbox. Each contained a blurred carbon copy of a purported "confession" by Miss Bates' killer. The typewritten message read in part:

"She was young and beautiful. But now she is battered and dead. She is not the first and she will not be the last. ... Miss Bates was stupid. She went to the slaughter like a lamb. She did not put up a struggle. But I said it was a struggle. ... I said it was about time. She asked me about time for what? I said it was about time for her to die. ... I am not sick. I am insane. But that will not stop the game. ... Beware. ... I am stalking your girl now." The confession, unsigned, concluded.

DETAILS

There has never been any question the confession was from the murderer. It included details about the crime police had kept secret. In particular, the fact Miss Bates' car had been sabotaged by pulling out the middle wire of the distributor.

Because the confession indicated the killer had once been given "the brush-off" by Miss Bates, Riverside Detective Captain Irvin Cross and his homicide investigators turned their search toward possible rejected suitors. Literally hundreds of young men — mostly fellow students, but military personnel from several nearby bases as well — were checked out and cleared. The murder of Cher Jo Bates remained unsolved.

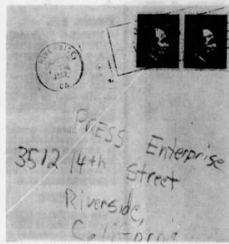
KILLING

On April 30, 1967, exactly six months after the killing, three stamped letters — addressed to the Press-Enterprise, the police, and, cruelly, to the slain girl's father — were dropped into a city mailbox.

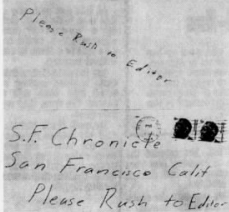
"BATES HAD TO DIE" was printed in large, scrawled letters on each of the notes, pencilled on pages of lined 3-hole school paper.

At about the same time, a college junior reported to police someone had defaced a library study desk by scratching a gory poem into the varnished top with a ball-point pen. The poem read:

"Sick of living unwilling to die,
"cut clean, if red clean,
"blood spurring, dripping
"spilling
"all over her new dress.
"oh well, it was red away.
"the draining into an uncertain death.
"she won't die this time,
"someone'll find her.
"just wait till next time."
Beneath the weird wording



The Riverside Press Enterprise received this envelope in 1966



This is the envelope mailed to The Chronicle by the Zodiac killer

who has many times boasted in his writings of having included clues to his identity.

Additional descriptive details about Zodiac have also been obtained by The Chronicle in an exclusive interview with one intended victim who, by chance, escaped unscathed.

Kathleen Johns, 23, driving from her former home in San Bernardino to the Bay Area to visit relatives on the evening of Sunday, March 22, noticed a late model car following her after she passed through Modesto. The driver began blinking his headlights on and when she turned onto lightly-traveled State Highway 152.

Eventually, concerned that something was wrong with her car, she overcame her fear and she pulled to the side of the road and stopped. So did the following car.

A man, clean-shaven and neatly dressed, approached, said her left rear wheel was wobbling, and that he'd fix it if she'd like. Mrs. Johns, a while he got back in his car and drove slowly off.

And perhaps the most meaningful discovery was that two of the three notes had been signed with a "Z."

Other similarities between Miss Bates' murder and Zodiac's known killings were also pointed out by The Chronicle in three days of investigation and conferences with police in Riverside.

CONCLUSION

At the conclusion, Captain Cross immediately forwarded the three notes and a photograph of the strange desk poem to Sacramento for examination by specialists of the State Bureau of Criminal Investigation and Identification.

The CII handwriting expert, Sherwood Morrill, after preliminary examination of the Riverside evidence, said it is quite possible the Zodiac killer authored the notes and poem.

There are minor differences, but, says Morrill, this could be the Zodiac's ever-worsening mental condition — a murderer growing more and more confident he can kill at will and never be caught. He agreed the notes and poem were done by the same person.

CAR

If the man who signed the notes "Z" is, as police here now tend to believe, Zodiac, also the killer who sabotaged Miss Bates' car and then lured her to her death.

They are, not without reason, excitedly working to determine if the presumed initials "Z" on the poem might not be those of Zodiac.

readily accepted the offer. "It's all fixed now," he told her a few minutes later, then headed for his car.

WHEEL

Mrs. Johns started to drive away. She went but a few feet when the left rear wheel fell off and the station wagon thudded to a stop.

The man came back, said with a sincere smile "the trouble's worse than I thought," and offered her a ride to a brightly-lit service station visible a quarter-mile up the road.

Mrs. Johns, a 10-month-old daughter to worry about and seven months pregnant besides, gratefully accepted it and with the child, Jennifer, got into the stranger's car because "he seemed so nice."

Two hours later and many miles away a passing semi was flagged down by an hysterical Mrs. Johns. She later told this terrifying tale to police.

CARRY

Once inside the car, the stranger had proceeded to drive the highway into a network of deserted farm roads. Telling him a man about to make a pass, she sarcastically asked "do you always go around helping people like this?"

"When I get through with them they don't need help," she quoted the soft-spoken stranger as answering.

After that, for nearly two hours, he drove slowly by the farmlands, every so often turning to look at her and say such things as "you know I'm going to kill you" and "you know you're going to die."

"I was terrified," Mrs. Johns told The Chronicle. "I knew he meant it. He said it over and over in a calm, quiet voice and you could feel he meant every word. I just sat there waiting for it to happen."

STOP

Suddenly, the car screeched almost to a stop. The would-be killer had almost driven the wrong direction onto a freeway exit ramp.

Mrs. Johns saw her chance and took it. She grabbed Jennifer, leaped from the accelerating car and ran deep into a field where she finally hid herself — into an irrigation ditch.

SLAYING

From there she could see the stranger, a flashlight in hand, trying to find her. At it if she'd like. Mrs. Johns, a while he got back in his car and drove slowly off.



Escaped victim identified this sketch

asked that night to describe the stranger, Mrs. Johns gave police her estimate of his age, height, weight, and hair-coloring, then her eyes drifted to a station bulletin board and she screamed out "Oh my God ... that's him ... that's him right there."

It was a WANTED poster with an artist's sketch of Zodiac.

It had been distributed statewide by San Francisco police after the Oct. 10, 1969, slaying of cab driver Paul

Slone, which Zodiac proved was his doing by mailing a bloody swatch of the victim's shirt to The Chronicle. The picture was based on accounts of eyewitnesses who saw Zodiac flee the Presidio Heights murder scene.

To the description police released then (see accompanying photo), Mrs. Johns remembers these details about Zodiac and his car:

- His chin had traces of pock marks such as can be caused by acne.

- He was wearing a dark blue nylon windbreaker-style jacket over dark blue or black woolen bell-bottom pants.

- His shoes, in her words, were "split-shined," the high-gloss black reflecting the interior light of the car.

- He wore black thick-rimmed glasses — held tightly on his head by a thin band of elastic such as glasses-wearing athletes and some working men use.

- He spoke in a monotone with no noticeable accent.

- The car was a late-

model American make; a light-colored two-door with black bucket seats between which was a sporty console-style automatic transmission gear shift. At the front end of the console was an ashtray, in which, on the right-hand side, was a built-in cigarette lighter.

- The car, bearing the old California license plates, was messy. Clothes and papers were scattered on the dashboard and on both the front and back seats. Mostly men's clothing, but also some smaller, patterned tee-shirts such as a child of 8 to 12 years might wear.

- On the dashboard were a couple of colored plastic scoring pads, and also a black, rubber-grip flashlight.

- Few, if any, of those details about Zodiac have ever been made public before. At the time the news media figured, wrongly, she'd made a mistake in identifying a "Bay Area" killer as the man who followed her from Modesto and the story was largely ignored.

- Police, however, feel she did meet with and escaped



CHER JO BATES 1966 murder

from Zodiac. They base this on a thorough examination of details of her story.

And also because of a Zodiac letter received by The Chronicle, in which he bragged about his near miss and the fact he'd gone back to Mrs. Johns' sabotaged car and turned it to the ground. When police found the station wagon it had, indeed, been set afire.

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