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The Black Dahlia

By: Abigail Anderson and Chloe Gregory

The Black Dahlia murder is one of the most brutal murders in history. The case remain unsolved to this day, though several people have confessed to killing Elizabeth Short. Elizabeth Short was 22 when she was last seen by Robert Manley. Short had befriended Manley in San Diego, he had then given her a ride to Los Angeles. On January 9, 1947, Elizabeth was seen by Robert Manley and then dropped her off at the Biltmore Hotel. That was the last place Manley saw Elizabeth. Then on January 15, 1947, Betty Bersinger was pushing her three-year-old daughter in a stroller on the sidewalk when she saw Elizabeth's mutilated corpse laying in the grass. She immediately went to a nearby home to ring the police. Reporters quickly came to photograph the sight. Before police officers could begin their investigation, the press had trampled the crime scene. Because of profound facial injuries, the body was difficult to identify, but a good set of fingerprints helped.

Short's severely mutilated body was severed at the waist and drained of all blood. The body obviously had been washed by the killer. Short's face had been cut from the corners of her mouth to her ears, creating an effect called the Gaslow Smile. At the crime scene, a bloody heel print was left stained in the concrete. An autopsy stated that Short was 5 feet 5 inches, tall, weighed 115 pounds, and had light blue eyes, brown hair, and badly decayed teeth. Following Short's identification, reporters from the *Los Angeles Examiner* called her mother, Phoebe Short, and told her that her daughter had won a beauty contest. Only after gathering as much personal information as they could from Phoebe, did the reporters tell her that her daughter had been murdered. Reporters offered to pay her air fare if she would help with the police investigation. On January 23, 1947, someone claiming to be the killer called the editor of the Los Angeles Examiner, offering to mail items belonging to Short to the editor. The next day, a packet showed up at the Los Angeles newspaper containing Short's birth certificate, business cards, photographs, names written on paper, and an address book with the name Mark Hansen on the cover.

The murder of Elizabeth Short, however, remains a cold case. Because there is little forensic evidence available, and decades have passed since the gruesome events took place, it is doubtful the murder will ever be solved. Perhaps, if all the records were made public, that situation would change. But until that day happens, the murder of The Black Dahlia is in a way, the Los Angeles equivalent of Jack the Ripper. There too, police believed that someone with medical knowledge was involved. A change in the law was directly related to the unsolved crime. The month after Elizabeth Short died, California became the first state in America to require registration of convicted sex offenders.

Since Elizabeth's Death more than fifty people have confessed to killing Elizabeth.

*** Daniel Voorhies, an army veteran , confessed, allegedly saying: "I can't stand it any longer - I killed Elizabeth Short."**

*** Minnie Sepulveda, also claimed she was guilty of the crime.**

*** Max Handler (also known as Mack Chandler) - with Homicide Detective Ed Barrett - was the 25th man to confess to the murder. When he took a lie detector test, however, the truth came out. Apparently, he "wanted to get away from a gang of men who have been following me constantly."**

****Carol Marshall said she could identify the killer. Nothing reliable ever came from her evidence.***

Elizabeth was known and loved by many. She was called several names including Betty, Beth, and to some of her friends "The Black Dahlia". She was born and raised in Medford, Massachusetts, Elizabeth had a dream to become a model. So she moved to Los Angeles in hopes of becoming a model but Los Angeles, after the war, sometimes had a way of destroying-as well as fulfilling - childhood dreams. At that time Los Angeles was growing and new building and roads needed workers, so people were provided jobs during the Great Depression. In one of her last letters to her parents she told them that she was about to achieve a lifelong dream. She was going to get a screen test.

Footnotes:

1) Bos, Carol, Black Dahlia , Awesome Stories, Sep/01/2006, May/27/2016,

<https://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Black-Dahlia>

2) Charles Dingley, Black Dalia, Wikipedia, Jun/03/2016, Jun/06/2016, <https://www.wikipedia.com>

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/Black-Dahlia0>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/Black-Dahlia0>

Media Stream



Black Dahlia

View this asset at: <http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/view/Black-Dahlia1>