



'FOUND' Zodiac Killer is 'finally unmasked' by sleuths, now decades after the brutal murders

By Nick Harding, The Sun; September 17, 2023



Reading the manuscript in front of her, **Professor Jen Bucholtz** was persuaded it held the key to a string of grisly murders, still unsolved after more than 60 years.

A few days previously, Jen had been approached by a stranger with a remarkable proposition: He was convinced he knew the identity of the mysterious “Zodiac,” a serial killer who claimed in newspapers to have killed as many as 17 victims in California during the 1960s.

But the police state the Zodiac only shot or stabbed “a few” victims between December 1968 and October 1969. Many experts, however, believe the serial killer’s death count is closer to a dozen, with similar crime-scene “MOs” and signatures that extend from San Diego to the Nevada side of Lake Tahoe.

His notoriety grew when he sent a series of letters and postcards, signed “the Zodiac,” to newspapers – several of which containing coded messages that challenged the authorities to crack them. The longer he remained at large, the more infamous he became, and he continued taunting officials through the mail until his last official murder.

Now a group of professional sleuths who’ve been investigating the case for several years have revealed the discovery of a new clue which, they say, reinforces their belief that they know who the Zodiac was.

Thomas J. Colbert is the founder of the Case Breakers (CBs), a 40-member task force versed in human intelligence (HUMINT), behavioral sciences, crime-link analysis, geospatial analysis, criminal justice, forensics, CSI, geophysics, encryption and ballistics.

In June, he announced the discovery of a symbol synonymous with the killer: A cross with a circle around it, recently uncovered when 40 years of thorn bushes were removed, revealed a wooden post near property once owned by the man who the team believes to have been the madman: Gary Francis Poste.



The revelation comes after the CBs spent 3 years investigating his long trail, following disclosures in the manuscript received by Jen. The author, Dale Julin, led the charge to collaborate with the CBs in 2020.



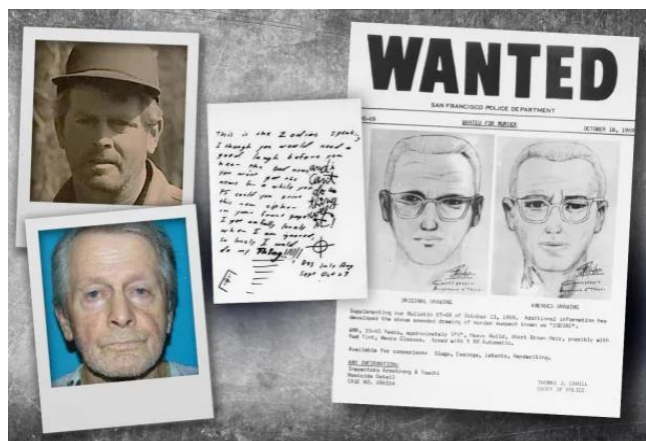
It was early that year when Dale, an award-winning TV anchor and reporter, decided to approach Jen – a 48-year-old US Army veteran in Afghanistan and Iraq. She learned that the Poste theory had been long ignored by a half-dozen law enforcement agencies – including the FBI, California’s Department of Justice, and the state’s Attorney General.

“Dale told me that in 2014, a homeless man named Wil turned up at his TV station he worked at, wanting to speak to him,” said Jen. “He claimed that Gary Francis Poste was the Zodiac, and when Wil confronted him about it, Poste tried to kill him, so he went on the run.”



As a pre-teen child on a San Francisco school bus during those 1968-69 attacks, Dale was enthralled by Wil’s story. The busy newsman was the first person to hear him out – in exchange for a lunch.

“The rest is history,” added Colbert.



The Zodiac’s confirmed 19 letters and postcards contain codes where letters were substituted for a series of symbols. In order to break the encryption, the reader has to correctly link the symbol with a letter of the alphabet.

During the ordeal, newspapers that received the letters quickly published them. The first was cracked in a week. The second took 51 years; only two remain unsolved.

The messages also contained details about the murders and methods used to kill the victims. The Zodiac indicated the codes also included his name, but codebreakers never found it.

After several encounters with Wil, Dale decided to become a code-breaker, using Poste’s name as the key to unlock the Zodiac’s identity. It would take him five years.

According to police reports, Poste’s only brush with the law had been in 2016 when he was arrested for pushing his wife down their A-Frame’s stairs. He later was found mentally incapable of being tried, so he was sent to a locked assisted-living facility. The 80-year-old suspect died in his secured room, alone, in 2018.



In January of 2020, Jen said, “Dale emailed [and] asked if I would read his manuscript, saying he knew who the Zodiac was. About a third of the way through, I realized he’d got it. This must be it.

“Dale unusually reverse-engineered the case. Typically, you work from the beginning. But, in order to decode the letters, one must have the cipher key, which is Poste’s full name. There’s no other way to solve them. Using it helped find key information.”

During his Air Force years, Poste had the experience to create complicated ciphers. He also “lived in close proximity to the murders and wore size-10 military boots, the same-size footprints found at three [Zodiac] crime scenes. He was also an avid outdoorsman. “There is nothing we know about Poste that eliminates him as a suspect.”

The Zodiac's dark run was shockingly brutal. Though he claimed in letters to the press that he had committed many more murders, the long-disbanded Zodiac Task Force could only agree on seven of the victims, mostly in the Bay Area: five who were killed and two who survived.

The CBs, however, respectfully disagree on the body count.



This is the Zodiac speaking

I do have to give them credit for stumbling across my riverside activity.

they are only finding the easy ones, there are a hell of a lot more than there.

SFPD-O

⊕ -17+

"Zodiac" takes credit for 1966 Riverside murder -- and others in SoCal? L.A. Times (3/16/71)

The team also strongly believes the Zodiac was responsible for the murder of Cheri Jo Bates. The 18-year-old cheerleader was found stabbed 42 times on October 31, 1966, in Riverside, California – with a stranger’s 4 hairs in her clenched fist. Meanwhile, Riverside’s PD media reps, its County Coroner’s Office and District Attorney still claim Bates was never considered as a Zodiac victim. That doesn’t explain this damning 48-year-old FBI memo that was quietly sent to the CBs.

After reading Dale’s manuscript, Jen and her fellow sleuths began gathering evidence to make a case for the deceased Poste.

In December 2021, the investigators managed to track down Poste’s 30-year hiking mat and harvest viable DNA from it.

Riverside PD has had Bates’ mystery hair-DNA on a slide, courtesy of the FBI Quantico lab, since 1999. Last year, consulting specialists from five top universities offered to harvest genetic material from the mat for a comparison to Bates’ DNA. But Riverside refused to collaborate with the esteemed experts.

Shortly after, Colbert issued a statement saying they’d been approached by a senior fed whistleblower. The informant claimed databases at FBI Headquarters list Poste as the Zodiac “suspect,” and his partial DNA has been at Quantico since 2018. This tipster “hero” has since joined Colbert’s 40-member team.

When reporters call on the decades-old Zodiac case, the FBI gives the standard “ongoing investigation” dodge. But for the first time, *San Francisco Chronicle* reporter Kevin Fagan heard something new: the bureau now “declines to confirm or deny” these developments.

Local law enforcement “friendlies,” meanwhile, confirmed that nothing on the Zodiac case or its evidence has ever been posted on the CODIS crime database – which, incidentally, is run by the FBI. According to California law, ignoring or refusing to enter genetic evidence into CODIS is a state violation.



Jen is certain Poste is the killer. “In 1959, he was a passenger in a drunk-driving jeep crash, in which he sustained massive head injuries and was hospitalized for weeks. All of his fellow airmen we located have said he became a totally different person after that wreck,” she says.

When he recovered, Poste was ordered to Greenland – the most remote American radar installation in the world. He had one chore for eight months: receiving and sending coded messages.

OPTIONAL FORM NO. 10
JULY 1973 EDITION
GSA FPMR (41 CFR) 101-11.6

UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

DIRECTOR, FBI (9-49911) DATE: 9/18/75
ATTN: IDENTIFICATION DIVISION

Halt
SAC, LOS ANGELES (62-6854)

ZODIAC
EXTORTION
OO: SACRAMENTO

g

TO DATE, THERE HAVE BEEN SIX VICTIMS WHICH HAVE BEEN ATTRIBUTED TO ZODIAC BY THE POLICE AUTHORITIES. FIVE OF THE KNOWN 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 CO-ED MURDERED IN RIVERSIDE, CALIFORNIA, IN 1966.** ZODIAC ACKNOWLEDGED THAT HE HAD INDEED BEEN RESPONSIBLE FOR THE RIVERSIDE SLAYING IN A LETTER MAILED MARCH 15, 1971, FROM PLEASANTON, CALIFORNIA.

Jen said, “He had training in cryptology and had the background to make anagrams.

“One of my theories about him is that he created some of these anagrams and messages before he killed the victims. I think he created them ahead of time and challenged himself to use the method of murder he’d included in the anagram.”



British true-crime expert and founder of Crime Viral, Cheish Merryweather, believes the answers will eventually be found.

“It is frustrating that the [Case Breakers] team has done the work, found the evidence, looked at the background of the suspect and got the DNA, and have then hit a brick wall with the investigation as the authorities simply refuse to consider what they have.”

For Jen and the CBs, the hope is public pressure will force the authorities to test their evidence. But until the Zodiac is unmasked, he’ll be one of the world’s most enduring bogeymen.

“It is unlike any other case in the world,” concludes Jen. “I don’t like giving compliments to killers, but he was unique and very smart.”

If Jen is right and Poste was indeed the Zodiac, he went to his grave without facing justice, having outsmarted the authorities for over half a century.

TJC’s FYI: The other shoe hasn’t dropped – stay tuned! Meanwhile, unanswered questions and critical documents can be found at: <https://thecasebreakers.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Zodiac-Killer-Press-Release-FBI-Whistleblower-Reveals-Zodiac-Cover-Up-ExtendedX.pdf>

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