

Is 'Zodiac' slaying young women?

By JAMES K. BECK

Since a chilling, psychotic killer stalks the western United States, plotting a satanic-mass game by leaving a trail of young, young girls' bodies for psychic homicide investigators in various areas?

Sheriff Don Strupke is convinced a solitary "lover" killed six young girls whose remains were found in Sonoma County in 1958 and 1959.

But he now says the same killer may be responsible for the deaths of some 10 or more girls in the western states since 1958.

And because of the killer's diabolical, fanatical attitude toward law enforcement, Strupke said, "I think he could definitely be the Zodiac."

Now and in Washington, the remains of 14 young women were found in three common graveyards — as though the killer enjoyed rubbing the evidence of his murders in lawmen's faces.

The Zodiac gave references to astrology in his cryptic messages to Bay Area authorities, but he also refers to Elliott and Wallace operators and talks of making "lovers" of his victims in an after life.

Strupke has released information on a diabolical symbol made of sticks, found at the spot near Devil's Kitchen in Frens Valley where the body of Carolyn Mallin Davis, 18, was found July 21, 1959 — the same place where the remains of Yvonne Weber, 13, and Marlene Sterling, 13, were found Dec. 21, 1957.

The sign, two cross rectangles joined by a stick, is an old English watercraft symbol which Strupke says was used in connection with death rituals, serving "to hurry the spirits on" to the after life.

"The last messages we got from the Zodiac indicated he was going to continue his killings, but vary them. And he bragged about entering slaves for his use in the next world," Strupke said.

Two psychological profiles, based on information collected by Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Seth Carlsfeldt, have been developed by a psychiatrist and behavioral scientist to give an insight into the killer's personality.

Strupke plans to release information on three studies of a new conference in Fresno, along with photographs and details on the Sonoma County homicides.

Dr. Edward H. Slav, San Francisco psychiatrist, says the Sonoma County killer apparently slays his victims slowly "for the necessary gratification" and considers the young girls "garbage to be dumped along the side of the road and not even receive a decent burial."

But he also seems compelled to keep items of clothing and jewelry from his victims, which Slav says could be "for purposes of worship" or to display "the trophies on his gun."

The killer may regard himself as a kind of messiah, Slav went on.

He has a personality similar to the religious fanatics of the Manson family type, and believes he "can resolve and change the world of these 'fallen women,'" Slav said.

Both Slav and Howard D. Taylor, of the FBI behavioral science unit in Washington, D.C., believe the person responsible for the Sonoma County slayings lives in this area or at least is quite familiar with its more remote areas, where he disposed of his victims.

But Carlsfeldt is working on the theory the killer circulates throughout Northern California.

His investigation into the murders here uncovered details of some 10 other young girls who were killed in Northern California in the past six years, and their bodies disposed of in isolated areas, or empty school yards during the week-ends.

Then in October lawmen found the remains of seven young women at two graveyards, 1.7 miles from each other, east of Seattle, Wash.

Carlsfeldt spent two days there discussing evidence with the 18 man team of investigators assigned to the homicides, and came home convinced a connection exists between the Washington murders and his own six cases.

"They had a psychological profile done up there on their suspect, and you can take it and almost overlap it with very close here," Carlsfeldt said.

"And remember, our killings stopped here in December, 1957 — and they began occurring in Washington in January, 1954."

The Washington killings stopped around July last summer, but Carlsfeldt said similar murders were reported about that time at Salt Lake City, where the bodies of three male, young women were found in remote graveyards.

Since the first of the year, the body of a male young woman was found in a snowbank near Aspen, Colo., and authorities are looking for a young female ski instructor who disappeared at Vail, Colo.

Carlsfeldt and Sheriff's Detective Sgt. Elva Halligan are presently in Colorado working with homicide investigators to determine if a suspect can be identified there who will fit in with the Sonoma County slayings.

Strupke also noted that one of Zodiac's last communications was a postcard sent to the San Francisco Chronicle, in which he told lawmen to look in the snowbanks near Lake Tahoe, where he said he disposed of the body of a young nurse who disappeared on her way home from work.

Now, back in Colorado they have a

youngster on her way home from work, who drops out of sight and is found a few weeks later buried in a snowbank.

"We can't help but think there is a similarity."

At his news conference, Strupke candidly plans to ask for assistance from Northern California lawmen to efforts to uncover any information that might help solve the Sonoma County homicides, while emphasizing at the same time the cases may well be connected to similar murders in other counties.

Since the killings began here in February, 1958, when Marlene Sterling and Yvonne Weber disappeared from the Redwood Empire Ice Area, five other young women have disappeared. Four victims were found dumped near rural road intersections, near small streams.

Kim Wendy Allen, 18, was last seen hitchhiking north from San Rafael March 4, 1959, and her body was found the next day off Highway 104 southeast of Santa Rosa. Len Lee Korns, 18, was found Dec. 14, 1958, off California Road; Carolyn Don, 14, 1958, was found July 21, 1959, off Fresno Valley Road; and Thelma Diane Walsh, 16, was found Dec. 21, 1957, in Mark West Creek.

The seventh victim, Jeannette Remick, 20, disappeared after leaving her Cotuit home to hitch a ride on 101 to her classes at Santa Rosa Junior College. Her body has never been found, but authorities are certain she met the same fate as the other six victims.

Sonoma County lawmen are now checking a lawbook found near Worcester, Wash., to determine if it matches dental charts of the young Japanese-Hawaiian girl.

Secret Witness rewards have been offered for information leading to the arrest and conviction of the person or persons responsible for the Sonoma County homicides, and investigators have checked out the hundreds of leads sent them through the program.

Carlsfeldt took a list of some 100 names with him to Colorado to see if they turned up in records there. Many of these names were developed through information supplied by the Secret Witness program.

At Friday's news conference, it is expected a continued reward of some \$25,000 will be offered by the Secret Witness program for information on the Sonoma here.

Information can be mailed anonymously to the program.

Details to the Secret Witness Reward Fund can also be mailed to Box 202, Santa Rosa, 95401.