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The Zodiac Killer

When people think of the late 60's to early 70's, images of hippies probably pop into their mind. Around this time America was fighting in Vietnam. Muhammad Ali was still boxing. America won the great space race by beating the USSR to the moon. It was a nostalgic time. What people don't often remember is that there was also a serial killer on the loose. The serial killer that would eventually be dubbed the Zodiac Killer. For approximately eleven years the killer captured the public's attention with his gruesome murders and anonymous notes. Though there was a public outcry to catch the one dubbed the Zodiac killer, he was never caught.

The unofficial start of the Zodiac Killer's reign of terror began in early June, 1963 (Butterfield). The first murder took place in Santa Barbara, California. The victims' names were Robert Domingos and Linda Edwards (Butterfield). The two decided to go to the beach for senior ditch day. The two were just high school seniors (Butterfield). The young couple's bodies were found by Robert Domingo's father (Butterfield). The victims had both been shot multiple times (Butterfield). The next unofficial murder occurred in October of 1966 in Riverside, California (Butterfield). This time it was a single victim. The victim's name was Cheri Josephine Bates (Butterfield). The victim was only eighteen years old. Ms. Bates had gone to the library but unfortunately never returned home. Her body was found in between two buildings (Butterfield). Her throat had been slashed and she had been stabbed multiple times (Butterfield). Unlike the first murder this time the suspect had left evidence at the crime scene. A Timex watch, a military boot print, and strands of hair were all found at the crime scene (Butterfield). Even with the evidence the local police department still could not find any leads (Butterfield). Both murders, though unconfirmed, are believed to be the work of the Zodiac Killer and the start of his reign of terror.

Shortly after the 1966 murder took place the killer started to send anonymous notes to the police department and the local newspapers (Butterfield). In the notes the killer took full credit for the murder of Ms. Bates (Butterfield). After doing some analysis on the notes it was found that they all came from the same person (Butterfield). The messages quickly gained national attention. This caused public outcry for the culprit to be caught.

After a two year break the killer was ready commit his next horrific murder. This would be the first confirmed murder by the Zodiac killer (Biography.com). This time in Benicia, California (Butterfield). This happened in December of 1968. The victims were again a high school couple. The victims' names were Betty Lou Jensen and David Faraday (Butterfield). The young couple had set out for their first official date and were supposed to be back at eleven p.m. that night (Butterfield). They were found hours later riddled with bullets (Butterfield). It shook the community.

Not being able quench his insatiable desire for murder the killer was back at it again a year later in July of 1969 (Butterfield). This time his victims were Darlene Ferrin and Michael Mageau (Butterfield). This would be the second confirmed killing by the Zodiac (Hayden). The two were sitting in a parking lot when the killer showed up and shot at the car hitting both victims multiple times (Butterfield). Shortly after the shooting the killer called the local police department and claimed responsibility, for both that murder and the murder that had occurred just the year before (Biography.com). The killer this time was not as successful in killing his victims, while Darlene died from her injuries, Michael miraculously survived (Butterfield). Shortly after this the killer once again sent letters to several newspapers claiming responsibility for the recent murders (Butterfield). The killer also demanded in his letters that they be published (Butterfield). This would not be the last time the killer made these demands.

Just two months later in September of 1969 the killer would claim his next two victims (Butterfield). Their names were Bryan Hartnell and Cecelia Shepard (Butterfield). This would be the Third confirmed murder by the Zodiac killer (Hayden). The Victims were college students. The Zodiac approached the young couple with a hood over his head (Hayden). The killer bound his victims up and

then stabbed both of them repeatedly (Butterfield). Again the killer was not completely successful in killing both victims. Cecelia died from her wounds but, Bryan survived (Butterfield). Unlike the other murder scenes this time the killer decided to leave a message at the scene. He left the date and time of the murder and then drew a circle with a cross in it on the victim's car (Hayden). This symbol would eventually become the killers' call sign. The killer once again then called the local police department and informed them where the victims were and claimed responsibility (Butterfield). The Zodiac killer was not done killing yet though.

Just a month after the murder of Cecelia Shepard and attempted murder of Bryan Hartnell the killer was ready to kill again. This time his victim was a twenty-eight year old cab driver, whose name was Paul Stine (Butterfield). This would be the fourth confirmed murder by the Zodiac Killer (Hayden). This took place in San Francisco, California (Butterfield). The killer shot Mr. Stine in the back of the head and then casually strolled away from the murder scene (Butterfield). After shooting Paul Stine the police had put out the wrong information about what the suspect looked like, and unknowingly let the killer get away (Foley). The police determined at first that it was a robbery that had gone bad until they received another letter from the killer claiming responsibility (Butterfield). This was probably the closest the police had ever gotten to catching the Zodiac killer and they messed it up.

Paul Stine was the last confirmed murder by the Zodiac Killer (Hayden). However the Zodiac Killer continued to send messages to the local newspapers (Butterfield). This went on for another three to four years. The last message that killer sent was in 1974 (Butterfield). He sent this message to a newspaper in Albany, New York and claimed that he was not done killing and that there were many more murders coming (Butterfield). The FBI however, was unable to confirm if the new letter actually came from the Zodiac Killer (Butterfield). Though there were only four confirmed murders by the Zodiac killer there have been more linked to him (Morrison). How many the Zodiac actually committed cannot be confirmed.

So who was the Zodiac Killer? While some experts can speculate no one really knows for sure who the Zodiac killer was. It seems his murderous appetite was eventually quenched. Though he was

infamous he left the world asking many question. The biggest question of course being why he stopped.

No matter how curious some may be there is no doubt that the world is happy that he did.

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