

BERKOWITZ: 'Others could go to jail'

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—Berkowitz was known in Westchester to have driven a yellow Volkswagen although he was the registered owner of a white Ford Galaxy. A year later, at the final Son of Sam killing in Brooklyn, an auto specialist who witnessed the attack says he heard a Volkswagen "several times" cruising the neighborhood. Two other witnesses say the killer fled in a yellow VW. The police ordered roadblocks to stop the yellow VW. Berkowitz' white Galaxy, with black vinyl roof, was ticketed near the shooting site. Who was driving the yellow Volkswagen in Brooklyn, and why was Berkowitz driving one in Westchester?

—Some witnesses to the Brooklyn attack insist the killer ran north to his getaway car—a yellow one, at least two of them say—while Berkowitz' black-and-white car was ticketed east of the shooting site. Who was running north, and why?

—A man described by police as "the best (Son of Sam) witness we've had" watched the killer at the Brooklyn attack for 10 minutes before he struck and was barely 20 feet from him when he pulled the trigger. The witness' description does not match Berkowitz.

The seeming contradictions in the case against Berkowitz, says a source in the Queens District Attorney's Office, have "been something of a concern to us for some time. When we put this one together we were left with a nagging amount of unanswered questions, indications and reports we could not dismiss out of hand. And so was (the) Brooklyn (District Attorney's Office)...and maybe even more so."

If so, Berkowitz has done nothing to ease the questions.

In the interview, conducted while Berkowitz was confined to the Central New York Psychiatric Center in Marcy and shortly before he was found competent enough to be transferred to Attica State Prison, the prisoner was calm but alert and attentive. He responded agreeably to most questions asked of him in the course of a four-hour, recorded interview.

But, in an abrupt departure from a previously open position on the killings, Berkowitz admitted he was being "evasive" in certain critical areas of the questioning and "not telling all I know" about the .44-Caliber case.

Berkowitz was then asked if the police or psychiatrists had ever asked him about others being involved in the attacks. "No," he replied. "If you did answer these questions," he was asked, "do you think other people might end up in jail?"

"There's a good possibility — and I don't want that to happen," Berkowitz said. He refused to go further on the subject.

Berkowitz, however, made a number of other revelations that complicate the Son of Sam case as it now stands.

Last summer, besides claiming sole responsibility for .44-Caliber killings and assaults, Berkowitz also confessed to setting 2,000 fires the police now say he could not have ignited. He had earlier confessed to a knifing and shooting police apparently have no record of ever occurring.

But, more importantly, there was some doubt being expressed even among those who investigated Berkowitz as the Son of Sam.

A veteran homicide detective who worked on the investigation, said: "There's a lot of folks upstairs who say one thing up front (to the public) and privately think another way about this case. If it was mine, which it isn't, I'd go after a lot of the interesting things that are still hanging out there."

Among those "interesting things" is that a week after Berkowitz' arrest the police were still "seeking someone with a possible connection to the case—a very strange one." That person was reported to be "a man with a mustache" who had watched Son of Sam shoot Judy Placido and Sal Lupio outside the Elephas discotheque and then fled in the same direction as the gunman.

Nothing more has surfaced about this person.

Westchester Rockland Newspapers has learned that well after Berkowitz' confession, the Brooklyn District Attorney's Office continued to investigate "at least two" other persons in an effort to link them to Berkowitz.

In total, a long list of questions surrounds the Son of Sam case. Prominent among these are ones that have long fueled a controversy over the true authorship of the two Son of Sam letters. One was thrown into the car where Valentina Suriani and Alexander Esau were murdered in April, 1977. The second was mailed to Jimmy Breslin in June, 1977, and printed in the New York News.

The controversy surrounding the letters, especially the one to Breslin, is multi-faceted. It includes Berkowitz' own, lifelong way of writing and his known limited ability to string words together fluently. Conversely, the Breslin letter is widely acknowledged to be well-written.

Many people, including handwriting analysts and Berkowitz' former close friends, believe him incapable of the quality of writing in the Breslin letter.

Charles Hamilton, an internationally recognized handwriting expert, has studied "many samples of Berkowitz' writing and printing," along with those of Charles Manson, the Boston Strangler and others famous and infamous.

In an interview with this newspaper, Hamilton flatly declared: "I will say without any qualification whatsoever that David Berkowitz did not write that letter to Breslin. There is no doubt at all in my mind. He was just not the person who wrote that letter."

"I've studied much of Berkowitz' writing and many samples of his printing, too," Hamilton said. "The Breslin letter is a masterpiece by comparison. Berkowitz doesn't write like that, he doesn't print like that, and he doesn't think like that. Further, he's incapable of it."

Hamilton said, "Whoever wrote that letter to Breslin is possessed of a high degree of urbanity and wit, is well-educated, and is able to make words flow together beautifully. Berkowitz can't do it, and his limited education shows in everything he writes."

Hamilton described the writer of the Breslin letter as someone who has had some art training and is very self-assured and confident of himself.

"The police were duped into believing Berkowitz wrote that letter to Breslin and

DEAR MR. JIMMY BRESLIN,

HELLO FROM THE GUTTERS OF N.Y.C. WHICH ARE FILLED WITH DOG MANURE, WASTED STALE WINE, URINE AND BLOOD. HELLO FROM THE SEWERS OF N.Y.C. WHICH SWALLOW UP THESE DELICACIES WHEN THEY ARE WASHED AWAY BY THE SWEEPER TRUCKS. HELLO FROM THE CRACKS IN THE SIDEWALKS OF N.Y.C. AND FROM THE ANTS THAT DWELL IN THESE CRACKS AND FEED ON THE DRIED BLOOD OF THE DEAD THAT HAS SEEPED INTO THESE CRACKS.

J.B. I'M JUST DROPPING YOU A LINE TO LET YOU KNOW THAT I APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST IN THOSE RECENT AND HORRENDOUS .44 KILLINGS. I ALSO WANT TO TELL YOU THAT I READ YOUR COLUMN DAILY AND I FIND IT QUITE INFORMATIVE.

TELL ME JIM WHAT WILL YOU HAVE FOR JULY TWENTY-NINTH? YOU CAN FORGET ABOUT ME IF YOU LIKE BECAUSE I DON'T CARE FOR PUBLICITY. HOWEVER YOU MUST NOT FORGET DONNA LAURIA AND

YOU CANNOT LET THE PEOPLE FORGET HER ESTHER. SHE WAS A VERY, VERY SWEET GIRL BUT SAM'S A THIRSTY LAD AND HE WON'T LET ME STOP KILLING UNTIL HE GETS HIS FILL OF BLOOD.

MR. BRESLIN, SER, DON'T THINK THAT BECAUSE YOU HAVEN'T HEARD FROM FOR A WHILE THAT I WENT TO SLEEP. NO, RATHER, I AM STILL HERE, LIKE A SPIRIT ROAMING THE NIGHT. THIRSTY, HUNGRY, SELDOM STOPPING TO REST; ANXIOUS TO PLEASE SAM. I LOVE MY WORK. NOW, THE VOID HAS BEEN FILLED.

PERHAPS WE SHALL MEET FACE TO FACE SOMEDAY OR PERHAPS I WILL BE BLOWN AWAY BY COPS WITH SMOKING .38'S WHATEVER IF I SHALL BE FORTUNATE ENOUGH TO MEET YOU I WILL TELL YOU ALL ABOUT SAM IF YOU LIKE AND I WILL INTRODUCE YOU TO HIM HIS NAME IS "SAM THE TERRIBLE."

If Berkowitz did not write this letter to Jimmy Breslin, and a noted handwriting authority says Berkowitz could not have, who did?

then convinced themselves he did it because they wanted to believe he did. But he didn't," Hamilton said.

Asked about theories that a "dual personality" in Berkowitz could have produced a work superior to his writing, thinking and graphics abilities, Hamilton said simply: "No."

He added, "You cannot by any stretch of the imagination assume or become a personality or intelligence that is so much greater than your own. It cannot be done."

Friends of Berkowitz, some of whom have known him since childhood, put it even more bluntly: "If he had a million years and a million pieces of paper," said one, "he couldn't have done that thing (the letter) to Breslin. It's just not him at all. If you knew him like I do you'd know that too," he said.

Two art directors contacted by this newspaper agree that the quality of the lettering in the Breslin letter suggests professional training. "The stylized printing is very well done, with no slips," one said. "It's natural, not like someone trying to hide his normal style. And you see centering, hanging indentation, outward pointing quotation marks and other subtle tricks of the trade the average person doesn't usually know."

The question, then, and one Berkowitz has consistently refused to answer, is if he did not write the letter, who did?

Berkowitz was only slightly more forthcoming in the interview on another question that has troubled people close to the Son of Sam case.

The day after his arrest in Yonkers, two neighborhood boys dug up the bodies of three slain German shepherd dogs they had found on the aqueduct near Wicker Street—the day after Berkowitz shot to death a German shepherd owned by the Joachimo Neto family on Wicker Street. The dogs were found lying side by side on the aqueduct, two with chains around their necks and the third with a hole in his head.

It was widely assumed that Berkowitz had executed these dogs as well as the Netos', but in the Marcy interview he strongly denied those killings while readily admitting to shooting three other dogs: "The Netos," "one in the Bronx," and a Labrador owned by the Sam Carr family, which he wounded.

The killings of the shepherds found on the aqueduct, however, "doesn't surprise me," Berkowitz said, cryptically adding:

"I have a good idea who did it."

Berkowitz refused to discuss names. A check with the Yonkers Animal Shelter disclosed that at least two times—after the arrest of Berkowitz—three more German shepherds were found slain in virtually the same spot on the aqueduct. Another was wounded.

Shelter Manager Tony Catalano said the first shepherd found had been shot to death and the second two, found "lying together... on the same spot on the aqueduct as the others," had been shot, strangled or poisoned. The fourth shepherd was found nearby with its ear sliced off. "It wasn't chewed off, like in a dog fight," Catalano said. "It was a clean, even cut, like it was done with a knife." Catalano termed the number of dead shepherds found in one place very unusual, saying he knew of "only about three dog shootings and the like in the whole city (of Yonkers) last year."

Also in that neighborhood, in a related event, Berkowitz was identified by a neighbor who said that she had seen Berkowitz in the area several times and that in the spring of 1977 she had seen him walking a dog in the parking lot outside his 35 Pine St. apartment.

The neighbor, a teenaged girl, said Berkowitz walked up to her, stared at her, and continued on his way.

Berkowitz did not own a dog. He had no known friends or acquaintances in that neighborhood and maintained before the Marcy interview that he kept totally to himself during the Son of Sam siege.

The question that remains is whose dog he was walking, and for what purpose he had the dog.

Still another intriguing series of events involved Berkowitz, German shepherd dogs, and the Pine and Wicker Street neighborhood.

Two days before Berkowitz' arrest, an ad in the Westchester Rockland Newspapers offered a German shepherd for adoption.

The ad was placed by Florence Larsen of the People for Animal Welfare, a volunteer organization in the Bronx. Mrs. Larsen's home telephone number was listed.

On Aug. 8, Mrs. Larsen received several

calls inquiring about that shepherd, Big Boy. Two were of special significance.

In the first, Mrs. Larsen says, a caller identifying himself as David Berkowitz of 35 or 50 Pine Street in Yonkers asked questions about the dog and talked about animals for about 10 minutes. Mrs. Larsen says "Berkowitz" praised the quality of the German shepherd breed, told her he once had a dog, and asked where this one was being kept.

Mrs. Larsen advised Berkowitz the dog was at the Westchester Boarding Kennel in Mamaroneck. He told her he would go there and see the dog. Mrs. Larsen says she wrote down Berkowitz' name and address "as a matter of routine, since all prospective owners are screened and visited in person before dogs are released for adoption."

A short time after Berkowitz hung up, Mrs. Larsen got another call about the same German shepherd. The caller, who said his first name was "Jeff," told Mrs. Larsen that although he lived in the Mamaroneck area, he would keep the dog in Yonkers.

On Pine Street. "He said he 'fixed cars' at a friend's house behind Pine Street in Yonkers and that's where the dog would be kept," says Mrs. Larsen. "I thought it was quite a coincidence to get two phone calls about the same shepherd right on top of each other that both mentioned Pine Street in Yonkers."

"Jeff," like Berkowitz, said he would visit the kennel to see the dog.

Mrs. Larsen says she realized later that "fixing cars" could have meant fixing "Carrs"—Sam Carr, who lived behind Pine Street in Yonkers. The day after the phone calls from Berkowitz and "Jeff," two young men, together, showed up at the Mamaroneck kennel to look at that German shepherd.

They stayed about 20 minutes, expressed concern about how "pure bred" the dog was, and balked about the background check that would have been done on them.

The kennel attendant, a veterinary student, later identified one of the men as David Berkowitz. The attendant also said that Berkowitz' companion bore a strong resemblance to the police sketches of Son of Sam that depicted him as thin, and with long, straight, parted hair and dark eyes.

Police have said it wasn't Berkowitz who visited the kennel. The unanswered questions, then, are: Who placed the two telephone calls to Mrs. Larsen that mentioned Pine Street in Yonkers—a short block—and that inquired about the same German shepherd—a popular commodity for unnatural death in that neighborhood? And who, if not Berkowitz himself, could have called about a German shepherd giving "loner" David Berkowitz' name and address just two days before his arrest?

"They (the police) just told me somebody must have used his name and address... They had their man and that was it," Mrs. Larsen says today.

She says the police dismissed the descrip-



If one Son of Sam victim provided the description for this police sketch, and a second confirmed it, why does it look nothing at all like Berkowitz?

tion of the companion, one who resembled the long-haired Son of Sam sketches, as a "coincidence."

"Quite a list of coincidences," notes Mrs. Larsen. "I'm afraid I don't buy any of it."

It would seem police might have been interested in finding out who, if not Berkowitz himself—which it certainly could have been—would have called about a German shepherd and used his name and address just two days before his apprehension.

At Marcy, Berkowitz, after making his statement about not wanting others to go to jail, hesitated on a question about the long-haired companion and the dog kennel visit and then denied that he had been there.

Interestingly, the long, straight, parted-hair description of Son of Sam that also showed him to be thin, and with dark piercing eyes—completely different from Berkowitz in every detail—was also the description that was provided by nearly all the acknowledged best witnesses to the attacks.

They included Joanne Lomino and Donna DiMasi, whom the killer spoke to from less than 20 feet before he pulled out the .44 and wounded them.

Both girls, in separate interviews with the police, including one under hypnosis, described him the same way with the exception of which side his hair was parted on. That a part existed in his long, straight hair was not in question, only the side on which it was parted.

The result was two sketches, both of which showed long, straight hair; one was parted on the right side, the other on the left.

"Maybe Berkowitz was 25-pounds lighter then and wearing a wig," one of the girls' fathers offered, but police said that wasn't the case.

In an almost identical episode, at the Moskowitz/Violante shooting, the key witness, who saw that attack from a distance of about 20 feet and also, significantly, saw the killer for about 10 minutes before the shooting, says that "the guy I saw had long, straight, parted hair."

"It hung way down over his forehead and was parted; and on the sides it covered most of his ears."

The witness, who was identified then only as "Tommy Z.", and whose last name is being withheld by WRN, said the neighborhood in Brooklyn was well-lit and very quiet that night. He saw only one other person besides the killer, and that was a girl. "The guy was standing across the street near the front of the park for about 10 minutes before the shooting—about 30 feet away from me," Tommy said.

"I was talking to the girl I was with... We were in a car right in front of Robert Violante and Stacy. I was facing toward the window and saw this guy standing there, looking at the cars. I got a good look at him. I noticed him so much because he was the only person around that I could see except a girl down the block," Tommy explained. "The area was very well lit."

Then, Tommy said, he turned away for a minute, and caught a movement in his rear-view mirror. He saw the man approach the car, pull out a gun, fire four times, and "run like hell" into the park and disappear.

At the time of the killing, police termed Tommy "the best witness we've had. He'll never forget what he saw."

He hasn't forgotten. "If it was Berkowitz, he had to be wearing a wig. If he wasn't, then I don't see how it was Berkowitz. I know what I saw," Tommy said.

Both Berkowitz and the police say Berkowitz never wore wigs.

Later, Tommy said, the police suggested to him that "maybe Berkowitz doused his head with water to make it look long and straight."

Police sources acknowledge that no amount of water could have made Berkowitz' short, kinky hair appear long and straight.

Sources close to the Son of Sam prosecution have told WRN that only one witness to all the attacks out of "at least six" was going to be able to testify that Berkowitz was the assailant in the various shootings.

"Although it's possible they all were wrong, it's not easy to rationalize it," an NYPD source said last week. There were some witnesses who got a good look at him, and it's hard to blow it on the long hair."

A prosecution source added: "Besides the eyewitnesses, we had other reports of two people and two cars at a couple of the crime scenes—including the Moskowitz one. They came from reliable people, and we couldn't write all of them off as flukes," the source said.

In answer to a question he said: "It's true that one gun doesn't have to mean one person using it all the time." He conceded that some police had always speculated on two people using one gun and throwing authorities off with the widely varying descriptions. "I'm not necessarily saying I believe that," he cautioned, "but I'm not denying it might have been."

At the Moskowitz murder site, more questions were raised besides the description given by Tommy Z and Berkowitz' statement about others who could go to jail.

In describing the Brooklyn killing Berkowitz told a psychiatrist "we had to make a sweep...sweep of the whole area." The psychiatrist said: "You just said 'we.'" Berkowitz backed off. Sources in Kings County Hospital say Berkowitz would not answer questions about who might have been with him that night.

Police sources have confirmed that there are some "problems" with the scenario that was played out that July evening in Brooklyn. WRN's investigation has found that they include the following:

—Berkowitz says he was wearing a dark jacket that night. Mrs. Cecilia Davis, who saw him two blocks from the murder location before the shooting, agrees that he was wearing a dark jacket—with the long sleeves rolled down.

—However, Tommy Z, in addition to his long-haired description, says the killer was wearing a white or light grey long-sleeved shirt with the sleeves rolled up. According to Tommy, this light-colored shirt had long tails and was not tucked into his trousers. "We wasn't wearing a dark jacket," Tommy says.

—About 15 minutes before the shooting, which occurred at 2:35 a.m., a 17-year-old girl who was riding her bike about three blocks away from the scene later told police she was closely followed by a man in a yellow car, who then pulled alongside her and kept up with her until she reached her home and ran onto the porch. The girl said the man then turned a corner and headed toward the murder area. She described him as wearing dark glasses, even though it was night, and picked out the long-haired sketch of Son of Sam.

Berkowitz had already been parked several blocks away for some time before this incident occurred.

Besides the girl's account of a man in a yellow car, a "mustard colored" car was reported at the Placido/Lupo shooting on June 26. And, at the Moskowitz murder, the killer was reported to have escaped in a yellow car. Berkowitz' car, a Ford Galaxy, was white—and had a dark vinyl roof. No reports of two-toned cars ever surfaced in the press.

After the Brooklyn killing, then Deputy Police Commissioner Frank McLaughlin said "some neighbors thought they saw more than one car." None of those cars was Berkowitz'.

A yellow Volkswagen was reported at the Moskowitz site. Two witnesses reportedly told police the killer fled in one. Motor Vehicle Department sources have told WRN that police tried to "box" a partial plate number on a yellow VW. Police sources say roadblocks that night were alerted to stop a yellow VW. Tommy Z, who describes himself as "very knowledgeable about cars," told WRN that he heard a Volkswagen engine as it cruised through the neighborhood several times.

Significantly, WRN's investigation has found that Berkowitz, while living in Westchester, drove a yellow Volkswagen for at least two months. But, his Ford Galaxy—the one ticketed that night in Brooklyn—was the only car registered to him during the time he was driving the VW.

Where, or from whom, the yellow Volkswagen came from, and where the Ford was during that extended period, is not known.

—After the Brooklyn killing, police said they had reason to believe the killer ran out of the top of the park that was across the street from the Violante car, and then got in his own car—reportedly yellow—and fled. Berkowitz was parked two blocks away in another direction.

—When NYPD sought out Berkowitz after Mrs. Davis told them about the parking ticket on a car on Bay 17th Street, the police, possibly because of other reports they felt were solid—wanted Berkowitz as a potential witness—not a potential suspect. This account has been verified by several Yonkers detectives, and other sources.

NYPD detective James Justus called Yonkers police. NYPD wanted Yonkers to contact Berkowitz, and to ask Berkowitz to call them as a possible witness. This was in spite of Berkowitz' "non-local" car being parked on the same block and at the same time as Mrs. Davis spotted the man that police took to be the Son of Sam. "Without contrary information, he should have been an automatic suspect," a prosecution source said.

In a million-to-one shot, Yonkers police dispatcher Wheat Carr—Sam's daughter—who was later honored by the police for her action happened to answer the call she alerted police to her suspicions about Berkowitz and his bizarre character.

Why NYPD had initially ruled out Berkowitz as a suspect is not known.

There are still other questions that were raised at the Moskowitz scene. They, along with other new information and details about Berkowitz' other activities, are continuing to be investigated.