

# Re-examination of Berkowitz Files Offers New Insights

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David Berkowitz could not have set the 1,411 fires he listed meticulously in notebooks introduced at hearings last week when he pleaded guilty to the six .44-caliber murders, according to a preliminary police investigation.

While studying the notebooks, assistant district attorneys and police officials from the three boroughs where the so-called "Son of Sam" shootings occurred, have also sifted through two cardboard boxes containing the other items that were taken from Mr. Berkowitz's apartment after his arrest last August. They have not found new evidence, but they have uncovered previously undisclosed bits and pieces of mementos of a disturbed life.

## Theories Are Supported

Among the items cramped into the two cartons are a letter from Mr. Berkowitz's father just four months before the first murder, expressing concern that his son's inability to sleep "is affecting him physically and mentally" and suggesting that he see a doctor; a handwritten "executioner's" file listing "quotas" of murders for 19 neighborhoods, and personal notes and diary entries tracing his torment and his determination to murder "to make people notice me."

The police also found two items that support two contested theories held by detectives during the yearlong "Son of Sam" investigation: that Mr. Berkowitz monitored police activities through a police-radio scanner and that a review of parking tickets handed out in the areas of the first five

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.44-caliber murders might have helped prevent the sixth—and final—killing.

After District Attorney Mario Merola of the Bronx introduced the handwritten notebooks as evidence—they list in meticulous columns fires, times, locations, alarm box numbers and weather conditions—he commented, "I don't know whether he's just a fire buff who called in fires or he set them." The District Attorney also indicated that one notebook for 1976 was apparently missing.

Detectives who were members of the now disbanded "Son of Sam" task force along with officers from the police laboratory have concluded after re-examining the notebooks that it would have been impossible for Mr. Berkowitz to have set one fire in the Bronx and race 20 miles across the borough during rush hour to set another blaze within 15 minutes as the notebooks indicate.

## No Notebook Missing

Officers theorize that Mr. Berkowitz, a former volunteer fireman, simply kept a log of fire reports he monitored on the fire scanner radios he kept in his car and in his apartment.

Also, the investigators believe there is no missing 1976 notebook: While the dating of the fires jumps from January 1975 to 1977, not a single line is skipped or even left blank in Mr. Berkowitz's carefully regimented notebooks.

These records are only a fraction of the papers taken from Mr. Berkowitz's apartment

last Aug. 10. Mr. Berkowitz seemed to have been an avid collector of memorabilia, a man reluctant to part with any of the countless—and often meaningless—papers that fill one's daily life.

Many of the items in the cartons are unremarkable: family albums, junior high school honor certificates, health club membership forms. Yet, in hindsight the ordinariness of many of these souvenirs gives them an incongruity: pictures of David Berkowitz in a baseball uniform smiling brightly with his Little League team. Also, the series showing 13-year-old David at his Bar Mitzvah: pictures of David dancing with his stepmother, David clowning with his friends, pictures of the proud guests.

One item when considered in terms of future events, becomes a father's premonition. On March 28, 1976, Mr. Berkowitz's father wrote to a friend and the letter was passed on to David: "It seems he is not happy about living where he is. He says he doesn't get much sleep and it is too noisy—this nite work is not good for him. It is affecting him physically and mentally.

"Will you please do me a favor and make him go see a doctor. I am worried about him."

Four months and one day after the letter was written, David Berkowitz shot and killed his first victim, driven to commit murder, he

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# New Insights Are Offered by the Files Berkowitz Kept

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would later say by the howling dog that kept him up all night.

There are other carefully saved possessions in these cartons now stored in an eighth-floor laboratory in the Police Academy: A small black box where Mr. Berkowitz kept, like a precious jewel, his adoption papers; his personal phonebook which included the address and phone number of his natural mother; a manila file stuffed with newspaper clippings on the topic "Consumer Hints"; an ungelined New Testament with the inscription on its inside cover, "Soldiers are strong."

Other belongings round the night of his arrest show a darker side of Mr. Berkowitz's character: A large manila folder has a passport-size photograph of Mr. Berkowitz attached in the upper right hand corner, military style, and bears the inscription: "This is the official file for the killings of the chosen executioner — David Berkowitz." Across the top of the file are the words, "Let us pray for those who have crossed over to the other side—Death."

Inside the folder are newspaper clippings of the "Son of Sam" shootings and a piece of yellow paper headed, "Quotas remaining as of 4/20/77."

The sheet lists 19 towns and neighborhoods in geographical order and lists the number—possibly of murders—planned in each area. For example: Roslyn, L.I., 2; Riverdale, 1; Adirondacks, Lake George, 1.

There are other folders also filled

with newspaper clippings, folders arranged to contain articles on airplane crashes, natural disasters, fires, and murder.

Much of the space in the boxes is filled with sheets of Mr. Berkowitz's writings. There are pages and pages of poems guided by a disturbing intelligence. For example:

*Old Mother Hubbard  
Sitting near the cupboard  
With a hand grenade under the bed  
What have we, the people, done to you?*

## Writings of Another Kind

Then there are other kinds of writings: "I have dedicated myself to murder and I promise to drive all my neighbors to death by the cruelest means."

Another page reads: "Today is Friday, blood day. Today I spill blood for the people..." A note headed, "Kill On Command," states, "I, like the dogs, are trained to kill. I kill on command."

Some of the writings are dated, as if part of a diary: "Aug. 26, 1976, 3 P.M. I went to the Cross County Center today and I must have walked over every square foot of space there. I went there to look for a friendly face and I found none... I only wish I had a machine gun. Then I could make people notice me. It's obviously the only way." The shopping center referred to is in Yonkers.

Most of the writings are done in blue or red ballpoint pen in a tight, childish script or in the slanted block letters of the "Son of Sam" notes Mr. Ber-

kowitz wrote to the police and newspaper columnists. However, there is one note written in pencil in a more hurried script and without Mr. Berkowitz's customary deliberate punctuation. It reads: "Oh Sam, give us peace—let us live like humans Sam please my ears hurt my head hurts..."

Also in one carton is a police radio scanner with crystals of 155.640 and 155.670 frequency—the same frequency that police radios are set on in the Bronx and Queens. This helps to confirm a theory detectives held during the course of the investigation: that the murderer was monitoring their movements as he hunted for his victims and then escaped.

Still, there are mysteries without viable theories. For example, a map of Brooklyn filled with red and orange dots and arrows pointing to specific addresses and the notation, "Two on this street." The police still have not determined "two" of what, if anything, occurred on that street.

There was one item that helps support the theory that David Berkowitz could have been apprehended earlier if the police had checked parking tickets in the areas surrounding the .44-caliber shootings.

Mr. Berkowitz was finally arrested Aug. 10 after the police traced a parking ticket in the area of the sixth—and final—slaying to him. On July 20, 1977—11 days before the murder of Stacy Moskowitz—Mr. Berkowitz paid \$35 to the New York City Parking Violations Bureau. The canceled check was found in one of the cardboard cartons.