

"It Would Have Been a Bloodbath"

True Crime: L.I. Confidential

by Bill Jensen

Son of Sam was One Day Away from Killing Hundreds in the Hamptons

It was August 10, 1977. Hot and muggy. On a parking ticket lead, Detective Ed Zigo had driven up to Yonkers to ask a few questions to the owner of a cream-colored Ford Galaxie which ten days earlier had parked too close to a fire hydrant on Shore Road in the Bath Beach section of Brooklyn. The night the car was ticketed, 20-year-olds Stacy Moskowitz and Robert Violante, parking after their first date, were shot with a .44-caliber revolver. She died, he was blinded. Maybe the man in the Galaxie saw something that night. Something that would lead the police to the killer.

Outside the apartment building at 35 Pine St., Zigo peered into the car, registered to one David Berkowitz.

"I saw the butt of a gun sticking out of a duffel bag," remembers Zigo. That wasn't anything surprising or illegal ... the city had reached a sweaty fever-pitch over the Son of Sam murders. It wasn't a .44 revolver, but a loaded Thompson machine gun. Zigo opened the glove compartment. "He had pictures, you know, the kind that come out of a quarter machine." Now Zigo knew what Berkowitz looked like.

Zigo then put his hand under the seat and pulled out an envelope. It was addressed to the New York police and press. He opened it.

"I started reading it. I thought I was having a heart attack. My adrenaline started flowing."

In the letter were details of Son of Sam's final waltz into history. He was going to drive out to the Hamptons, walk into a discothèque and start shooting. Shooting at everyone. The serial killer would turn mass murderer, and end it all in a Butch-and-Sundance shoot-out with the cops, leaving the front pages of 1977 New York in a "blaze of glory."

The police watched as Berkowitz emerged from the building and headed toward his car. They took him. They found the .44-caliber revolver he used in the shootings. The jig was up.

"He told me, 'That letter, I was going to leave it at the scene,'" remembers Zigo. "Had he bypassed me that Wednesday night, it would have been a bloodbath."

INTO THE LIGHT

Ed Zigo is sitting on his porch in Lynbrook, living the retired cop's life. He eats breakfast at McDonald's every day, works out at Bally's three days a week, and tries to get out on his boat as many days as he can.

Zigo was one of the first cops to talk to Berkowitz after the arrest; he was the cop that combed the killer's hair before he met with the press in a scene portrayed by Martin Sheen in the made-for-TV movie *Out of*

Darkness. There is no doubt in his mind that Berkowitz was on his way out to the Hamptons when Zigo and his men caught up with him.

"From talking with David, he had the wherewithal that night," says Zigo. "He literally said hundreds," Zigo says of the body count. "He talked in hundreds." And Berkowitz had the firepower with him to pull it off.

The .44-caliber Charter Arms Bulldog revolver — which gave the murderer his original name, "The .44-Caliber Killer," before he introduced the world to his "Son of Sam" moniker — had been purchased in Texas for Berkowitz by an old army buddy. But Berkowitz bought the Commando Mark III semiautomatic rifle himself at the Empire Gun and Coin shop on Eighth Avenue and 56th Street in Sunset Park, Brooklyn.

Berkowitz bought the rifle and a 30-bullet clip for \$152.50 on January 26, 1976.

The sale was legal — Berkowitz had the requisite New York City firearms permit and filled out forms at the store. Storeowner Barbara Rutuelo later said she usually tries to "avoid a sale if I think they're a ding-a-ling." But Berkowitz was "so nice."

The rifle was in the car that day, accompanied by seven clips "taped military style," remembers Zigo. "All you do is fire 35 rounds, flip it upside down and fire another 35 rounds." In a packed nightclub, Berkowitz could have gotten his number.

HE HAD BEEN OUT HERE BEFORE

After the Moskowitz-Violante shooting, *Newsday* reporters set out to take the pulse of Long Island in the grip of Son of Sam. Gail Broder of Smithtown told the paper, "He's coming out here. Day by day, I am more and more scared." East Northport haircutter Tony Marino said, "The next place he is going to strike is Long Island."

Berkowitz had been out to Long Island before. Two years earlier, he had found his birth mother living on Long Island. She had given him up, but kept his sister. Crime profilers say the incident was one of the things that set him off.

The night of his capture, he told Zigo of a meandering drive he took out on Long Island one night, perhaps looking for victims.

"I asked him, 'Do you remember [the names of] any towns?'" Zigo recalls. "He said, 'I remember going through a place called Rockville Centre.' Then he said, 'Lynbrook ... Merrick Road.'" Berkowitz had driven a block away from Zigo's house.



Detective Ed Zigo was the first to make the discovery that David Berkowitz and Son of Sam were one and the same.

There is speculation as to whether Berkowitz had gone out far enough and scouted locations for his Hamptons massacre.

"We were scared," says Marina Van, who co-owned Bobby Vans, a before-hours restaurant and bar where the East End's literati congregated. "The writers would scare the hell out of us. We had Truman Capote — you know, he wrote *In Cold Blood*. He'd say 'Aw, Marina, if he comes in here, don't worry.'"

Driving down Route 27, the first club Berkowitz would have hit would have been La Plage, preferred spot when the bridge-and-tunnel crowd turned east. Berkowitz could have climbed the ladder to the DJ booth and started shooting at the dancers below.

Moving down the road, he would have encountered Middie's General Store, then the Hampton Attic in Wainscott.

If he wanted to go all the way to East Hampton, he could have tried to get into the young jetset crowd at The Jag.

"We felt that was the place he was going to hit," says East Hampton Chief of Police Todd Sarris, who was a rookie cop in 1977.

The reigning club in the Hamptons circa 1977 was Great Scott, filled with celebrities and politicians and scantily clad women.

"We would have been the perfect place," Great Scott owner Buddy O'Keefe says of Berkowitz' final assault. "[But] he wouldn't have got through the door. We had the tightest security. It was a very elitist/upscale crowd The most expensive place that ever existed out there."

In fact, the hefty, unglamorous Berkowitz would have had trouble getting into most clubs in the fashion-and-status-intense East End of 1977.

"He would never get in the door in our place," says Van of her literary establishment. "Truman was our doorman. He would have stopped him." ■

L.I. CRIME FILE #6

UNSOLVED CASE



MURDER? Catherine Faul

Danny's Den. It's now called the Loose Caboose, but in 1998, it was called Danny's Den, a local watering hole close to the train tracks in Riverhead. On Saturday, December 5, 1998, Catherine Faul went out for drinks there. She got into a fight with her boyfriend and called a cab. The cab came, but she sent it away. She had another ride home. Cops think the ride was a Grey Honda Civic 1500s, from either 1984 or '85.

At about 4:30 a.m. the next morning, women walking home from a night of drinking found Catherine lying on the side of Ostrander Avenue, unconscious. A few hundred feet down the road were signs of a car accident — a landscaping truck, parked for the night, had been rear-ended, and the debris on the ground was indicative of a Civic 1500s. Catherine's pocketbook was found a block away on Main Street. Its contents seemed in order. Catherine Faul was taken to the hospital with severe head trauma. For three years, she sat in a coma, before dying on September 24, 2001. The theory is Catherine was the passenger in a vehicle that

smacked into the back of the truck. The driver, whoever decided to give her a ride that night, might have panicked — perhaps over a possible D.U.I. charge, perhaps because he was married and with another woman — removed Catherine from his car, placed her on the side of the road and drove off. Upon realizing he still had her purse, he tossed it out the window onto Main Street.

According to the Riverhead police, checks with patrons at the bar that night, including the boyfriend, turned up nothing, as did checks with the DMV, local wrecking yards and body shops. Someone is out there, driving in his car — maybe not the beat-up Honda Civic — but some car, thinking he got away with it. ■

Do you know anyone in the Riverhead area who drove an old gray Honda Civic Hatchback in 1998? He or she may have had the car, then, all of a sudden, it was gone. Were you at Danny's Den on a Saturday night in December, 1998? If so, contact Suffolk Crimestoppers at 1-800-220-TIPS or The New Island Ear at LIconfidential@islandear.com.



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