

## WARNING BELLS



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*“Never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee.” John Donne*

### **Who Speaks for the Dead?**

This is the most unusual Skelly Response I have ever been asked to write. The term Skelly Response wasn't used in the request, but that is what was being requested. A Skelly Response is a right afforded to an officer to respond in writing to an allegation that an adjudicator has sustained. It is the officer's opportunity to respond to the adjudicator as to why the sustained finding is wrong.

In this case, an allegation of corruption has been sustained by an adjudicator. What is unusual is that the adjudicator sustained the allegation in the public forum and the allegation occurred 60 years ago. The allegation is that members of the LAPD covered up the murder of Elizabeth Short, known as “the Black Dahlia.” Among the accused are legends of the LAPD such as Bill Parker, Thad Brown, Jack Donahoe, Finis Brown and Harry Hansen. The cover-up was initiated, according to the accusation, by two Gangster Squad detectives whose pseudonyms are given as Bill Ball and Joe Small. The reason? To cover up an illegal abortion ring that the Department was protecting. The allegations were made in retired LAPD detective Steve Hodel's book, *Black Dahlia Avenger*. Bill Ball and Joe Small float through the book destroying evidence, dissuading witnesses and finally arresting an abortionist named Eric Kirk to silence him from giving information on the protected abortion ring.

Most of the involved officers are dead, but not all of them. Retired Captain Ed Jokisch is still around. He is 93 years old, sharp as a tack, and offended beyond belief by what he views as the shoddy logic, manufactured evidence and misinformation in Hodel's book. He and his partner arrested Eric Kirk in 1948 as part of an abortion ring investigation that Jokisch is justifiably proud of putting out of business. Therefore, Jokisch, according to Hodel's book, must be Bill Ball and his partner, Lloyd Burton, must be Joe Small. He and his partner are being accused in the *Black Dahlia Avenger* of being the foundation for the LAPD cover-up of the Black Dahlia murder.

Captain Jokisch wants to speak for the dead.

Ed Jokisch's serial number has only three digits: number 180. He came on the job in 1940. His pay was \$170 per month, an amount that at that time he felt fortunate to earn. In those days, you had to buy your own gun and uniform. Among his classmates at the Academy were a future chief of police and a mayor: Ed Davis and Tom Bradley. His first assignment was Accident Investigation. His captain was William H. Parker.

The war came in 1941. Shortages in detectives and a reputation for performing thorough investigations landed him in Homicide in 1942. Six months later, he was in the Navy, fighting in the Pacific. He commanded a landing craft that landed troops at Iwo Jima under shell fire by the Japanese. When the war was over, he returned to the Department. It was 1946 and he was back in Homicide. Jack Donahoe was the Homicide captain.

In those days, Homicide had citywide jurisdiction, similar to Robbery Homicide today. The detectives worked out of City Hall on the second floor. Also on the second floor was the Gangster Squad, the precursor of Intelligence Division. They were not part of Homicide and they worked directly for the chief of police. Therein lays the crux of the problem. Jokisch did not work in the Gangster Squad. Jokisch did work on an abortion ring and closed it down. It came under his duties in homicide because females had died as a result of the illegal abortions. The Gangster Squad had nothing to do with it.

Hodel believes that his father is the killer of the Black Dahlia. I don't know who the murderer was. He could be right. Five other authors have come up with five other answers as to who killed the Dahlia. This article will only address the broad accusation of an LAPD cover-up. As a former officer, Retired Detective Hodel will probably agree that every accused officer should get a Skelly.

### **The Accusation**

*“The Department’s two highest officers, Thad Brown and William Parker, in a conscious and deliberate obstruction of justice, aided and abetted a cover-up and, along with their subordinates, were directly responsible for knowingly permitting a psychopathic serial killer to remain free until he was finally forced to leave the country in 1950.”* Page 373, *Black Dahlia Avenger*.

Hodel argues that his father, a doctor and a psychopathic serial killer, committed numerous murders in the late 1940s, one of which was Elizabeth Short, whose body was found on January 15, 1947 at 39<sup>th</sup> and Norton, naked and neatly severed in half.

His argument is complex and sometimes hard to follow, but it starts with his discovery of a mysterious photo found in his father's effects after his death that Hodel believes is the Black Dahlia. Others identify the photo as being someone else, but regardless, Hodel began to investigate and eventually came up with the accusation that the highest ranks in LAPD decided to protect his father because of secret medical information he possessed on important people gathered at his venereal disease clinic, and because they were afraid that public exposure of the Gangster Squad's protection of the abortion ring (by Small and Ball) would create too much negative publicity.

Since Dr. Hodel was a serial killer, the book states, this necessitated the LAPD cover-up to also include several other murders. The book suspects the number of homicides may be as high as 20. One of the murders that Hodel is convinced that his father committed was that of Jean Spangler, an actress who disappeared and whose body was never found. Her purse was found and in it was a note written to “Kirk.” Since the note referred to going to see a doctor,

Hodel concludes that Spangler was looking for an abortion. He opines that “Kirk” must have been Eric Kirk, a known abortionist.

Enter Ball and Small from the Gangster Squad. Kirk must be taken care of before he can spill the beans about the abortion ring protection and connect George Hodel and the Spangler murder to the Black Dahlia murder. The Gangster Squad participation in the abortion ring protection would be too embarrassing for the LAPD brass to deal with, therefore George Hodel must be protected and allowed to continue killing, the book surmises.

The book states that this could not be done without the knowledge of Captain Jack Donahoe, Detective Finis Brown, Detective Harry Hansen, Chief of Detectives Thad Brown and Chief William H. Parker. Therefore, all of these LAPD legends must be dirty.

We would hope that there should be a preponderance of evidence, at least, before the good names of these officers are trashed. There should also be an opportunity to respond to the charges. Conveniently, they are all dead. However, Captain Jokisch knew them all and he was there at the time. They may be legends to modern day LAPD officers, but they were friends and co-workers to him.

The misidentification of the arresting officers of Eric Kirk as Gangster Squad officers is only the start of the misinformation in the book, according to Ed Jokisch. As stated in the book, Jean Spangler disappeared in October of 1949. On October 9, 1949, her purse was located with the note to Kirk. This supposedly triggered the need to arrest Eric Kirk and silence him. Unfortunately for this shaky logic, Jokisch and Burton arrested Kirk in September of 1948, over a year before the note was written. They must have had a crystal ball to know that a murder victim over a year later would write a note to a “Kirk”! The homicide detectives assigned to the Spangler case never did figure out who Kirk was. They even interviewed Kirk Douglas because Spangler had been a celebrity.

The source of the book’s information on the abortion ring was another book written by Charles Stoker, a vice cop who was terminated at a trial board. The interesting fact that is neglected in the book is that Eric Kirk **did** accuse the LAPD of a shakedown. He accused Charles Stoker and Police Woman Audre Davis of trying to arrest him and making a demand for money two days after he was arrested by Jokisch and Burton. Stoker was ignorant of the previous arrest. Both Stoker and Davis were fired by the Department, and then Stoker wrote his book.

There are many more inconsistencies and blind leaps of faith in the book. Much of the book is concerned with various pieces of evidence and supposition that the author believes links his father to the Black Dahlia murder. Fine. Speculate away. There are many Black Dahlia buffs out there to debate with, but dragging down the entire Los Angeles Police Department and the reputations of officers who can’t defend themselves, without solid evidence, is unfair. And in this book, the evidence is absent. Yet the public will take accusations as facts and real people and their families will be hurt. Yes, there was corruption in the Department, but that does not mean that everyone was corrupt.

So who will speak for the dead? Ed Jokisch will.

I have spent many hours with retired Captain Ed Jokisch and together with the help of District Attorney Steve Cooley and Assistant District Attorney Sandy Gibbons, Ed and I have reviewed the DA's files on the Black Dahlia case. Ed's stories of the old days are fascinating. He had a long and honorable career. Ed has provided the materials for rebutting the accusations and asked the League for help in getting the accused officers side of the story out — after all, they used to be League members. (I received the assignment from Director Scott Rate.) Contary to the information in the Black Dahlia Avenger, Ed had nothing to do with the Black Dahlia case and he and his partner received written commendations from both the Department and the District Attorney for the arrest of Eric Kirk and his cohorts resulting in successfully closing down the abortion ring.

There is not enough room in the Blue Line to challenge in detail the accusations made against LAPD officers in the *Black Dahlia Avenger*. The misstated facts and faulty leaps of logic must be pointed out one by one. This requires numerous quotes from the book and comments and links to contrary sources of information. In short, it has to be done on the internet. If you have an interest in this, go to **www.warningbells.com**. There you will find the Skelly Response of Bill Parker, Thad Brown, Jack Donahoe, Finis Brown and Harry Hansen speaking to you from the grave.

Be legally careful out there.