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# THE ZODIAC KILLER

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## BACKGROUND

An era of trepidation was invoked in the citizens of Northern California in the 1960s and 70s. This was the result of a killer on the loose, who claimed to be the 'Zodiac Killer'. He was found to be operating his murderous schemes on young people and couples in the secluded areas of California and Nevada. He manipulated and threatened the media, mainly the local newspapers like San Francisco Chronicle, the Vallejo Times-Herald and the San Francisco Examiner. The letters he sent included Cryptograms - ciphers in which he claimed that he was killing people to make them his slaves in the afterlife. He used the San Francisco Chronicle as his literary outlet. His first letter to the chronicle was attached with a cipher. In the letter, the anonymous killer taunted the police by giving them gory details about the murders he had recently committed. It included facts of his murder that were obscured from the public eye. Most of its readers believed that the man wanted attention from the media or had a thirst for fame. He was referred to as the 'Zodiac Killer' after the arrival of his second letter in which he attested to the same. He signed the letter with the symbol marking the crosshair of a gunshot. In one of his last taunting letters to the news media, the Zodiac Killer claimed he had 37 victims to show for his five years of terrorizing the San Francisco Bay Area.

## VICTIMS

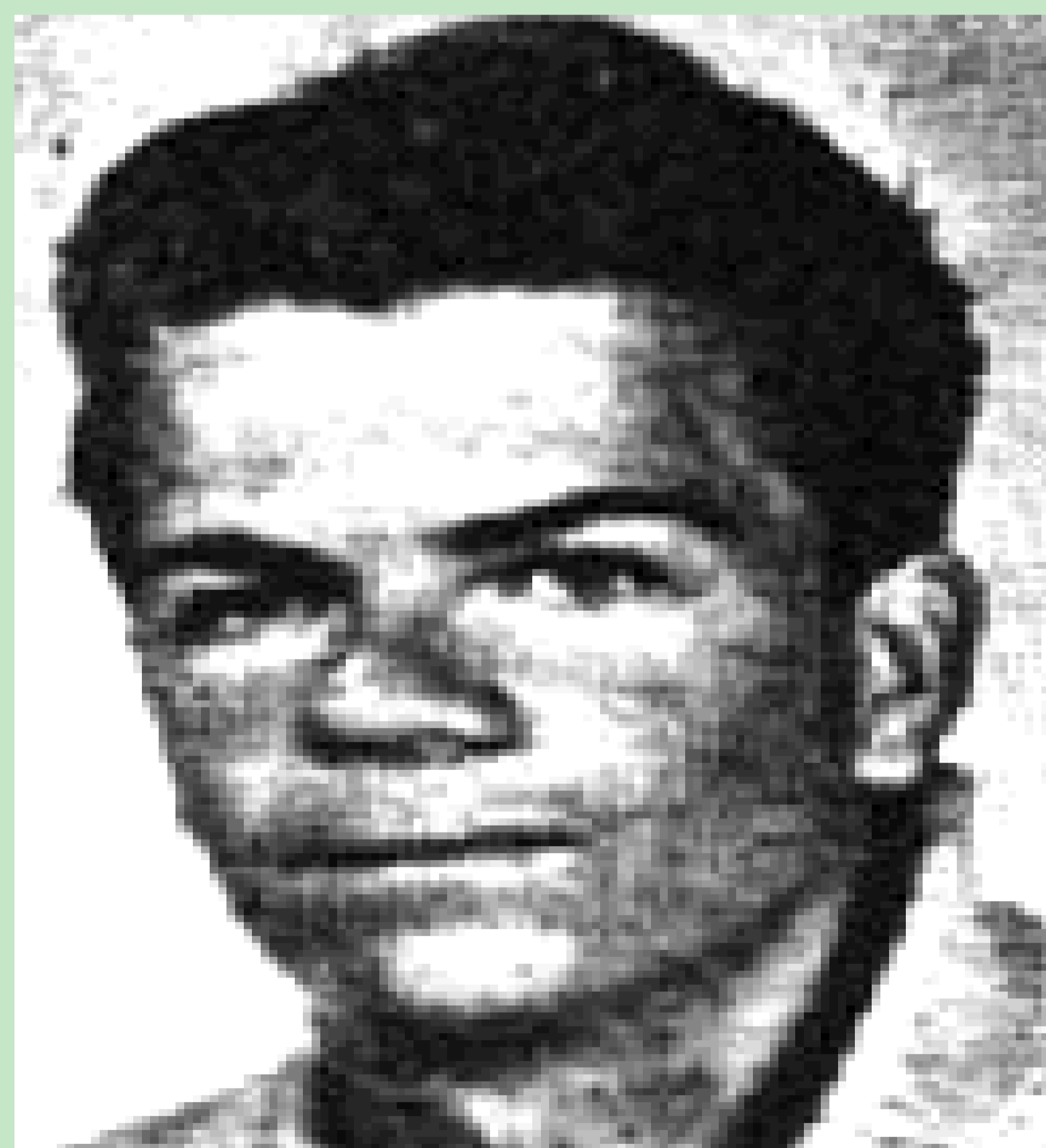
### DAVID FARADAY AND BETTY LOU JENSEN - Dec. 20, 1968



*courtesy: <https://zodiackiller.com/FaradayJensen.html>*

David Faraday, age 17, was shot once in the head at point-blank range and died within minutes. Betty Lou Jensen, age 16, was shot five times in the back and killed instantly. There was no indication of robbery or molestation. The incident occurred at a gravel parking area along remote Lake Herman Road on the eastern outskirts of Vallejo, Calif at approximately 11:15 PM.

### DARLENE FERRIN AND MIKE MAGEAU - July 5, 1969



*Courtesy: <https://zodiackiller.com/FerrinMageau.html>*

The shooting occurred at 12:10 AM in the parking lot of secluded Blue Rock Springs Park on the eastern outskirts of Vallejo, Calif. Darlene Ferrin, age 22, was shot five times. Mike Mageau, age 19, was shot four times. The weapon was a 9mm semi-automatic pistol. There wasn't a single witness. Mike somehow survived the shots and briefed the

police regarding the physical features of the perpetrator. The killer informed the police about his role in the crime committed in December and July. On July 31st, 1969 letters were sent to the Vallejo Times-Herald, San Francisco Examiner, and San Francisco Chronicle. The letters claimed to be from the killer of Faraday, Jensen, and Ferrin. Each letter contained one-third of a cipher that, if solved, supposedly contained the killer's identity and also revealed the details of the crime which only the killer would have known.

### **CECILIA SHEPARD AND BRYAN HARTNELL - Sept. 27, 1969**



*Courtesy: <https://zodiackiller.com/ShepardHartnell.html>*

Shepard was stabbed 10 times, both front and back, with a knife, 10 to 12 inches long and Bryan, six times in the back at approximately 6:15 PM in the shoreline of Lake Berryessa near Napa, Calif. The Napa County Sheriff's Department deputies responded to the crime scene where they found that the attacker had written a message on the victim's car door.

### **PAUL STINE - Oct.11th , 1969**

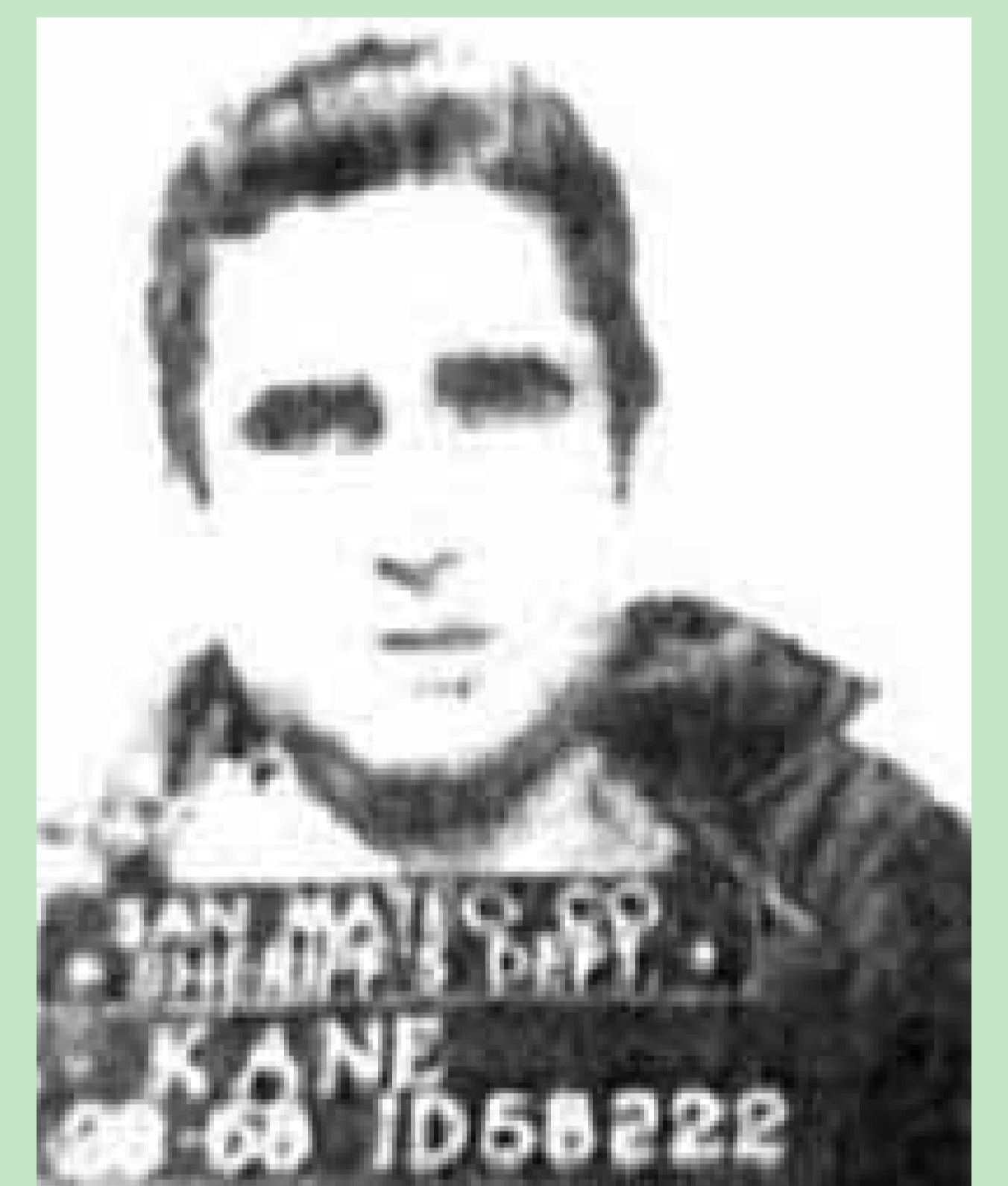


*Courtesy: <https://zodiackiller.com/zodiac-killer-victim-paul-stine/>*

The place of attack was the northeast corner of Washington and Cherry Streets in the Presidio Heights neighbourhood of San Francisco, Calif at approximately 9:55 PM. Cab driver Paul Stine, age 29, was shot once in the head at point-blank range. The weapon was a 9mm semi-automatic pistol and unlike the other killings, this one had three witnesses. On Oct. 13, 1969, the San Francisco Chronicle received a letter from Zodiac containing a portion of a bloody shirt and him taking credit for the killing. However, in early 2004, the decision was made to close the case.

## SUSPECTS

There have been over a thousand suspects in this case since 1968. Four of the high profiles include :



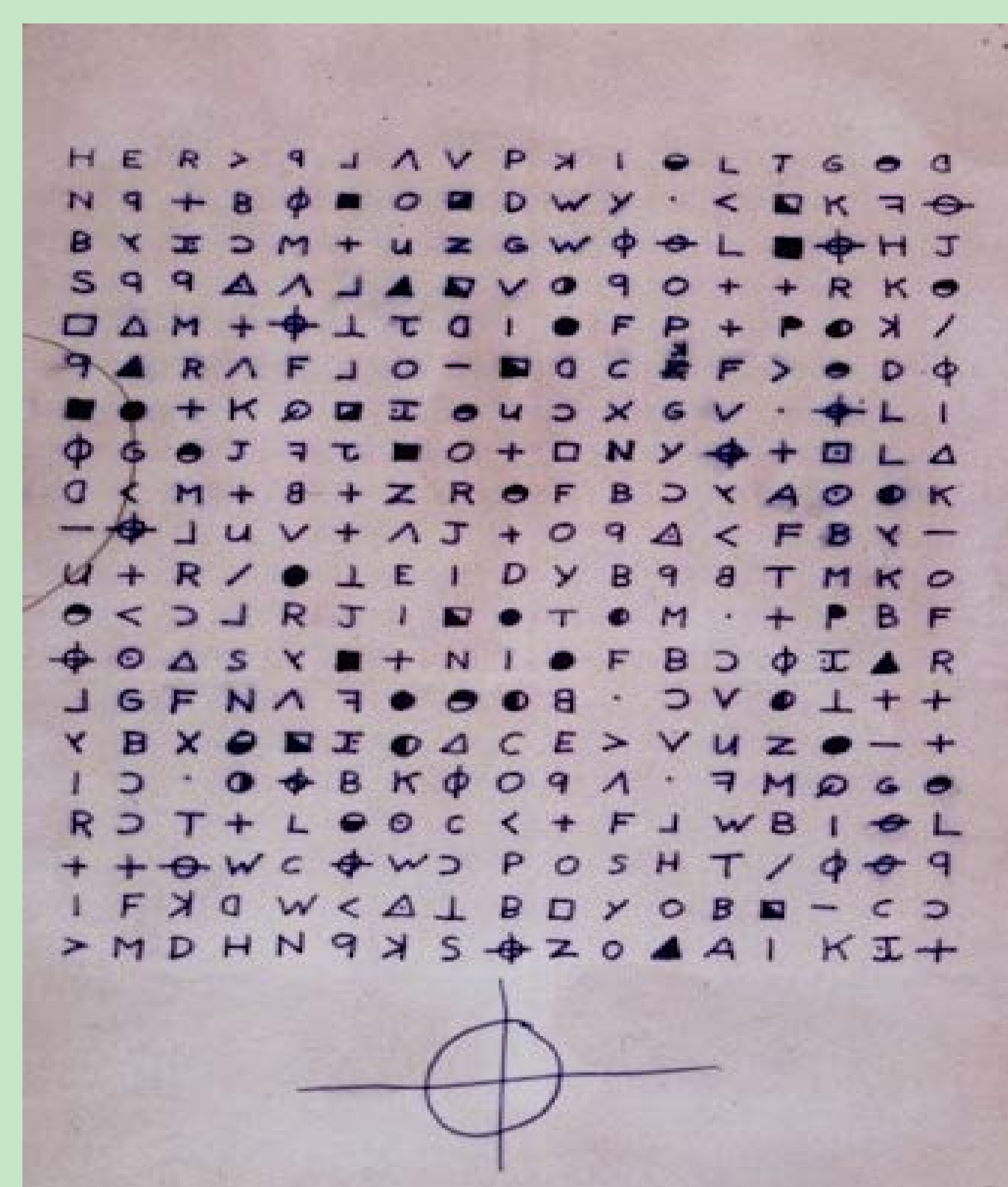
*Richard Gaikowski   Arthur Leigh Allen   Rick Marshall   Lawrence Kane*

## ZODIAC'S LETTERS

*This is the Zodiac speaking  
By the way have you cracked  
the last cipher I sent you?  
My name is —*

*A E N ⊕ ⊗ K ⊗ M ⊗ ∪ N A M*

*I am mildly cerous as to how  
much moner you have on my  
head now. I hope you do not  
think that I was the one  
who wiped out that blue  
meannie with a bomb at the  
cop station. Even though I talked  
about killing school children with  
one. It just wouldnt doo to  
move in on someone elses territory.  
But there is more glory in killing  
a cop than a cid because a cop  
can shoot back. I have killed  
ten people to date. It would  
have been a lot more except  
that my bar bomb was a dud.  
I was swamped out by the  
rain we had a white back.*



Courtesy: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac\\_Killer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac_Killer)

## CONCLUSION

On October 6, 2021, The Case Breakers, an independent team of 40 former law enforcement investigators, military intelligence officers and journalists, identified the Zodiac Killer as Gary Francis Poste, but the information was not confirmed by the Vallejo Police Department. The Case Breakers have requested that police test the Zodiac Killer's DNA evidence to confirm if it matches the DNA of Gary Francis Poste. The police stated that the case is not yet solved and, "The Zodiac Killer case remains open."

## REFERENCES:

- Voigt, T. (1998, March 20). ZODIAC KILLER .COM. Retrieved from <https://zodiackiller.com/>
- Fagan, Kevin. (2021, October 6). San Francisco Chronicle. Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac\\_Killer](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zodiac_Killer)

Myth - Handwriting is passed down from the parents.

Fact - Handwriting is an acquired skill which means that it is learnt through practice and observation.