

Welcome to A Deep Dive I'm Reggie.

In this episode, what happens when an apathetic and hostile police force is tasked with catching a serial killer targeting gay men in 1970s San Francisco? How much did a climate of homophobia and life lived fearfully in the closet contribute to a serial killer's ability to remain free for over 40 years?

Thanks for joining me for Cops, Queers, and Serial Killers.

From the moment I learned that a serial killer was killing gay men in San Francisco in the 1970s, I wanted to know more, when I found out the suspect was a black man who had killed white men without ever being tried or convicted I absolutely wanted to know more.

At first blush, it might seem a little gratuitous to cover a series of serial killings that happened 46 years ago but I think the assumptions made about the victims and their sexual orientation not to mention assumptions and Hunches made about the killer can be extremely instructive.

In 2019 The San Francisco police dept. made an announcement they had DNA evidence, a new digitally aged photo and a \$100,000 reward leading to the arrest of the 1970s serial killer, The Doodler.

From 1974 to 1975 one man is believed to have killed between 5 to 14 gay men in San Francisco's gay community. Homicide detectives said they were hampered in their investigation because the survivors of the Doodler refused to come forward for fear of repercussions.

From today's vantage point, 1970s San Francisco might seem as if it was a sexually freewheeling, open city and compared to most of America I suppose it was but that freedom was not without complications and difficulties for gay men and women.

Homosexuality was still illegal through the 1970s in the United States and though San Francisco police often looked the other way most of the time they would occasionally use the nuances ordinances to harass gays and lesbians in bars mostly.

Often plainclothes officers were sent to monitor gay bars undercover. When they witnessed men dancing together, kissing, touching, or "soliciting" sex those men would be placed under arrest or the bar would be shut down.

In lesbian bars, women would sometimes be arrested because of their clothing. The butch form of gender expression was treated as cross-dressing and women were often arrested for dressing in the guise of a man. This type of harassment of the lesbian community is not as often written or talked about. Disorderly conduct laws and other catchall violations allowed the police to shut down establishments based on an officers' casual observation.

Occasionally the police themselves would be caught committing acts of violence against members of the gay and lesbian community. Here's an account of police violence written by Harvey Milk who was the President of the Castro Village Association before he was a city supervisor. He recounts an instance of two police officers brawling with bar patrons at the end of the night in the Castro. ARTICLE: See Deep Dive website Castro Busts 1974.

So, in addition to all of those things I've just related to you, there was a rise in gay or fag bashing in San Francisco and across America in the 1970s. It was a backlash to the heightened unapologetic presence of a community on the rise.

Being targeted for violence wasn't new, after all, gays and lesbians have always been ripe and ready victims of financial exploitation through blackmail, robbery or physical threat. When your date turns out to be a thief who's stolen your wallet or worse who are you going to call? The police? Not bloody likely.

Gay or fag bashing was another order of magnitude. Young men would attack gay men, often preferring to sexually harass lesbian, its form of violence, late at night when the bars closed. These confrontations would start with verbal assaults and whether you responded or not the next level would be a physical challenge usually between one person and a small group of young men beating, kicking, punching their victim until he or she was a bloody mess. Sometimes these attacks would result in death with barely a response from the police.

The response on the part of the police began to change a little in the mid-1970s because of the political power that began to accrue to business owners in the Castro district. Harvey Milk and others began to demand that the police take some more affirmative action to protect their patrons after they left the bar. In response, San Francisco police became one of the first forces to form a group of officers assigned to dress in plain clothes to protect the safety of gays and lesbians while arresting the bashers.

the police and the gay and lesbian community began to work at forming a stronger bond with baseball games and other civic activity but the scars of homophobia were deep and it would take much more than a baseball game to penetrate the frost and fear of the gay and lesbian community towards the police and soon that barrier would become Fatal.

On January 27th, 1974 phone call came to the San Francisco police dispatch importing body online sweet call was recorded at 1:25 A.M.

Read transcript of the call.

Victims Number One:

On January 27, 1974, the body of 49 **Gerald Earl Cavanaugh**, was found at San Francisco's Ocean Beach in the dunes near Ulloa Street. When he was found face up the tide threatened to drag his body out to sea. Cavanaugh had been stabbed 16 times including defensive wounds on his left pinky finger. Cavanaugh was fully dressed with \$21.12 in his pocket and a Timex watch on his wrist with no form of ID on his person. Due to no way to id him Cavanaugh was named John Doe #7.

The gay paper the San Francisco Sentinel ran a photo of Cavanaugh. When he was finally identified very little was known about him other than he was born in Canada On March 2nd, 1923 he was a resident of San Francisco he worked in a Mattress Factory he was 5'8 " and 220 lbs. pounds he was Catholic and as the coroner wrote he never married.

Victims Two:

On June 25th, 1974 the body of **27-year-old Joseph "Jae" Stevens** was discovered by a woman walking along Spreckels Lake in Golden Gate Park. Stevens had been stabbed five times. According to the coroner's report, "Approximately 10 feet west of the deceased's feet was a large disturbed area of brush, with a pool of blood. There were drag marks from this point to where the deceased was found, indicating that an altercation had taken place."

Jae, as he was known, was a very popular female impersonator and comedian in the city. Mr. Stevens had been stabbed three times there was blood in his mouth and nose the last reported sighting of him was at the cabaret club on Montgomery street in the North Beach District of the city. I've read differing accounts of the last sighting of him, in one report I read

that the police theorized that he had driven himself to the location of his murder and in another report, I read that he had been seen at the Cabaret Club chatting with and leaving with a tall lanky black man.

Stevens is born in Texas and as I said he was a popular female impersonator, he had been named the summer replacement at the wildly popular female impersonator club Finocchio's in the North Beach district of the city. In an article in the Advocate magazine, it said that Jae Stevens had moved away from female impersonation and was concentrating more on gay comedy at the time of his death.

Finocchio's was one of those weird places, at a time where men who cross-dressed were routinely arrested their parties rated a club like Finocchio's had been around since the 1930s. At the time of Jae Steven's murder, it was part avoided clubs like this altogether because it was a sanitized version of what most of them could get elsewhere without being in the company of people who most likely disapproved of them.

Victim Three:

Klaus Christmann age 31, a recent German immigrant was found by another dog walker on July 7, 1974. Christmann's throat was slashed in three places he was stabbed at least 15 times.

According to the coroner, "The deceased's pants were unzipped and open." The report details multiple stab wounds on Christneck and shoulders, "In a manner which seemed as though the assailant had attempted to decapitate the deceased."

Inspector David Toschi, a 20 year veteran of the San Francisco Police Department said this was the most vicious stabbing he had ever seen, and he had been a part of the Zodiac murder investigations. Like the two victims before him, Christmann's identification had been removed.

According to a Homicide Division information bulletin, Christmann was found with a tube of make-up in his pocket, which suggested to the detective at the time "homosexual propensities." We don't know if it was a tube of concealer or lip balm. That says a lot and a certain point of view indicative of the times but mostly it doesn't seem very helpful as a detail.

Christmann, who had a wife and two children, had been staying with his friends, Mr. and Mrs. Booker Williams, and had been in the city for three months. His body was returned to Bamberg, Germany for burial. This detail seemed to confuse the police as well.

Victim Four:

On May 12, 1975, **Frederick Elmer Capin** aged 32 was discovered by a hiker behind the dunes that run along the Great American Highway also near Ocean Beach. The coroner notes, "There was dried blood smeared on the soles of both shoes, on the hands, about the face and upper torso, anterior, lateral and posterior." Unlike the other victims, homicide been moved 20 feet from where the initial attack was likely to have had taken place. Capin had no identification and was identified through fingerprints on file due to his work as a nurse.

Capin's sister who lived in Port Angeles, Washington. According to Capin's obituary, he was a medical corpsman in the Navy and the recipient of a "commendation medal for saving four men under fire in the Vietnam war."

Victim Five:

66-67-year-old **Harald Gullberg**, a Swedish immigrant was discovered in bushes near

the 16th tee of the Lincoln Park golf course northeast of Ocean Beach on June 4, 1975. in a decomposed state, according to the coroner, he was killed two weeks earlier. Mr. Gullberg's murder differed from the others four due to age and his underwear had been taken and his pants left unzipped. Mr. Gullberg is believed to be the last of The Doodler's victims.

Five men had been found dead within 4 miles of each other, all within 18 months. Five months after the discovery of Mr. Gullberg the SFPD released a composite of the suspect.

The killer got the name The Doodler from a surviving victim who met the suspect at an all-night truck stop diner, the Doodler told him he was a cartoonist. When the victim was alone with the Doodler he was attacked but managed to survive to give the police the details that defined the investigation.

Police described the killer as a black man in his 20s, between 5'11" and 6' with a lanky build. It was also noted that the suspect often wore a navy type watch cap. In police circles, The Doodler was often referred to as The Black Doodler emphasizing the race of the suspected killer.

The police said they believed the killer had a quiet, serious personality, with an upper-middle-class education and above-average intelligence. Possibly an art student as he had told a few of the surviving victims that he was either studying commercial art or was employed as a cartoonist. The police have never released any of the doodles or drawings. I'm sure how the police arrived at this psychological profile. Maybe these were impressions gained from The Doodler's surviving victims.

The police also indicated the suspect had a history of mental difficulties involving sex. One of the city's newspapers would further in stating the killer had sexual identification was undergoing psychiatric care on an out-patient basis. According to the San Francisco *Chronicle*, the perpetrator said to more than one of the surviving victims, "All you guys are alike."

San Francisco homicide seems certain in their public announcements at any rate that these five murders are the work of the Doodler but are these the only ones? Don't worry I'm not about to go down some conspiracy dark alley. It's just that at the time and since people have speculated that nine or ten other murders committed around the same time but in different parts of the city with similar details might be the work of The Doodler. A detective quoted on this subject said anyone who says the killer only killed five people without an indictment is either lying or don't know what they're talking about.

The question for me is, is it possible that the lack of police insight at the time and limited experience with gay culture in San Francisco created a type of tunnel vision when it came to any possible connection between the other murders and The Doodler. We will never truly know until and if a suspect is apprehended and confesses to the murders he committed.

I found a piece written by the Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Eugene Robinson who started his career at the San Francisco Chronicle. This article appeared on page two of the Chronicle on November 13th, 1975. It illustrates beautifully what I meant when I talk about the police their confusion about gay culture.

As I said a bit earlier other murders occurred around the same time as the doodlers and they occurred in different sections of the city one of those sections of the city was South of Market which was and is now the little bit that remains of it the spot for S&M bars like the defunct Ramrod and San Francisco Eagle that's been around since the 1980s. If the gay community, in general, confounded the police the leather community completely threw them for a loop.

In Robinson's article titled, One killer theory in six SF murders he refers to six brutal murders of homosexual men stretching back to January of 1974 in the article he quotes the Lieutenant Charles Ellis of the homicide division who stated sought in five murders centering on the gay

leather scene in the South of Market area it was the same description of the murders in the Castro District later assigned to The Doodler.

The Lieutenant said they were looking for a young black man who had stabbed all of his victims and dumped their bodies near Ocean Beach. At the time of this report, Mr. Goldberg remained a John Doe they had not identified him yet.

Homicide inspector Dave Toschi said we don't know if we're looking for a guy who hates homosexuals or if he's a part of the S&M scene. Lieutenant Ellis said that owners and patrons of gay Taverns had been helpful in providing leads he added that some portions of the gay community had been skeptical that the police hadn't done more to catch the killer.

Ellis ended his remarks by stating there had been seven other unrelated gay murders that year, six in the Tenderloin and one in the Haight Ashbury.

The observant among you will notice that in this article that I just quoted there's no mention of the doodler or his pattern or habit of drawing people in bars and there's no mention of his activity taking place mostly in the Castro District which is in a different area of the city from the South of Market leather bars.

On June 19th, 1976 the San Francisco Chronicle finally mentioned on its front page this series of murders. The headline for the story was "Sado Murder Horror" In giant graphic print so you couldn't possibly miss the sensational nature of the story on two of the newspaper's pages. By then, 17 gay men had been murdered. I guess the death toll had risen to a level that finally warranted front-page coverage.

Aside from its sensational headline, this article was pretty informative. Lieutenant Charles Ellis head of homicide was again interviewed and he said that the murder is where the work of several sadists. The slayings he said can be grouped into three categories there are the Folsom cases, the five murders by one or more Tenderloin slasher who mutilate their Drag Queen victims and the stabbings of 6 white men picked up in the Castro Village bar and restaurants by the cartoonist police called The Black Doodler.

Unlike the article written by Eugene Robinson, Lieutenant Ellis and his Department had arrived at three different categories for the killings that had taken place. In my research, the San Francisco Sentinel which was a gay newspaper did a stellar job filling in the void left by the cities newspapers.

As I say, Lieutenant Ellis and the homicide squad divided up the murders between three different neighborhoods in the city the leather spots South of Market, the Castro district, and the Tenderloin at that time the home to trans men and women, crossdressers, and people of color.

The problem with this kind of stratification will become obvious when I read you the description of one of the first victims associated with the S&M scene. You'd be forgiven for recognizing any similarities to The Doodler murders.

This excerpt comes from an article written by Maitland Zane for the San Francisco Chronicle on January 19th, 1976. By the way, Zane did most of the reporting on The and from my reading Aside from the reporting in the gay paper the Sentinel Zane did some of the best work on the Doodler.

Excerpt:

Tracing George Gilbert's few last hours found that the handsome 32-year-old blonde-haired lawyer was living a double life. By day he was an assistant trust officer for the Wells Fargo Bank straight clothes a high-rise apartment in the Grosvenor formerly Fox Plaza, with women friends with whom he had platonic relationships. At night though he came out of the

closet. The detective said that all his adult life Gilbert was a leather freak a slave who liked being gagged tied down on all fours and spanked to the point of orgasm. It ends with, Gilbert was found dead by a friend in his apartment on Sept. 29th, 1974. He had been stabbed seven times in the lower part of the stomach. The killer with whom he may have had sex even ripped

Gilbert's leather jacket, pants, and hat said Toschi. Summing up the other victims it was said that they were all passive masochists who liked flirting with danger. The first part of the column ends with remarks by San Francisco's coroner Doctor Boyd Stephens who said bizarre violence is the rule rather than the exception in gay slayings. I'm not sure where he derived that wisdom, particularly because some of the most horrifying murders ever committed, have been against women who make up the broad history of serial killer victims around the world.

Dr. Stephens went on to say we're dealing with men who have emotional problems to start with. He's talking about all gays in general terms. Aside from being a textbook example of institutionalized homophobia, his statements seem absurd in a conversation about serial murderers.

Yet, it's also true that these murders took place only four years after The American Psychological Association finally ruled that homosexuality was not a mental illness or disturbance.

It's difficult from today's vantage point to remember that the popular culture view of homosexuals, both women, and men, was that they were predatory, sexually deprived, immoral deviants given to coercive violence in order to corrupt the heterosexual orthodoxy of the day.

If that sounds a little overblown I will share a few covers from pulp novels that were written from the 1950s through the 1970s and many of them had as their theme the very thing that just I laid out for you. Then there's much of Hollywood film history almost every representation of gay people after the 1930s Hays Code was a negative image as to discourage homosexuality.

In the 1960s and 1970s, gays and lesbians shifted from being just the butt of the joke on film into predatory homicidal psychopaths. Lest we not forget William Friedkin's 1980 film *Cruising* starring Al Pacino which has at its center a homicidal homosexual murderer stalking New York's gay S&M scene.

The problem with treating communities or groups of possible victims as separate investigations can be found in the Tenderloin where several cross-dressing men were murdered and mutilated at the same time.

The Tenderloin is a neighborhood caught between neighborhoods. Not quite downtown and quite uptown, it has been a low-income neighborhood for all of its modern existence with all that, that implies.

Dashiell Hammett, who lived at 891 Post Street and gave detective Sam Spade the same address in the *Maltese Falcon*. In addition to sex workers and strip clubs, the Tenderloin was the home to the world-famous Black Hawk jazz club at Hayes and Turk Street. Everyone from Dave Brubeck to Miles Davis and Thelonious Monk played there.

In the 1950s and 60s, the neighborhood became a haven for trans men and women unable to find housing or employment in any other place in the city. Slowly nightclubs and hotels begin to spring up we're trans men and women could live and form a community.

The Tenderloin neighborhood plays a vitally important role in the story of the Doodler because it was the 1st place that the police encountered the person they believed to be the suspect in the murders, he was detained and spoken to by the police. According to reports, they found him outside of a bar in the Tenderloin. We'll get to that detention and conversation in a minute.

According to police reports at the time, The Doodler met his victims in the Castro district yet they encountered him for the first time in the Tenderloin. He was alleged to have killed his victims at and around Ocean Beach yet at least one of the surviving victims, a foreign diplomat brought the Doodler back to his apartment where he was stabbed six times but managed to survive the ordeal.

Remember the murder of George Gilbert the handsome blonde-haired lawyer living a double life in the SM scene? His body was discovered in September of 1974 in the same high-rise apt complex known today as Fox Plaza. In another coincidence, Fox Plaza is a 10-minute walk from the Tenderloin.

It seems that the Doodler had killed one person who worked professionally as a drag performer one of his other victims was known to have some association with the leather scene.

Perhaps a deeper association with the gay community would have helped the police better understand that most gay people wouldn't relegate their social life to areas of the city that only aligned with their sexual preferences. Even leather queens like a good drag show.

The other thing that occurs to me is that this killer was in his 20s which means that he didn't have a very long history of committing these types of murders and from all the reading just as people develop as human beings serial killers develop as serial killers. So perhaps the Doodler didn't have a set pattern of who he killed and where he killed.

There are a few patterns that you do see the weapon that he used the fact that most of the victims found outdoors didn't have identification but he broke a bunch of patterns because he killed people indoors and outdoors and let's say did he successfully if that's a proper word to use killed 5 people three people escaped which means that again as a killer he was refining the process.

Which I would think would make him even more difficult to track down for detectives the lack of patterns the lack of relationship to victims and so on and there are a few other tropes about serial killers and murders in general that the FBI has recently dispelled.

In a comprehensive report called Serial Murder: Pathways for Investigations published in 2015 the FBI's Behavioral Analysis Unit, the [National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime](#) and [U.S. Department of Justice](#) put together a resource to help law enforcement better understand the motivations and behaviors behind these crimes to discover necessary correlations between potential suspects in cases and more expeditiously identify arrest and convict serial killers.

The research study included in this publication used 480 cases of serial murder involving 92 offenders. The cases used in the study span 46 years from 1960 to 2006. The reports start with, and I love this, myths about serial killers followed by a diss of talking heads. The report also says talking heads often do my harm than good and you can certainly see that in the case of the Doodler. From bar patrons to the coroner outlining the pathology of an entire community of people, doesn't seem helpful at all.

The talking heads that annoy me the most are the psychiatrists or psychologists who have an ethical if not a moral obligation to not diagnose people without that person being their patient. It makes their appearance seem like a cheap party trick or a bid for much-needed attention. The report sums it up best. Historically, comments by media experts provide little, if any, assistance to law enforcement attempting to capture a serial murderer. In the section called Serial Same-Sex Murders, there are quite a few things relevant to the case of the Doodler.

First of all, same-sex serial murders are extremely rare. Sexual activity is present in 85.3% of these murders dropping to 5.9% committed for profit. Yet in the case of the Doodler while there is speculation that sexual activity occurred there is little evidence. Two of the victims had their pants unzipped one was found with his pants down and underwear missing but maybe he wasn't wearing any to start with. According to the report in 44.4% of the cases of same-sex serial murder, the victim is found nude or partial nude.

When the police made their announcement about their renewed effort to apprehend the killer they mentioned that they had DNA in further reading I found that the DNA discussed is blood, not semen. One other unusual aspect of this crime is that it was committed with a knife.

According to the report death by strangulation comes first with death by gunshot second. Stabbing is fourth after blunt force trauma. Making The Doodler's method of killing was fairly unique.

One of the more surprising things in the study on the topic of motivations for murder is the fact that serial killers sometimes change their motivations for killing victim to victim.

The study says:

There are many motivations for serial murder and each presents unique challenges for law enforcement investigating these complex cases. When the killers' motivations change from case to case, this creates problematic issues linking multiple victims to the same offender.

One of the stranger aspects of this case is that fairly yearly on the police made public statements that they had an idea of who the suspect was. In a very recent local news report this reference to knowing who the suspect was made to sound like it was conjecture or rumor made by a police officer who wasn't authorized to give this information but that's not true.

In the San Francisco Chronicle, a two-page article that was written on July set on July 9th, 1977 Rotea Gilford, before he was promoted to head of homicide, the first African American person to hold the position, gave a rundown of the case history and contact with the person they believed to be the suspect.

I'm going to read you the fairly riveting description he gives of the police contact with the individual and the other information gleaned in their conversation with this alleged or possible suspect.

Isn't that the most extraordinary thing you've never heard concerning a murder? I've never heard of a thing like that the police have three people to identify the suspect I would imagine that there are patrons in the bars who they said were cooperative at the beginning who would be able to ID the suspect the foreign diplomat pick the suspect out of a lineup but then refuse to testify to his identity later as did the other two witnesses who survived for fear of ruining their lives and yet the police were unable to go forward with the case which I find strange and unusual on many levels.

The two other witnesses who survived there evening with the doodler one of them moved out of town and the other is purported to be a very famous actor whose name the police have never released any of these people were willing to come forward which earned the ire of the police and some members of the gay community. And I find this aspect of things a little in a little upsetting.

Harvey milk when asked about the unwillingness of these victims to come forward to testify said to the press that he completely understood their reticence because they knew as he knew as anybody would have known I would think at the time that had they come forward their professional lives and some aspect of their personal lives would have been ruined and in a perfect world everyone would do their civic duty but sometimes the price is just too high.

And this brings us back to where we began with an announcement from the San Francisco homicide division that they were taking up the case the cold case of the doodler. Like many police departments around the country SFPD seems spurred on have by the capture of the Golden State Killer who was found through familial DNA.

But there's an aspect of this that I don't understand if the police knew in 1974 we haven't seen 75 who the doodler might be if they had DNA evidence which of course wasn't around in 1974 but has been refined many times since its introduction in the 1980s why didn't the police use that information they had and the DNA to name or arrest a suspect 15 years ago 20 years ago?

As this is an ongoing case and there are many facts to be yet discovered this is where the story has to end I will put up the notice from the San Francisco police force which includes \$100,000 reward so that if you recognize the drawing or have any information well you know what to do.

There were two overarching things that I kept reminding yourself while writing this episode is that while it's worth even necessary to hold powerful institutions like the police to account, to be critical when they get it wrong it's equally important to not let ourselves off the hook. After all, police offices a part of our communities, sometimes they literally come out of our family. Their training should help them recognize the prejudices and blind spots when the institutions those police officers serve fail them when they don't demand they go higher see things more clearly the results can be deadly.

One of the things that has grown stronger in me as I grow older is my love and appreciation for the gay and lesbian men and women and trans men and women. Grappling with yourself over something so innately you then moving into it fully, sometimes having to find a family different from your family of origin to love and support you.

Finding the courage to open yourself up to romantic love, daring to be broken-hearted then finding love again. Pursuing one's artistic passions, your professional life, your one's education. Doing all the stuff adults are supposed to do, as my grandmother would say, to grow yourself up. Doing all of that under a cloud of a society that gives you a side-eye for holding the hand of your cute date, or kissing the love of your life on the street.

A society that isn't quite sure you should deserve the same rights they have. To be married, to buy a house, adopt children to just live your life. The people living in San Francisco at the time of this story we're grappling with all of that while enjoying many of the fruits of their hard work and sacrifice only to have much of it crushed under the weight of the HIV aids crisis of the 1980s.

It makes me stand in awe and love and appreciation of people struggling, to quote Alice Walker in love and in trouble managing to come out of the other side of it.

I ended the second half of the first episode with a quote from Maya Angelou. That quote is beautifully suited to this moment that we're currently embarked upon. It contains some loving instruction about the attitude we might adopt as we face the future.

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The issues which face us all is not merely how to survive, obviously, we are doing that somehow. But really how to thrive, really. Thrive with some passion, some compassion, and some humor and some style.

If you like to see clips of San Francisco in the 1970s, newspaper clippings about the Doodler case including the extraordinary account of their conversation with the alleged killer or if you would like to collect the \$100,000 reward you can find them all at the Deep Dive website at www.reggiedeepdive.com

Before I go I'd like to thank you, this is the last episode of the first season of A Deep Dive. I'll be back with season 2 next month. If you haven't already please subscribe to the podcast, share it with a friend, please. Most of all, thank you so much for listening.

See ya next time.