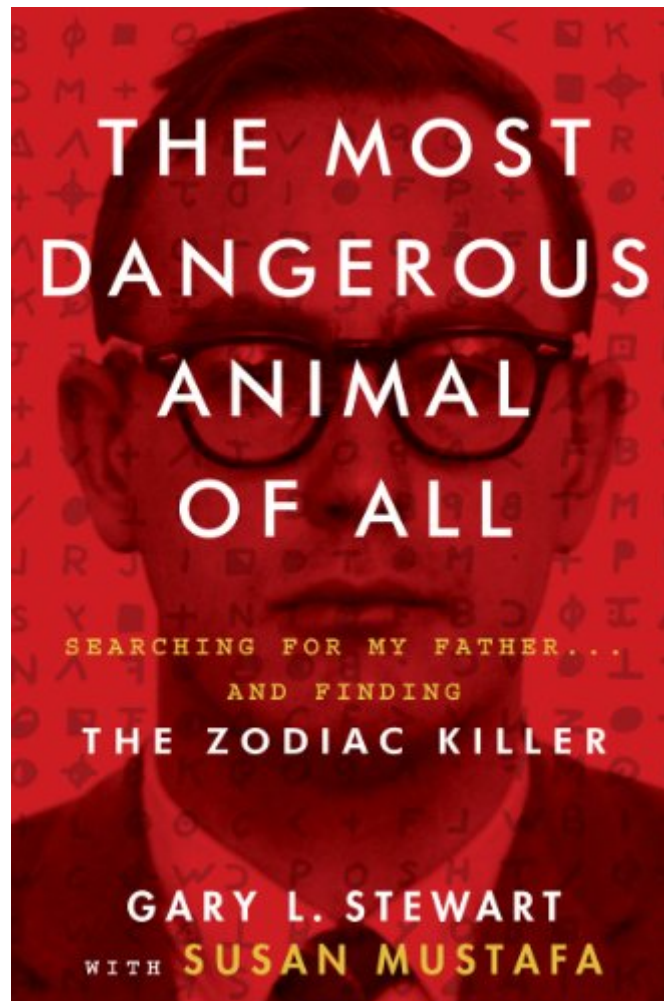


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The Most Dangerous Animal Of All: Searching For My Father . . . And Finding The Zodiac Killer



Synopsis

New York Times Bestseller Soon after his birthmother contacted him for the first time at the age of thirty-nine, adoptee Gary L. Stewart decided to search for his biological father. His quest would lead him to a horrifying truth and force him to reconsider everything he thought he knew about himself and his world. Written with award-winning author and journalist Susan Mustafa, *The Most Dangerous Animal of All* tells the story of Stewart's decade-long hunt. While combing through government records and news reports and tracking down relatives and friends, Stewart turns up a host of clues—including forensic evidence—that conclusively identify his father as the Zodiac Killer, one of the most notorious and elusive serial murderers in history. For decades, the Zodiac Killer has captivated America's imagination. His ability to evade capture while taunting authorities made him infamous. The vicious specificity of his crimes terrified Californians before the Manson murders and after, and shocked a culture enamored with the ideals of the dawning Age of Aquarius. To this day, his ciphers have baffled detectives and amateur sleuths, and his identity remains one of the twentieth century's great unsolved mysteries. *The Most Dangerous Animal of All* reveals the name of the Zodiac for the very first time. Mustafa and Stewart construct a chilling psychological profile of Stewart's father: as a boy with disturbing fixations, a frustrated intellectual with pretensions to high culture, and an inappropriate suitor and then jilted lover unable to process his rage. At last, all the questions that have surrounded the case for almost fifty years are answered in this riveting narrative. The result is a singular work of true crime at its finest—a compelling, unbelievable true story told with the pacing of a page-turning novel—as well as a sensational and powerful memoir.

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Customer Reviews

Before anyone throws accusations around, I don't know the author. I'm a true crime fan who was skeptical about this book like many others, but I have to say the evidence the author provides throughout the 360 or so pages is more than compelling. It would be idiotic to write it off as nothing or a mere coincidence if one is being honest with themselves. Since I know many people just want to read the reviews and glean evidence from them, I'll list what evidence the author presents in the book to back up the claim the Zodiac was his father, Earl Van Best Jr.: -A fingerprint of his father has a scar that is nearly identical to one seen on a print left at the Stine murder. A photocopy of the prints is presented side by side in the hardback and even a layman can see the scars are the same angle and length. -A handwriting expert testified that the handwriting on Earl's marriage certificates (filled out by Earl himself) is the same handwriting as that in the Zodiac's letters, even stating he would testify to this in court if he was asked to. A document containing his response to the handwriting comparison is also included in the book. -Earl Van Best Junior is in one of the Zodiac's ciphers--every letter. A test to see if one can find other names in the cipher, like Mary Smith (for example) yields no results, yet every letter of Earl Van Best Junior is there in a cipher the Zodiac said contained his identity? That's a mighty coincidence! -Another cipher contains Earl's initials, making that two ciphers matching his name. -A Zodiac letter was signed "EV"--the initials for "Earl Van." -The mug shot of Earl is virtually identical to the police sketch of the Zodiac.

I have to say that while I enjoyed reading this, I found the author's case unconvincing (I have no vested interest in this, I just find the case fascinating). I was hoping that this book would be the "smoking gun", but unfortunately, while I don't doubt the author's sincerity, I think he may be blinded by his conviction and only see the "facts" he wants to, while conveniently discarding others. But I think every Zodiac author has done this, which is why probably we will never know the truth. While one of the ciphers was fairly convincing, some of the other evidence kind of undermines him. For example:- Much is made of the fact that one of the other main suspects in the case, Arthur Leigh

Allen, apparently received letters from an inmate at Ascatedero who claimed to be the Zodiac. "I am certain that when you check out my father's file, you're going to find that he spent some time at Atascadero" says the author (pg 257 in hardcover copy). However, the author's father apparently spent time at Atascadero in 1963. The first Zodiac murder didn't occur until 1966, and the publicity and the name "Zodiac" wasn't used until 1969. So the author's father seeminlgy envisioned the murders and the name Zodiac and identified the future prime suspect back in 1963.

Seems...unlikely.- The author claims he finds his father's name in not one but two Zodiac ciphers. However in the 408 cipher (page 297), the author counts the word "BEST". This was not part of the cipher - this was the solution to the cipher. This means that the symbol V in the cipher would be standing in for both V and B. So basically, all he's found in the cipher are the symbols R, J, V and E in relatively close succession.

I'm surprised to see the ultra-negative reviews, many of which appear to have been written by those who haven't read it or microscope its flaws. I found this a compelling 5 STAR book, for revelations of not only the Zodiac's identity, but the impact of SF politics on a murder investigation and later, a cover-up. I think the author has nailed it, when I consider: (a) the credibility of both the presenter and the publisher (HarperCollins); (b) the opinion of an esteemed handwriting expert of a 99% definite match between several documents written/signed by Van Earl Best, Jr. and those written by the Zodiac; (c) the name VE Best, Jr. is embedded in TWO (2) of the Zodiac ciphers; (d) both the Zodiac and VE Best, Jr., had identical scars on the same index finger; and, (e) a number of other significant pieces of persuasive circumstantial evidence, too many to list in this review. - While the author also provides a compelling case for motive, means and opportunity (some of which he admittedly embellished), these elements would not be needed to convict. An antiseptic listing of the evidence above without discussing MMO would amount to a news article and otherwise bore one to tears. What's missing for a slamdunk "beyond a reasonable doubt" case is a DNA match. Mr. Stewart and his biological mom have offered DNA to an independent expert who now holds the markers to match to the Zodiac's DNA. Eight years ago, Stewart gave a DNA sample to the SFPD, who buried it. From all that appears, the SFPD Blue Wall has stalled for nearly a decade now, beginning with closing the 35-year investigation **the week the author began making inquiries for the Best file.

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