

RS 35

RALPH STORY'S LOS ANGELES

VTR AND AIR DATE: OCTOBER 20, 1964

I have a kind of Sigalert message, not
from the police department but to the
police department.

Gentlemen: You have before you a case of
murder which you had better solve in the
next 90 days or the scene of the crime will
be gone. What murder? Why gentlemen, the
one you've been working on forty-two years.

FILM OPEN

BILLBOARD

CAM

There's a small apartment-court on South Alvarado street -- a modest circle of duplexes about to be torn down in favor of a shopping-center. You students of history should be roused to the fact that this apartment court was the scene of one of the most celebrated crimes in the history of our town -- a murder which occurred 42 years ago and for which no one has ever been convicted or punished. Now, the tearing-down of this apartment court may actually enable police to solve this ancient crime; or, it may remove any lingering chance that the case will ever be solved. Listen to the story, then you decide. (PAUSE)

FILM: APT. HOUSE

The address is 400 South Alvarado street.

FILM: CONT'D

Its present occupants are receiving notices that they must move elsewhere. In former days, 400 South Alvarado was the haunt of movie-celebrities. Silent-star Douglas MacLean lived here. So did Edna Purviance, (PURR-vee-ance) one of Chaplin's leading-ladies. And so at the same time did movie director William Desmond Taylor. He lived here...and died...here.

DOORWAYS

TAYLOR DOOR

- DISSOLVE -

Taylor died on the first evening of February, 1922. His houseboy discovered him next morning. A physician took a look and blamed his death on an abdominal hemorrhage. The Coroner took a closer look and blamed the hemorrhage on a 38-caliber slug.

CROWDS

The crowds which converged on the murder-scene were second only to the throngs which

FILM CONT'D: FUNERAL
CROWDS

attended the funeral, an observance held in the grand tradition of Hollywood in the 20's. William Desmond Taylor lived flamboyantly; he had almost as many friends as he did enemies. He excited strong emotions.

- DISSOLVE -

GIRL, CAT & TAYLOR

As a director, he was a master of melodrama, he proved in his final picture -- "The Green Temptation" starring Betty Compton -- that he had a way with leopards.

TAYLOR IN CAR

But it was Taylor's way with women that made him a predictable candidate for murder. He was witty, attractive, famous and well-salaried. In his apartment he kept a selection

EX-WIFE

of silk nightgowns in various sizes. His checkered past included at least one ex-wife, an eastern lady who showed a marked indifference to news of his death.

FILM: YOUNG MABEL NORMAND

Hollywood girls were less indifferent

Taylor's name was joined romantically with that of Mabel Normand, reigning beauty of the Mack Sennett comedies. He liked the ingenue type.

MARY MILES MINTER

It developed that his capacity for affection was large enough to include Mary Miles Minter, the dimpled teenager who was the first Hollywood actress ever to sign a million-dollar contract.

MINTER LOVE NOTE

Evidence of Miss Minter's feeling toward William Desmond Taylor is preserved for us in this note, found in his apartment the morning his body was discovered. Miss Minter not only adored Taylor but there's no doubt she considered herself engaged to him at the time of his death, although he may not have viewed the relationship in quite that formal a light.

FILM: MARY & MOTHER

Mary's mother Charlotte Shelby was still the guardian of the girl's wealth. She could hardly be expected to look upon her daughter's impending marriage with any great enthusiasm.

NORMAND STRAW HAT

Nor for that matter could Mabel Normand, with whom Taylor continued the warmest relationship, and who visited Taylor the night of his death. Except for the killer,

WATCH & PICTURE

Miss Normand was the last person to see him alive.

PAN TO PICTURE

The bedside picture found among Taylor's effects was not of Mary Miles Minter but of Mabel Normand, inscribed "To My Dearest."

BOOTS & GUN

And though Miss Normand was cleared of any suspicion, she had written her share of love letters to William Desmond Taylor,

BOOT TOE

a correspondence so intimate he chose to store it in the toe of his hunting boot.

FILM: WIDE SHOT BOOTS
& GUN

That gun you see is unimportant in the case; it was not used to kill Taylor. The gun that was used, a 38-caliber pistol, has not been found to this day.

STILL DOORWAY

Whatever tangle William Desmond Taylor had made of his personal life was ended by one bullet one February night 42 years ago.

But Los Angeles police were left with an even more complicated tangle of clues and suspicions.

DIAGRAM

The shot was heard by a neighbor. And a muffled figure was observed running from the scene -- a figure that could have been a man...or could have been a woman.

EDWARD SANDS

Taylor's valet, Edward Sands, was known to have threatened his employer. He dropped from sight -- then reappeared, to produce an unbreakable alibi.

8.

FILM: HEFNER & COPS

Police received hundreds of bogus confessions. Furtive clues and disappointing leads kept them questioning people for decades after the killing. The principals in the case grew older. Mabel Normand died.

MARY & MOTHER IN
COURT

Mary Miles Minter and her strong-willed mother, Charlotte Shelby, continued to hold the interest of public and police. First, because of a legal dispute about Mary's earnings; second, because of a growing suspicion on the part of police that Mrs. Shelby knew more about the Taylor murder -- a great deal more -- than anyone else involved. By that time, the mid-thirties, the case had been re-opened a dozen times,

MRS. SHELBY

- DISSOLVE -

FILM: APARTMENT COURT
TODAY

and by this time -- the mid-nineteen-sixties,
it has consumed more police man-hours than
any case in Los Angeles history.

Even though the leading suspect is dead,
the William Desmond Taylor case is still
technically unsolved.

It is not likely that police can solve it
in the next 90 days or so, but if they
don't the apartment-court will be torn
down and the scene of the crime will be gone.

Most of the players in the Taylor melodrama
are dead. Soon, even the stage will have
disappeared.

END FILM

CAM

Maybe the Los Angeles police have no further
interest in that apartment-court; on the
other hand they might find it worth their
while to give it one last look.

CAM

Among the old-timers who investigated the William Desmond Taylor murder there seems to be pretty close agreement on one thing: It was the lack of a murder-weapon that prevented their closing the case long ago. Nobody ever found the gun. Well the bulldozers go to work on that apartment-court on South Alvarado early next year. You know how demolition-crews disturb things -- smashing through wall-sections, tearing up floors, rooting out trees and shrubbery. Wouldn't it be odd if some workman were to kick away some rubble and find a 38-caliber revolver, a crusty and rusty little gun with one shot fired? Have stranger things happened in the course of crime in Los Angeles? (NODS) Much stranger.