

An Unlucky Dissolution

Judy Alexander

EULOGY

Phedra was my colleague and my friend. As most of you know, she rose to the top of her profession quickly, founding the Dallas Institute of Graphological Science in 1982. (The institute teaches how to analyze handwriting for authenticity and personality.) In addition to directing the institute, Phedra, who held a doctorate in psychology, conducted marriage and individual counseling. She will be greatly missed by all, her friends, her colleagues, and her clients.

GOSSIP

Last week, when Phedra and I were having one of our late dinners, as we so often did, I noticed that she seemed totally preoccupied. I asked her if anything was bothering her. She assured me there was not, and with an arcane smile, said she had to leave. She then stood up and walked out of the restaurant, almost trance-like. She telephoned the next day, full of apologies, and asked if we could meet later that afternoon. She said she had something very important to tell me.

We met at the Crystal Carry Out, a diner across the street from the handwriting institute. There was something about Phedra that seemed strange, aside from the way she was dressed, which was totally out of character. She arrived directly from the job. I didn't expect to see her in blue jeans and cowboy boots! She had never even worn pants in the office before. Her thick black hair, usually worn pulled back in a bun at the nape of her neck, was loose and flowing about her shoulders. She was usually conservative in her professional dress and it seemed bizarre that she would be seeing her clients in this outfit. (Professionally, it is a rule of thumb for a therapist to maintain a sameness in dress so as not to call attention away from the analysis.) She seemed in a rush, her explanation being a full roster of afternoon appointments. We sat down, ordered coffee, and her eyes began to fill with tears.

"I have fallen in love," she said. "His name is Bonar, Bonar Fuller."

As far as I or our coterie was aware, Phedra had never

had a date the entire time we had known her. She was always far too busy with her career. Naturally, this announcement was a bit of a shock.

"That's wonderful," I said. "Tell me about him."

"I met him less than a week ago," she said, "and he has changed my life. He brings out the little girl in me. I can play with him."

"How did you meet him?" I said.

"He came to the institute for a handwriting analysis last Wednesday, and before the afternoon was over, we were making love on the floor behind my desk!"

"What was his handwriting like?" I said, without thinking, feeling immediately doltish. I suppose I could have said, "What was he like?" or "Why did you do it on the floor instead of the couch?" but frankly, I was shaken.

"Oh, he didn't come in to get his own handwriting analyzed," she said with a throaty laugh. She then flipped her hair with a toss of her head.

At this point, I knew my friend had undergone a total personality change.

"He was researching some of his clients. He's a hypnotherapist. By taking patients through their past, he accomplishes in hours what it takes us weeks to do."

"Well, I'd certainly like to meet this man," I said.

"It will have to be soon. We're leaving on Friday for some relaxation," she said causally. "We may get married."

The following evening, I and three of our colleagues met them for a drink at Frank's Grill. Bonar was short, dark complected, with probing vulturine eyes and a black moustache. His manner was carefree and fun-loving. He was hardly the type of man one would have thought Phedra to be attracted. She was usually so serious. There was something about him that made me feel uneasy.

The next day, I suggested to Phedra that we analyze his handwriting as I was quite sure she must have samples. She said that I was being ridiculous and that if we did analyze it, we would find "happy, happy handwriting." I was convinced that we would have seen heavy pressure and erratic writing, which indicate the writer is "not real stable" or uses alcohol or drugs.

Friday, after work, Phedra and Bonar left Dallas in

different cars. She left the institute in the care of co-workers but did not tell us where she would be staying. She told us she would check in, once she got to Hot Springs, Arkansas, where she was planning to rent a condominium on a lake.

FACTS

TIP LEADS OFFICERS TO BODY IN CAR TRUNK

Sunday, June 16, the nude body of an unidentified woman in her 40s was found stuffed in the trunk of a vehicle parked 12 miles north of Hot Springs, and authorities were interviewing a suspect in the death, the Garland County sheriff's office reported. There were no obvious signs of violence. The suspect apparently drove the vehicle to a house on state Highway 5 and left it on the property, where the owner found it at 2:52 p.m. The owner called the police, informing them there might be a body in the trunk and gave the identity of the driver.

MAN PLEADS INNOCENT IN SLAYING OF HANDWRITING EXPERT CALLED DEDICATED

Bonar Dean Fuller, 47, pleaded innocent Monday to the first degree murder of a Dallas handwriting expert whose body was found in the trunk of her maroon 1989 Cadillac. Fuller was arrested Sunday after a friend told the sheriff's deputies that Fuller came to his home asking for a meat grinder to dispose of a body. When the police arrived on the scene, Fuller was asleep on the couch. He allegedly had a badly swollen left eye and fresh scratch marks on his left cheek. The record says he told officers he walked into a cabinet. Fuller told officers the car belonged to a "lady friend" who was "out and around." When officers discovered Dr. Byden's partially nude body in the trunk, they arrested Fuller. Fuller, who had moved to Hot Springs five years ago from Texas, listed his occupation in court documents as "mental therapist" for the last 20 years, earning \$175 a session. Neither the Arkansas State Board of Examiners in Psychology nor its Texas equivalent show that Fuller was licensed by them.

BONAR FULLER, ACCUSED MURDERER, HAS BEEN DEEMED MENTALLY UNFIT BY THE STATE HOSPITAL TO STAND TRIAL

On June 25th, state medical examiners, after extensive testing, have determined Bonar Fuller unable to stand trial for the murder of a Dallas psychotherapist. Because of a gag order in the case, investigators still refuse to say how Phedra Byden was killed.

OBITUARY

Phedra Lynn Byden, age 45, died suddenly, on the sixteenth day of the month of brides. She had no survivors.