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Mystery still lingers on Marilyn Monroe

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LOS ANGELES—Ever since Marilyn Monroe's nude body was found sprawled on the bed of her fashionable home 20 years ago in Brentwood, Calif., there have been questions.

Did she really die of a self-ingested overdose of barbiturates, as stated in the coroner's official report? Or was she murdered, injected with the lethal drugs against her will, as several investigators have since insisted?

Wednesday, the 20th anniversary of the death of Hollywood's platinum blond sex symbol, a Los Angeles private investigator who has spent more than a decade probing the case said the answers are in Marilyn Monroe's so-called "red" diary, missing since her body was examined in the Los Angeles coroner's office.

"THIS DIARY names names," said Milo Speriglio, director of the 76-year-old Nick Harris detective agency in Van Nuys, Calif. "It may tell us who killed Marilyn Monroe."

Speriglio is so confident the diary contains incriminating murder evidence that he is offering a \$10,000 reward for it.

"We know it still exists," said Speriglio, who also has demanded that authorities reopen the Monroe case and hold an inquest. "I got a call from a New York attorney who told me his client had the book, but would turn it over only to a living blood relative of Miss Monroe's."

Monroe's only living relative is her mother, who has spent the last several years as a patient in a mental institution, Speriglio said. There is also a half-sister.

SEVERAL BOOKS written after Monroe's death have linked her romantically with both former President John F. Kennedy and one of his brothers, the late U.S. Sen. Robert Kennedy.

According to Speriglio, the missing diary details those affairs and also contains information about a CIA plot to kill Cuban dictator Fidel Castro.

"Miss Monroe was murdered to keep her from talking about her relationship with the Kennedy brothers, the CIA plot and her association with certain San Diego Mafia figures," Speriglio said.

Just who may have murdered Monroe is still a matter of conjecture and the wide range of theories have kept the public supplied with an almost inexhaustible flow of biographies and counter-biographies.

One theory is that Kennedy loyalists in the Department of Justice or the Central Intelligence Agency killed Monroe with a lethal dose of barbiturates in order to protect the Kennedy brothers from scandal.

WRITER TONY Sciacca, in his 1976 book "Who Killed Marilyn?" insists that neither Robert nor J.F.K. was involved, or knew anything about the murder allegedly committed on their behalf.

Robert Slatzer, another writer and close friend of the actress, said in an earlier book that Monroe had been upset over Robert Kennedy's attempts to break off their alleged affair and was angry because she couldn't reach the then attorney general at the Justice Department.

"If he (Robert Kennedy) keeps avoiding me, I might just call a press conference and tell them about it . . . and my future plans," Slatzer said Monroe told him a few days before her death.

Slatzer, who came to Speriglio with his information several years ago, asserts in his book that Robert Kennedy visited Monroe the day before her death.

"There was definitely a cover-up in Miss Monroe's death," Speriglio said. "Some famous people were protected."

JACK CLEMMONS, the Los Angeles Police Department homicide investigator who was the first policeman to arrive at the dead actress' house, agrees.

"She was murdered by needle injection by someone she knew and probably trusted," Clemmons told reporters. "This was the cover-up crime of the century—a matter of the Los Angeles Police Department and other officials here protecting a famous political family of the East who had good reasons to shut Monroe's mouth," said Clemmons, who has since retired from the force.

Deputy Coroner Lionel Grandison, who signed the death certificate, has since said he did so under duress.

"The whole thing was organized to hide the truth," he said. "An original autopsy file vanished, a scrawled note that Marilyn Monroe wrote and which did not speak of suicide also vanished and so did the first police report. I was told to sign the official report—or I'd find myself in a position I couldn't get out of."

IT IS THE CORONER'S report that is at the center of the controversy. Speriglio said. Though it says death was caused by the ingestion of barbiturates, there was no trace of pills in the stomach or duodenum when the coroner examined the body.

Indeed, a toxicologist's report showed barbiturates only in the blood and liver—an indication that the drugs were not taken orally, but rather were injected.

Deputy Medical Examiner Thomas Noguchi, who now holds the same position as he did in 1962 when he performed the autopsy on Monroe, flatly denies assertions that there was a cover-up in the star's death.

"There is nothing new about this talk and nothing new I know of about how Marilyn Monroe died," said Noguchi, the recently demoted "coroner of the stars." "The case has been investigated again and again. The autopsy records are public information."

Noguchi also insisted that no samples were taken from Monroe's stomach because in the early 1960s it was standard practice to rely on blood tests only to determine the presence of drugs.

Theodore Curfee, the Los Angeles County coroner when Monroe died, who has since retired, insists the case is closed.

"If someone doesn't believe it was suicide, it's a free country," he recently told a Los Angeles newspaper.