

PORT FOLIO WEEKLY

November 11-17, 1997

Handwriting Expert Works on JonBenet Ramsey Case

By JENNIFER BRADNER

After being beaten nearly to death in the dorm corridor of a boarding school, Cina Wong hoped her nightmare was over. But several weeks later, she began to receive death threats from the girls who had attacked her.

The headmaster promised that her assailants would be apprehended and punished with the help of handwriting experts. It was then that the spunky 15-year-old determined her career path. "I decided I would follow this profession [analyzing handwriting]," she says, "to help other people in similar situations."

Wong is now officially titled a "Questioned Document Examiner," a court-qualified, board-certified handwriting expert. She inspects various documents and testifies in court as to their authenticity for David Liebman & Associates, one of only 200 privately run handwriting analysis houses in the nation. In her eight years in the profession, Wong has worked on hundreds of cases involving questionable documents. They've ranged from family squabbles to neighborhood disputes – and murder investigations.

In one Richmond case, the parents of four children passed away. After some time, a handwritten will was found. It claimed that everything was left to one son, a son who was neither very bright nor very adept at forgery.

Another person's handwriting gave him away in a Portsmouth case. But this time the writing instruments included a key. One neighbor didn't like another so he scratched obscenities into his enemy's new black Mercedes

and wrote nasty letters to the man. Generally it would be hard to determine who had defaced the car, but Wong was able to prove that the vandal and the letter writer were the same person.

While most people haven't heard about these two cases, just about everyone knows about the JonBenet Ramsey murder case. Wong and Leibman were recently hired by a national newspaper to analyze new samples of Patsy Ramsey's handwriting. The team compared the samples to the ransom note published in newspapers and are waiting for the findings to be published before they'll discuss them.

In addition to analyzing handwriting, Wong can also examine graffiti, typewriting, disappearing inks, watermarks, check and credit card fraud, embezzlement and contracts.

Whatever challenges cases bring, she loves her work. Plus, she's confident in her job security: "This is one business that improves even more when the economy suffers," she quips.

So if we slip into a recession, look out, Cina Wong is watching.