

The Virginian-Pilot

NEWS

Handwriting expert says author stole her JonBenet Ramsey work



By THE VIRGINIAN-PILOT | tips@pilotonline.com

PUBLISHED: March 22, 2007 at 12:00 a.m. | UPDATED: August 7, 2019 at 6:33 p.m.

By TIM McGLONE

The Virginian-Pilot

NORFOLK – Dueling handwriting experts will square off in federal court here today over allegations that one stole the other's analysis of the JonBenet Ramsey ransom note.

Mr. Ramsey,

Listen carefully! We are a group of individuals that represent a small foreign nation. We ~~do~~ respect your business but not the country that it serves. At this time we have your daughter in our possession. She is safe and unharmed and if you want her to see 1997, you must follow our instructions to the letter.

You will withdraw \$118,000.00 from your account. \$100,000 will be in \$100 bills and the remaining \$18,000 in \$20 bills. Make sure that you bring an adequate size attache to the bank. When you get home you will put the money in a brown paper bag. I will call you between 8 and 10 am tomorrow to instruct you on delivery. The delivery will be exhausting so I advise you to be rested. If we monitor you getting the money early, we might call you early to arrange an earlier delivery of the

Cina L. Wong, a forensic document examiner with an office on Granby Street, is seeking to stop author and handwriting expert Michelle Dresbold from holding up the ransom note analysis as her own. Wong also wants unspecified monetary damages.

In the suit, filed Monday, Wong submitted hundreds of pages of her analysis of the ransom note and says it is nearly identical to what Dresbold published in her book, "Sex, Lies, and Handwriting." Wong concluded that JonBenet's mother wrote the note.

A hearing on Wong's request to stop further publication of the book is scheduled for 2:30 p.m. before U.S. District Judge Jerome B. Friedman.

The JonBenet Ramsey killing in 1996 remains one of the more intriguing unsolved mysteries in the annals of modern crime. The 6-year-old beauty queen was found slain

and sexually molested in the basement of her parents' Boulder, Colo., home the morning after Christmas.

Numerous suspects, including the parents, were investigated and discounted. Just last year, 41-year-old convicted child molester John Mark Karr confessed to the murder, but police determined he lied after DNA evidence failed to link him to the crime scene.

One man, Robert Christian Wolf, whom police questioned about the crime at the urging of JonBenet's parents, John and Patsy, sued the parents for libel and defamation after they repeatedly named him as a potential suspect. Wolf claimed in the lawsuit, filed in Georgia in 2002, that Patsy killed JonBenet and wrote the ransom note in an attempt to cover up the crime.

Wolf brought in Wong as an expert in handwriting analysis.

Wong submitted a detailed analysis of the ransom note, concluding that the girl's mother wrote it.

"Patsy Ramsey made a primitive attempt at disguising her handwriting when writing the three-page ransom note," Wong wrote.

Wong noted a "significant number of similarities" between Patsy Ramsey's writing style and the print on the ransom note, which demanded \$118,000 from the Ramseys for the safe return of their daughter.

"It is highly unlikely that all of these similarities occurred by chance," Wong wrote.

A federal judge, however, refused to allow Wolf to use Wong as an "expert witness." Her analysis could not be admitted in that court. The judge later dismissed the case.

In December, Dresbold published her book, through Simon & Schuster Inc., with a red sticker on the cover stating it contains "explosive details about the JonBenet Ramsey ransom note." A 23-page chapter strongly implicates Patsy Ramsey, who died last year of cancer.

Dresbold, in the book, "copied substantial portions of Wong's work," reproducing 48 of 62 of the same letter-to-letter comparisons and 20 of 68 word-to-word comparisons, Wong's lawsuit says.

On Dresbold's Web site, she lists her qualifications as a graduate of the U.S. Secret Service's advanced document examination training program. She also has testified as an expert witness in criminal trials.

Dresbold, who lives in the Pittsburgh area, did not return an e-mail request for an interview. A Simon & Schuster spokesman did not return a call for comment.

Wong declined to comment Wednesday.

“All Miss Wong wants is to get credit for her own work and to not have someone else profit from it,” Wong’s attorney, Christopher Abel of the Norfolk firm Troutman Sanders, said Wednesday.

The lawsuit says that Dresbold has appeared on a number of television news and talk shows touting her book and claiming that the JonBenet ransom note analysis “was her own” without “giving any credit to Wong.”

The lawsuit also seeks to stop Dresbold from making those claims over the public airwaves. Dresbold, according to her Web site, is scheduled to appear on Court TV on Saturday.

Reach Tim McGlone at (757) 446-2343 or tim.mcglone@pilotonline.com.