

MADALYNNÉ OBENCHAIN, IN 'LOVE QUADRANGLE,' HOPES FOR ACQUITTAL TO REWED EX-HUSBAND

Second Trial of Woman Pictured by State as Beautiful but Heartless Vampire Nears End With Mystery Still Unsolved

ODD ROMANCE OF COLLEGE REACHES SORDID CLIMAX IN A BAFFLING MURDER

Girl Discarded Spouse for Old-Time Sweetheart Whom She Then Lured to Death at Hands of Another Admirer, Prosecutor Asserts

TS MRS. MADALYNNÉ OBENCHAIN, on trial a second time in Los Angeles for the slaying of John Belton Kennedy, a heartless vampire of the worst type?

Or is she merely the unfortunate victim of her own reckless love for a man who went armed because he feared attack, who had been "beaten up" and shot at not long before he was slain, a man many might have wished to kill?

Kennedy was slain almost a year ago, the night of August 5, as he was about to open the door of a bungalow he owned at Beverly Hills, a residence suburb of Los Angeles much favored by motion-picture folk. Mrs. Obenchain was with him. They had gone there, she said, to look for a "lucky penny" she had hidden under some stones months before, when she had been there with a half-sister and not in Kennedy's company.

On March 19 the jurors trying Mrs. Obenchain disagreed. They had been in session since February 6, but the trial had been adjourned several times from one to three days because of illness of jurors or witnesses. After the case finally ended, after an exceedingly bitter fight, the jury remained out fifty-six hours and took five ballots. Finally the jury reported agreement was impossible, and the jurors were dismissed. They stood nine to three for conviction, though no ballot had been taken as to the degree of guilt.

With Mrs. Obenchain was indicted Arthur C. Burch, of Evanston, Ill., son of a minister and once her childhood sweetheart. The State of California endeavored to prove that it was he who fired the shot which killed Kennedy, and linked him to the crime by a long chain of circumstantial evidence.

Burch was brought to trial before Mrs. Obenchain. As in her case, the trial was prolonged and bitterly fought. In the end the jury disagreed, and Burch was remanded to prison for a retrial. Since the first attempt to convict Mrs. Obenchain of participation in the murder, as its instigator and accomplice, Burch has been tried again, and once more the machine of justice crashed against the wall of disagreement.

He is to be placed on trial for a third time after the present hearing of Mrs. Obenchain. If the "woman in the case" is acquitted, however, it is likely that the case against Burch will be dropped.

State Spent Thousands to Unravel Mystery

California has spent many thousands of dollars trying to bring home the death of Kennedy to Mrs. Obenchain and Burch. The eyes of the country have been focused on the dramatic efforts of the District Attorney of Los Angeles to prove man and woman guilty. The case has been crowded with interesting and sensational incidents.

But apparently the death of Kennedy is no nearer solution than it was the night the murder was committed, when a hysterical woman ran after a passing motorist and begged him to return with her to see if Kennedy still lived.

Standing out above the crime, its sorrow and its sordidness, is one commanding figure, Ralph Obenchain, husband of Madalynne. Though perhaps he has suffered most in the months that preceded and followed the crime, he has murmured least. His wife divorced him so that she might marry the man who was slain (though the marriage never took place), and yet he has by her.

She has given her not only his moral support but his active physical and financial aid, going from Chicago, where he is an attorney, to Los Angeles, that he might sit at her counsel table and aid in her defense. She was even more than willing to do so, that she might find the comfort and the moral support of his name and belief.

Remarriage in Jail Balked by Sheriff

That the remarriage did not take place was no fault of either Madalynne or her husband. The Sheriff refused to permit them to be remarried in jail. At her first trial one of the attorneys for the State referred to Obenchain as a "doormat,"



Madalynne Obenchain



J. Belton Kennedy, the murdered man

Faithful Ex-Husband Is Ready to Rewed Her

RALPH OBENCHAIN, husband of Madalynne, will marry her again if she is freed of the murder charge.

"Steady Ralph, the man in a million," she called him during her first trial. He met and wooed and won her when he was a senior and she an undergraduate at Northwestern University.

He married her years later, after a broken engagement had been resumed, in spite of her new love for Belton Kennedy.

He released her, aiding her to get a divorce, when her love for Kennedy proved insuperable.

And then when she was charged with murder, he hurried to her side, where he had remained ever since, fighting for her. He wanted to marry her again, but an unwelcome sheriff intervened. If she is acquitted he will make her his wife once more.

but he had the sympathy and the admiration of the hundreds who daily watched the trial, as with all respect and gentleness, with faith and loyalty that had survived every shock, he fought to save the life of the woman who had thrown him over.

An extraordinary feature of the murder of Kennedy and the trials of Madalynne and Burch is that they are a tangled web of youthful friendship, Kennedy, Burch, Obenchain and the girl were all friends in college, at Northwestern University, in Evanston, Ill.

Madalynne is remembered there as the prettiest co-ed in college, a gay, spoiled, sunny, vivacious girl, with dozens of admirers among the boy students. She was not a girl who went to college to have a good time, and there were many ready volunteers to see that she got it. She bore the reputation of being a thoroughly good girl, and was usually intelligent, keeping up a first-class academic standing.

Among the favored few of her many beaux were Burch, who came from the same town of Evanston and had been her childhood admirer, and Ralph Obenchain, later destined to become her husband. Kennedy was not then "in the running," although a friend of the others.

Burch was in one of the lower classes. Madalynne was in his senior year. Both men bore reputations for scholarship. Burch's standing with his fellow students was less than Obenchain's. Burch was not unpopular, but he had few staunch friends. His nickname was Boobie. He took a prize in debating and was a member of Delta Sigma Ebo, an honorary fraternity, and Delta Upsilon.

College Love-Making Ended in Marriage

Ralph Obenchain's reputation was for character as well as scholarship. He was a bachelor of arts and at the time he met Madalynne a senior in the law school. He represented his fraternity, Phi Kappa Sigma, in interfraternity affairs. He was one of the most popular men in the university.

Obenchain fell in love with the pretty and popular co-ed. She returned his affection, and when he was graduated, in June of 1914, their engagement was announced. Unfortunately there were disagreements, and in the following September their engagement was broken off.

They were married. But with Madalynne it was a marriage of convenience—she hoped to forget. Forgetfulness did not come, however, and soon she was corresponding again with Kennedy. She told her husband she still loved her former sweetheart. Then Obenchain resolved to let her free, hoping that she would be happy, and quietly deciding that he would sacrifice himself for her sake. The husband told this chapter of the story on the witness stand at Madalynne's first trial.

"I saw that she was not getting better and the way she cared for this other man was stronger than I thought it was at first, and in some way she could not throw it off," he testified. She was not well. I told her I was going down and have it out with him, but she said no, that Kennedy was sick and worrying about her. I then told her the best way to do was to get away from both of us—to go off somewhere by herself and decide what was best. I could not stand to see her worrying herself sick, to see her health failing.

Their romance had lasted only a few months. According to Madalynne's testimony, her husband arranged matters so that she could get a divorce. She did so, expecting to marry Kennedy. But that young man, either because his love for her was not as great as his words had led her to believe or because he feared to offend his parents, failed to make her his wife.

Mrs. Obenchain had come to California to be near Kennedy. She had expected him to meet her in San Francisco and marry her. He did not. She went to Los Angeles, and when he brought her no nearer her heart's desire, Kennedy, she testified at her trial, urged

her to marry him secretly, but she refused to become his wife unless his parents would consent.

Old-Time "Love Triangle" Becomes a Quadrangle

This was the state of affairs when Burch entered upon the scene. He had been in love with Madalynne at college; he still retained his affection for her. In his unhappiness over her affair with Kennedy she telegraphed him to come to Los Angeles, and when he arrived she urged him to see Kennedy and seek a solution of their difficulties. This was several weeks before the murder.

Burch took a room in a hotel just across the street from Kennedy's office, so situated that he could watch Kennedy from the window. He spent hours watching the man who had failed to marry Madalynne.

Madalynne's love for Kennedy, some handsome and a member of a wealthy family, already had become the biggest thing in her life. Obenchain inquired with the girl about it. Kennedy promised to accept the break which had occurred between them four years before, and he hastened to the Coast to see her.

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had produced testimony to show that Burch owned a gun and carried a gun-case when on the Pullman car riding from Chicago to Los Angeles. Burch, it was further proved, hired a roadster from an automobile-renting agency, giving a fictitious name.

Search for "Lucky Penny" Ended in a Tragedy

At her first trial Mrs. Obenchain testified that Kennedy had called for her between 3 and 4 o'clock the day of the murder and that she had gone with him in his automobile to the beach at Del Rey. They remained there for supper, leaving after the sun went down.

They motored out by the Glen road and stopped at Kennedy's cottage to see if they could find the "lucky penny" Mrs. Obenchain said she had hidden there some months before. She had been there, she testified, with her half-sister, Glenn Smart, and a party of friends some time between the previous January and May. She had picked some flowers and had hidden the penny.

She showed the flowers to Kennedy

in a jardiniere filled with pebbles, but couldn't find it in the darkness.

Kennedy, Mrs. Obenchain testified, held out a ring to her and begged her to put it on and marry him. It was a wedding ring, she said.

"I refused to wear it," she testified. "I refused to go away and marry him." He begged and pleaded, but she still refused. He would not take her "no" for an answer and said he thought he could persuade her.

The cabin stood above them, on a natural shelf in the hillside, reached from the road by a rustic stairway, with a rail made of branches of trees. They mounted part way together, Mazzlyn said. It was dark, and Kennedy had drawn an automatic pistol he al-

"He kept talking," she testified, "and then I heard a voice say something. I didn't think it was Belton's voice, but I wasn't sure."

"I called, 'What did you say, Belton?' And then there was a shot. I heard Belton say 'Good night,' and then 'Mazzlyn,' and then another shot."

Mrs. Obenchain climbed the steps and there at the top found Kennedy's body. She says she bent over him, reaching for his hand and begging him to speak to her. When she saw that he was dead she screamed loudly for help, running back to the road as she heard an automobile approaching. Mazzlyn said. It was dark, and Kennedy had drawn an automatic pistol he al-

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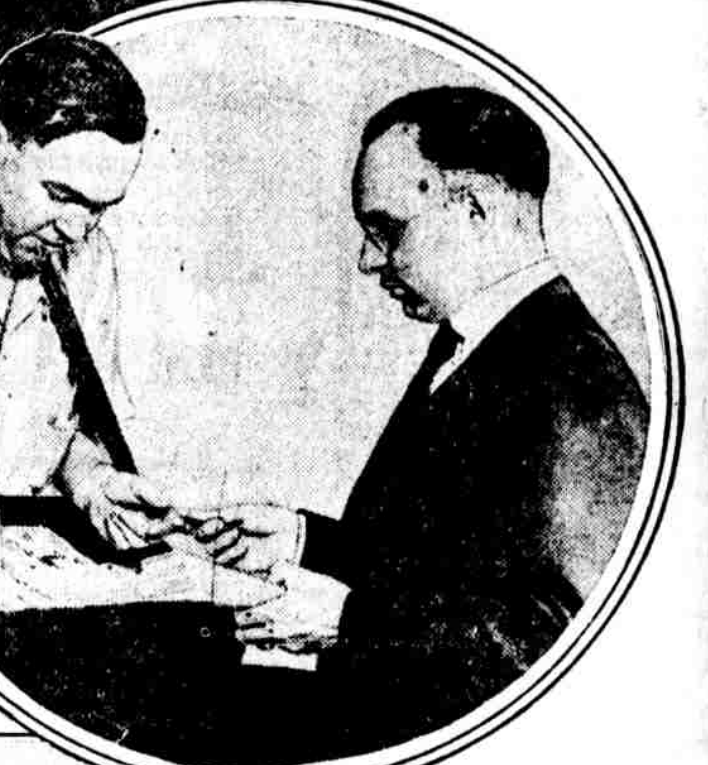
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Arthur Burch buying cigars from convicted slayer in jail

He was more than willing to abandon his practice in the Chicago courts that he might give of his energy and knowledge of the law to save Madalynne's charges against him connection with the conduct of his office.

Erbestein, ready and a fighter, met the denunciation by the District Attorney with a scathing arraignment of the latter's conduct in office. Erbestein defended himself, saying he had been tried twice on charges of "jury fixing" and twice had been acquitted.

Woolwine has a reputation for being a bitter fighter and twice had attacked opposing attorneys physically. Erbestein had just come through an operation at the time of his appearance in the Los Angeles courts. He is a little man, but full of spunk. He declared publicly that if he were in physical condition to fight with his fists he would not let the District Attorney's words go unchallenged.

The trial, long drawn out, was replete with unusual incidents. Even the dream element was brought into it. A witness for the Commonwealth testified that on one occasion she had told Mrs. Obenchain of seeing her, in a dream, sitting by a country road, with water surging toward her, and a procession moving along the road.

Another witness for the prosecution was a fortune-teller, who testified Mrs. Obenchain had visited her to learn whether she would marry her sweetheart. Later, after the shooting, Mrs. Obenchain had brought a young man to see her, whom she called Belton, after first asking the woman to say something favorable to him. The fortune-teller obliged by saying with great solemnity that the young couple should marry each other.

Denounced as Heartless and Frigid Vampire

The case went to the jury finally, after a bitter denunciation of Madalynne by one of the Assistant District Attorneys as "faithless, cold, selfish; a woman who loves to have men at her beck and call for what she can get out of them." He declared she was a woman of a highly educated type, of the type that she has had months in which to prepare her story.

Ralph Obenchain was scored as "a human doormat," at which he smiled in his quiet way. "Obenchain was made into a hypnotized, blindfolded, fatigued swain," insisted the District Attorney. "He is so controlled and dominated by her that he is perfectly willing to do anything for her smile, to be at her side."

He made no objection to the divorce. He made no objection to her divorcing him. He made no serious objections to her eloping around after Kennedy, calling him out, writing him love letters.

"I don't understand him, and I don't know if you do or not, but it shows Madalynne Obenchain had no regard or appreciation for those who have been kind to her."

Madalynne said she was surprised when the jury disagreed. She had expected an acquittal. It doesn't often happen that there is even a disagreement up that she might marry the man she now was accused of having lured to his death, hastened to Los Angeles, forth?



Mrs. Irene Smith, who says Mrs. Obenchain asserted Kennedy was killed by his own parents in an attempt to kill her



Diagram of scene of shooting

when he called that night, she said, and when they went to look for the penny it was partly with the idea of proving to him that she really had been at the cottage.

They hunted for the penny for a few moments, she said, under stones and

ways carried. He had the pistol, he had told her, because of a fear that her husband might try to "get" him.

As they neared the top Kennedy asked her to wait a moment while he went up to the cabin and made a light. He went up with her and found Kennedy was dead, the back of his head torn