

# The Girl In The Red Velvet Swing



COMES OUT OF SECLUSION — Evelyn Nesbit, the Floradora beauty, recently visited the set of "The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing," the Twentieth Century-Fox CinemaScope production based on the famous Harry K. Thaw-Stanford White

passion-murder trial. Here she talks over the script with Joan Collins who portrays the role of the Floradora beauty in "The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing."

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** In 1906, the Harry K. Thaw-Stanford White murder case rocked America. Because it involved a man of great consequence, another of great wealth and a girl — Evelyn Nesbit — of extraordinary beauty it remains unique in the annals of crime. Because of the new interest in this passionate story through a CinemaScope motion picture, "The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing," what follows has been re-created from the actual reports of the trial and from personal interviews with Miss Nesbit.

By ADELA ROGERS ST JOHN

Now that a motion picture has been made of The Girl in the Red Velvet Swing, Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, her life and times, it is important to review the historical significance of that lush melodrama which is America's favorite murder. The Thaw case.

I began reviewing it by going to see Evelyn Nesbit Thaw, now 71-year-old, in a bare little studio under the Hollywood Freeway. I wanted to know what the girl who was so beautiful that men killed over her favors was like in old age, what she felt about life, what it was like to remember murder. I didn't expect her to tell me anything new about the famous case that filled newspapers around the world for months.

**BARES INNER SECRET**

She told me a secret she had kept locked in her heart for 50 years, and that if it had been known then must have changed the course of the trial and of her own life.

To understand that secret it is necessary to go back and review the case from the moment when Harry K. Thaw in her presence, the presence of his girl-bride Evelyn, shot Stanford White on the roof of Madison Square Garden while hundreds of fashionable New Yorkers watched horrified because, as Evelyn was to testify, she had told him that three years before, when she was only 16, Stanford White, a married man, had drugged and seduced her.

This brought together in one courtroom: \$4,000,000—the Thaw Pittsburgh fortune.

The most beautiful woman in the world—Evelyn Nesbit Thaw. A genius—Stanford White, architect of the Pennsylvania Station, the Boston Public Library, Washington Arch, millionaire, popular in New York society who, though he's been murdered, was present as the murdered always are.

It not only set off the most in-comparable newspaper story of crime and passion and, in the moment when District Attorney Jerome tried to break the testimony by which little Evelyn was trying to save her husband from the electric chair, the greatest battle of the sexes seen at any trial any time.

**STORY OF AN ERA**

More than that, the Thaw trial is history in biography. Evelyn's brings into brilliant focus the end of the Gay Nineties, the Mauve Decade, it reveals class, religion, art of those times when a lusty young nation fought back from Civil War and began to jell into a world power. The never-fading excitement of this case lies as much

in the amazing reaction of the whole nation, coast to coast, border to border, as in the tale of madness and millions, love, luxury and death.

"I can't conceive I brought about all that the Thaw case caused," 71-year-old Evelyn Nesbit Thaw said to me in one of our long talks. "Then, I saw only my own pain, the end of my love and happiness, as any other girl would. Now that girl seems to me as though she was another incarnation. I remember most of it, and I can see now that she had a dangerous beauty and no experience, no sense with which to handle it.

"That's the tragedy of young beauty, the gift comes too soon. It was, I suppose, the same with Anne Boleyn when Henry VIII cut off her silly young head."

So wide-spread, absorbing was interest in the Thaw trial that LIFE then said, "Never has a bomb burst with such reverberations in the world of morals" (its comforting to see how seriously people took their morals at the turn of the century) and added the shock is so stunning that all tongues wag.

**PRESIDENT ACTS**

In 1906 President Theodore Roosevelt called a special Cabinet meeting to ask if by halting mailing privileges the country's population could be kept from devoting all its time to reading the Thaw murder. Couldn't be done. On the 8th of February the reasonably conservative New York World had two full pages by Irvin S. Cobb, four pages of Evelyn's verbatim testimony; two other pages. On the 21st, the only other stories to make the front page under enormous headlines EVELYN NESBIT THAW UNDER FIRE BY JEROME were he race results and a six-line box that the Senate had decided to seat Smoot.

In famous trials of every country it's plain that each age has a murder which typifies it; Hamlet or Hauptmann, Jack the Ripper or Jesse James or the little Princess in the Tower.

The Thaw trial could have happened only in a country big, young, rich, when the game was more important than the rules and people lived big in good, in sin, in righteousness. It's a period piece; so was the Trojan War which when you look at it it is a violent tale of mad illicit love and mass murder. A beautiful bored wife named Helen ran off with a handsome no-good

named Paris and two gangs fought it out for her.

The beauty of Helen brought madness.

Men who knew Evelyn before her tragedy—Jack Barrymore, David Belasco and Charles Dana Gibson among them, have told me that Evelyn was as beautiful as Helen. Two of her lawyers, Delphin Delmas and Martin Littleton, told me she had magic, and they were hard-headed men of the law.

**POSSESSED BY MADNESS**

Certainly you will see madness possessed Stanford White and others Evelyn remembers vaguely. A man with a yacht, named Garland, George Lederer whose Casino Girls were as famous as Folies Girls became later. In their divorces, 17-year-old Evelyn was named correspondent, she says, today, without cause.

"Any man who spoke to me," she says, "once their wives saw me they thought their husbands were in love with me."

Glamour, magic, black or white, brought violent emotions, love or hate, no one was ever neutral about Evelyn, she was always a storm center.

The country split over her. Girls ran away from home to reach and defend their idol, Evelyn Nesbit Thaw. Women had meetings in clubs and churches to condemn her as a home wrecker, a girl who'd sold herself for diamonds. No day passed without thunder from pulpit and press. Rockefeller's Minister Evans shouted, "It would be a good thing if there were more shootings in cases like this" but Richard Harding Davis, then the most popular author and war correspondent said Harry Thaw was a crazy man who had assassinated one of our great citizens. In Boston one pastor called Thaw a de-

# Divorce Jury Hears Wife Accused By Her Own Voice

NEW YORK — Testimony by human witnesses took a back seat yesterday in Manhattan Supreme Court. Instead, a tape recorder held the spotlight. And for the first time in legal history here, the mechanical witness sent tapped conversations between two principals in an alleged love triangle ringing loudly and clearly through the courtroom.

In some previous trials, phonograph records had been played, but they were weak, scratchy and often unintelligible. Yesterday's first use of tape—authorized by Justice James B. M. McNally—was pronounced a signal success by all listeners, except possibly Mrs. Cecil Weiner and her counsel.

**Listen For Four Hours**

Out of 100 hours of tapped phone conversations offered by Mrs. Weiner's blouse manufacturer husband, Albert, the judge and an all-male jury yesterday listened effortlessly, for four hours to the purported voices of Cecil and Sam Sidoff, a bedding salesman.

The voices poked fun at Weiners' vitality and discussed Cecil's remark that things were getting complicated and they might "both end up with a good dose of sleeping pills."

The wife also mentioned that her husband had found out about her cashing certain securities and that he had accused her of keeping "some young fella."

**He Seeks Divorce**

In the double-barreled suit, Mrs. Weiner, a petite blonde, is suing for \$500 weekly alimony and a separation, charging cruelty.

Weiner, short, bald and hidden yesterday behind dark glasses is counter-suing for divorce accusing her of misconduct with Sidoff, a considerably younger man than he.

Cecil's attorney Irving Erdheim, fender of American womanhood while editorials branded him a spendthrift and sex sadist.

Yet I think now that Teddy Roosevelt, who believed that virtue and morality were pillars without which democracy could not endure, was wrong when he wanted to suppress this story. A Methodist Episcopal rector in Wichita said every line should be published to teach the younger generation that the way of the wicked led to hell.

Of course vice, luxurious and glamorous, sin in high society, millionaire love nests with red velvet swings for teen-age girls, had fascination. But never, NEVER IN ALL HISTORY, has evil shown so grim and grisly a face. Never have the wages of sin been collected with so ruthless and inexorable a hand, never have the wrong-doers paid and paid as in the case of teen-age Evelyn and the man — Thaw was 34, White past 50 — who destroyed her and themselves 'or love of her.

**HAD EVERYTHING**

"We had everything," Evelyn Nesbit Thaw said to me, "fortune, fame, position, prestige, beauty, genius, opportunity. The world saw them brought to hideous ends. The world didn't see what I remember best, myself on the stand trying to save a husband I didn't love from going to the chair for killing the man I did love."

This was the secret she had kept for years!

No one knew Evelyn Nesbit Thaw loved Stanford White, the man she testified had ruined her. I must have showed my amazement for, sitting very quiet, very erect, an old woman with fluffy gray hair and bright bright brown eyes looking back through horn-rimmed glasses at the past, Evelyn said wearily, "Stanford White was the only man I ever loved."

For months before the trial, shook rocked millions in the United States. This would have been a greater shock.

How could it have happened like that?

protested vehemently that the recordings, made at the Weiner's former apartment at 450 West End Ave., violated his client's constitutional rights, compelling her in effect to testify against herself.

**Expert Handles Job**

Justice McNally upheld the contention of Bernard Phillips, Weiner's counsel, that the manufacturer, as a phone subscriber, had the right to tap his own line.

The playback was handled by Bernard Spindel, the wiretap expert who started a House subcommittee earlier this year by demonstrating just how easily electronic devices can clamp an invisible ear to any person's telephone communications.

It was in a talk commencing at 8:10 P. M., June 8, 1954, that Mrs. Weiner spoke of sleeping pills and confessed she had just heard that her husband "claims he's got a ace in the hole. He says he's got

something on me."  
Sam: Yeah, he claims, huh?  
She: He found out something from several years ago.  
Sam: Yeah, so what? That's kid stuff.

**"Taken Out Bonds"**

She: Who knows, who knows, who knows? He found out that I had taken out bonds and cashed them and things of that type, and bank, he probably checked on all that.

Sam: Yeah, and what?  
She: And every time you take out a bond and you cash it—  
Sam: And what's wrong with that?

She: Well, I used it for one purpose. He's sure.  
Sam: What's that?  
She: To keep some fellow.

**More On Hand**

Sam: No kidding!  
She: A young fella. That's what he told this party.

One of Weiner's charges is that his wife gave Sam money.

Later in the conversation, Sam asked her if she had "kept some fellow." Her answer was, "No."

The trial resumes at 10 A. M. today, with 96 hours more of tapped dialogue to be played.

## BULLETINS

**CHICAGO (P) —** Adm. Arleigh A. Burke, chief of naval operations, said last night the Navy probably will be chosen to handle the government's earth satellite project.

**MOSCOW (P) —** Former Finnish Foreign Minister Reinhold Svento said today Soviet Premier Nikolai Bulganin is "quite sick but not dangerously ill."

**WASHINGTON (P) —** The tentative membership list of the Agriculture Advisory Committee named to help the Democratic Party plan its campaign strategy on farm problems was announced today and includes L. Y. Ballentine, North Carolina agriculture commissioner.

**BERLIN (P) —** Western observers said today the East German mission to Moscow is the beginning of a possible double cross.

**BUENOS AIRES (P) —** A subversive plot directed against President Juan D. Peron was uncovered only hours before it was scheduled to break today, reliable sources reported.

**RALEIGH, N. C. (P) —** A downward trend noted earlier this week in Carolinas tobacco prices appeared checked today after two days of steady or slightly rising prices.

### Odds In

(Continued from Page One) pected to be that there should be a percentage reduction across the board, say 10 per cent for purposes of calculation.

The little fellow paying \$300 income tax annually would get a cut of \$30 compared with the \$300 windfall to the taxpayer whose liability had averaged around \$3,000 a year. The Republican argument is that the percentage system is not only fair to all but would have the added advantage of releasing large sums among the higher bracket taxpayers for productive investment.

### Hurricane

(Continued from Page One)

**HILDA STRIKES**  
Hilda meanwhile struck the Yucatan peninsula about midway between Cozumel and Chetumal and at 11 a.m. was centered at Latitude 19.8, Longitude 88.1.

Hilda was moving west-northwest at 10 miles an hour and highest winds were down to about 75



**COSTUMING UNDERWAY** — With the Harnett County Centennial production of Paul Green's symphonic drama "The Highland Call," only three weeks away, one of the big tasks is to make 200 new and specially designed costumes. Here, Miss Suzanne Kramer of Hickory, professional costume designer confers with Mrs. Cora Hight of Buie's Creek, one of the many Harnett women who are volunteering their services day and night at the costume shop set up in the Campbell College home economics cottage. Harnett home demonstration clubs are taking turns sewing in a group at the shop. "The Highland Call" will be presented six nights, October 10-15, in the Paul Green amphitheatre at Buie's Creek as the feature attraction of the Harnett County Centennial. (Photo by D. W. Amburn.)



**BOOSTER FOR MULE DAY** — Janice Pearl Johnson, 8, of Benson, wants all her friends to know one another. Yesterday she introduced a small Mexican burro to a much smaller Jersey pig. Though they didn't exactly hit it off, Janice believes it's only a matter of time. "They'll get along all right," she said. "You'll see." Today being the start of Mule Day activities at Benson, the burro was going to be mighty busy but the pig just headed back to its mother for lunch. (Daily Record Photo by Ted Crail.)

ple, Jerry Godwin, Donald Suggs, Ralph Tedder, Jr., G. R. Pope, Jesse Lockamy Bobby Horne and Alice Faye Denning.  
Also Betty Prince Edna Lockamy, James Smith, Kenneth Temple, and Meldin Dunning, Jr., Larry Royal.



**REV. SAMUEL HARDISON OF DUNN**, who celebrated his 59th birthday here Sunday. He is pictured above with his wife and children at the celebration. Left to right, front row, are: Mrs. Corrine Tart of Sanford, Rev. and Mrs. Hardison, Mrs. Wallace Norris of Broadway, Route one, Mrs. George K. Turbish of Dunn; back row: Sherwood Hardison, Wallace Hardison, Sherrill Ray Hardison, all of Dunn, and Geraldine Hardison, of the home.

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