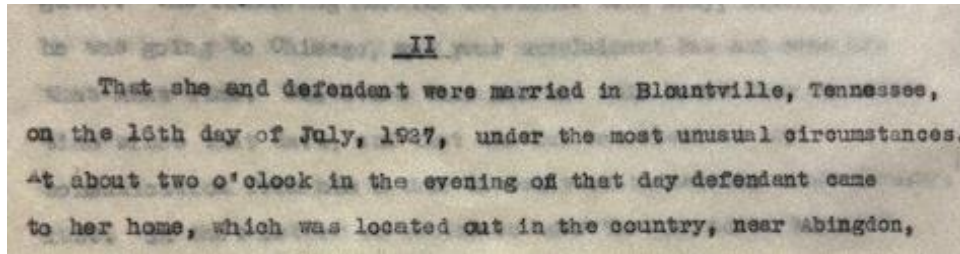


*Bill and Marilyn:  
It was Never Really a Love Story*



Sometimes we find stories in our case files that, as we often say, “You can’t make this stuff up.” This is one such story. The couple’s names have been changed to protect their privacy, and I hope you enjoy the story of “Bill and Marilyn.”

A young woman, around 19 years-old filed for divorce in Chancery Court in Washington County. The divorce case begins with Marilyn’s statement: “That she and defendant were married in Blountville Tennessee on the 15<sup>th</sup> day of Jul 1927, under the most unusual circumstances. At about two o’clock in the evening on that day, defendant came to her home, which was located out in the country, near Abingdon, Virginia, pursuant to a pre-arranged engagement for that hour...”

Bill had asked Marilyn for a date, and she was ready to go when he arrived. The couple had a plan—to go to the “motion picture show” in Bristol. Upon their arrival there, Bill purchased ten or twelve bottles of home brew, together with a pint bottle of bond whiskey. The couple “partook freely.” After they were feeling the effects of the intoxicants, Bill began to taunt Marilyn by saying, “You are not game enough to marry me, are you?” Marilyn replied that all he had to do was say the word, and yes, she would marry him. She had accepted the challenge.

The couple drove on, arriving in Blountville at the County Clerk’s office, where Bill got out of the car, went inside, and got a marriage license! Before leaving the building, he found a Justice of the Peace, and a witness, and brought them out to the car where Marilyn was waiting. The couple were married in the car because Marilyn was unable to stand up!

Immediately after the ceremony, they drove back to Marilyn’s brother’s home, arriving around 11 p.m. Marilyn went to her room, and Bill stayed in another room, “as her brother’s guest.”

The following morning, after sobering up, Bill stated that he was going to Chicago, and he left! Marilyn never saw him again. She stated that in two years, she had only heard from him five times since their “marriage.” In a letter written to Marilyn, he wrote that he never expected to live with her, as he could not keep up himself, much less a wife. She never heard from him again.

A notice of the suit was published in a Johnson City newspaper, and surely, Bill never saw it, or knew that he was party to the lawsuit. He did not appear in court, and Marilyn was granted a divorce on the grounds of abandonment in 1929.

Is there an obvious moral to this story? I think we will let you be the judge.

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