



Deadly Hero: The High Society Murder that Created Hysteria in the Heartland

Jason Lucky Morrow

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On the night of Thanksgiving, 1934, the son of a prominent Tulsa doctor was shot to death in his car in the wealthiest neighborhood of the oil-rich city. Two days later, the son of one of the most powerful men in the state walked into the sheriff's office with his lawyer and surrendered. The killer's name, and who his father was, would shock the entire nation and make news around the world. In a convoluted story, the mentally unstable genius claimed he killed in self-defense and to protect wealthy debutante Virginia Wilcox—the object of his unrequited love. But prosecutors claimed their star prisoner was actually the mastermind of a diabolical plot in which he would emerge as the hero, win Virginia's heart, and gain acceptance into the Wilcox family by her mega-rich father. Tulsa's high-society murder scandalized the Oil Capitol of the World when the investigation churned up unsubstantiated reports of rich kids wildly out of control. Looking out over their Christian, conservative city, adults imagined sex-mad teens driving dangerously over their streets to get to hole-in-the-wall gambling joints and breast-bouncing dance parties where they would plan big crimes—all while high on marijuana and drunk on 3.2 beer. A tornado of rumors and gossip tore through town, stirring up mass hysteria and igniting a moral crusade to save the souls of Tulsa's youth. When a key witness was found dead in his car under similar circumstances, it only confirmed their worst fears. In a notable year for famous criminals, this case from the Oklahoma heartland received nationwide coverage each step of the way. This true story is not a "whodunit," but rather, a "will he get away with it?" The answer to that question is still up for debate after the killer did something only the bravest of men would ever do.

Deadly Hero: The High Society Murder that Created Hysteria in the Heartland Details

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From Reader Review Deadly Hero: The High Society Murder that Created Hysteria in the Heartland for online ebook

Janet says

This was an interesting case from the victim, the murderer, the police and all of the lawyers involved. It seems like a case typical to that era. At times it was difficult to keep up with everyone and their often conflicting stories. I will read others books from this author. But I hope the cases themselves are more interesting.

Bettye McKee says

This is one of those vintage true crime stories set in Tulsa, Oklahoma, in the 1930s.

The crime was the shooting death of John Gorrell, Jr. by Philip Kennamer who insisted he had shot Gorrell in self-defense. The underlying theme was the moral corruption of Tulsa's youth, especially the children of the wealthy, who drank and gambled to excess.

The story is rather complicated with witnesses giving conflicting stories, unfounded rumors and outlandish theories. Much of the book, it seems, is devoted to the trial when the courtroom is almost reduced to a battlefield.

The antics continue even after the trial as tremendous time and effort is expended trying to free the defendant. I found the story very interesting in spite of some repetition in the telling.

Ronnie Cramer says

A fairly interesting case, though the book is overly long in my opinion. Also, the author injects his opinion repeatedly and the book is full of loaded sentences, such as: "Governor Phillips, unlike his predecessor, had a backbone," "for the first three centuries after Columbus 'discovered' America, not much happened in the region that would later become Oklahoma," "as in their overreaction to everything else, authorities and residents just assumed...," "what he really meant was: I'm wishy washy." He speaks of oil wells as being "discovered," which makes me wonder just how much he understands the location (Tulsa).

Lynn says

Good Book About a Long Forgotten Crime

This story had so many different elements, rumours and conjectures it would have been seen as far fetched in a novel, but actually happened. It also has frightened citizens up in arms about alleged misconduct and salacious behavior by area young people. As is often the case, previous generations claimed the problems were the result of too much freedom and idle time allowed by permissive parents. Much of the commotion

was caused by false information and speculation by people who knew little or nothing regarding actual facts related to the case. Very interesting read.

Lorraine says

Very interesting story...corruption and using your friends to turn the laws to your own advantage. I don't know how they could call Phil a hero and keep a straight face. It was all just wheeling and dealing.

Aishuu says

I find Jason Lucky Morrow one of the few independent writers worth following because he knows *exactly* how to tell a story.

I wish all the new independent writers brought about by the Kindle/Nook age were as good as this. In Deadly Hero, the reader is given a play by play in a fashion that builds suspense. I've never heard of this case before, but it was well covered and well paced. There's some foreshadowing, but the author knows what points to reveal when and manages to create a comprehensive plot arc.

So far Morrow's the only independent writer I've picked up through Kindle Unlimited I will continue to follow after my subscription expires (KU is a waste of money since so much of the "Unlimited" books are self-published and give me new appreciation for the work editors *do* and the suffering of those who must go through slush piles.) I don't know why this guy hasn't been picked up by a more mainstream publisher.

linda patton says

Good!

Very good read. Not only the story of a murder also a lesson about this time in history. Was interesting and informative.

Tina says

At last, a true crime book that breaks what has become the standard, tiresome mode of telling the tale of a crime. It is hard to find true crime to read that is not about a spousal killing, or sexual serial killers, but this book has found a fascinating case from the 1930's. It is told briskly, and is free of the cliched use of unnecessary endless descriptions of geography that have nothing to do with the crime or highly detailed personal facts and life history of detectives working the crime. These true crime standards of geography and personal details were first used to great effect by Truman Capote (In Cold Blood), but Ann Rule and others have used these so repetitively that much of today's true crime genre is as format-driven as romance novels.

Susan Burns says

This book details the murder of John Gorrell Jr., the events that lead up to it, the arrest and prosecution of Phil Kennamer and the subsequent incarceration, delays and appeals.

It was a case that rocked Tulsa but today has been forgotten by time. I don't want to spoil it by going into any details, but it's a great read for true crime fans and it's intriguing (almost as much as the case itself) to note how laws and rules regard court conduct and procedure have changed over the years.

It's rare to have a true crime case where all of the people involved - even the unrepentant, sociopathic murderer - elicit sympathy on some level, but that's certainly the case here. You even have to feel for Tulsa's manipulative, narcissistic detective, to some extent.

The author did a great job in assembling the story into a timeline that was unpredictable yet satisfying. I appreciate the enormous amount of research the author put into this case, fully answering every lingering question. It's a book I'd like to come back to and re-read in the future.

Susanne says

The more things change, the more things stay the same. This was a difficult read for me, because there's a lot of the same forces of injustice and unfairness here that are seen in many modern trials, and it was depressing that nothing has changed. I'm particularly susceptible to depression right now (my cat is in Stage 4 Kidney Failure), so your milage will vary.

In this book:

A bipolar, habitual liar, protected by his Judge father from the consequences of his actions since kindergarten, murders a boy to impress a woman.

Back-room deals have more influence than facts.

The murderer lies to people's faces and expects them to believe him--and why not? He's got drunk and totaled his car FOUR times and his father just buys him a new one. His reality is never having to take responsibility for anything. In fact, the victim is vilified at trial and made out to be responsible for his own murder.

Well researched and presented, this book includes what happened to the people involved after the trial, as well as background on even the side players--demonstrating scandal was everywhere (like the governor marrying his dead wife's niece whom they'd raised as a daughter).

If you like scandalous historical true crime, I think you'd like this.

Euraylie says

Well written and well researched, and very readable. The only problem is that the case itself maybe just wasn't interesting enough for a book of this length.

The author often foreshadows events, making it sound like something really exciting is going to occur, but ultimately most of these developments turn out to be not that interesting.

Still, it's an easy read, and people who enjoy the historical crime genre will doubt find something to appeal to them within these pages.

Ronda Emele sherwood says

This was a pretty quick read. Unlike some reviews, I didn't find it overly long. I thought it was extremely well researched and interesting. The writing kept my interest and explained things carefully. I particularly enjoyed the epilogue which detailed what happened to all pertinent characters after the trial. I enjoy true crime stories. Not every aspect of the case was explained, but only because explanations were not always available.

The author is obviously someone with a strong sense of humor. At times this was a little annoying, but mostly I am grateful for the perspective. Sometimes things are so ridiculous it is necessary to address them in an incredulous manner.

Georgia Mountain says

I have loved all JLM's books, but this one fell a little flat for me. It was about a sociopathic, privileged young man with a bad case of affluenza. I think the coverage of the trial was repetitive and boring. The boy admitted he did it, told how he did it (prolific liar,) and yet they had a long, boring trial trying to get him off with an insanity plea. In the end, I think he got what he deserved, but did the victim and his family get justice? I don't know. I think the murderer should have gotten the death penalty. I think this case would have played out very well in one of Morrow's anthologies. I had never heard of this case before, and it is interesting on its own.

Ed Eleazer says

A fun read — creates a mystery and keeps you turning pages. It is vague on the reasons John Gorrell did whatever Phil Kennamer told him to do, since Kennemer was two years younger than Gorrell, and Gorell was clearly under the impression that Kennemer didn't like him at all.

Darcey Tomasino says

Boring

Too many extra details, convoluted, and boring, boring, boring, boring. B o r I n g b o r I n g
