

What! Give the Reno Divorcees Back to Their Original Husbands? Ouch!



Outlawing of Nancy Brill's Divorce Because She Pretended to Be a Resident and Wasn't, Threatens Severe Matrimonial Headaches for Thousands Who Have Lightly Tossed Their Marriage Bonds Away in Nevada

A JUDGE has apparently kicked the props right out from under the Reno divorce mill by ruling that one of its run-of-the-mine decrees isn't worth the paper it's written on because the lovely lady who got it was never really a resident of Nevada, but was just pretending to be. This will doubtless be bad news to many of the 30,000 persons who also went there for these scraps of paper during the past ten years.

Other judges have declared Reno divorces invalid for one reason or another, usually because the defendant was not properly served with a summons or did not have a lawyer at the hearing. But this judge went straight to the heart of the matter and established a new precedent when he set aside Mrs. Nancy Pierson Brooks Macy Brill's Reno divorce "because her residence in Nevada was purely simulated."

So it may be that Nancy not only got herself into a peck of trouble but also dragged in a lot of other women when she carelessly went through the motions of getting that divorce and a \$100,000 alimony check from George Macy.

The check was good, but the other day Superior Judge Edward Henderson, of Ventura, California, decided the divorce was not and annulled her marriage to William Hunsaker Brill, 3rd, who walked out of court owing nothing to Nancy for his two-day honeymoon.

And since judges like nothing so much as a brand-new precedent, they may now start taking this same disconcerting stand all over the country in regard to the simulated residence of people who crave Reno divorces.

But that is precisely what so many discontented wives and a few husbands go there for, renting a room in a boarding house and rushing home with the divorce papers the moment they are signed.

They have been doing that for years, but back in 1927 Nevada decided its divorce mill was not grinding fast enough to stifle competition from other quick and easy communities. So it cut down the period for establishing "legal residence" from six to three months. But the people who profit from this business still weren't satisfied, and in 1931 the law was changed again, cutting the period down to six weeks, and since that time the State has been averaging 4,009 divorces a year.

Dr. Alfred Cahen, an outstanding authority on this subject, says in his "Statistical Analysis of American Divorces" that since 1927 five-sixths of the Nevada decrees have been granted in a "migratory fashion to people from other jurisdictions, who were evading their own State laws." On this basis, considering only the past ten years, there must be close on to 30,000 persons who now have reason to feel uneasy.

Nancy, who is no longer Mrs. Brill but Mrs. Macy again, says she will appeal to a higher court. But if Judge Henderson's ruling is upheld, there seems to be no reason why all the husbands of all the wives who have remarried on the strength of Reno divorces shouldn't do as William did and walk out without alimony obligations.



Bill Brill and Nancy Photographed on Their Brief But Hectic Honeymoon.

Furthermore, should the higher courts agree with Judge Henderson, that would be fair notice to everyone that a Reno divorce for a temporary resident is a gold brick, which would doubtless put the divorce mill out of business. The only Nevada decrees that would be any good would be those granted to bona fide residents. There are about 100,000 of these.

The court's decision seems to have tossed Nancy back into Mr. Macy's lap, regardless of the \$100,000 payoff which he made for a permanent parting.

In cases where the wife has had several Reno divorces, all would be equally void and each husband could toss the ex-wife, in turn, to the next previous one, like men in a gymnasium tossing a medicine ball, until she would finally come to rest in the arms of the first and original spouse. This gentleman, with no predecessor to whom he could pass the fair buck, would seem to have a problem on his hands.

He might sue for divorce, naming the annulled husbands who succeeded him as corespondents but suppose he too has remarried. In that event she could bring countersuit, naming any or all of his annulled wives as corespondents. Things being equal, or anything near equal, the wife usually wins any sort of matrimonial suit. Therefore the first



Mrs. Nancy Pierson Brooks Macy Brill, Who, the California Court Says, Is Still Married to George Macy, Because When She Went to Reno to Clear the Way to Marry William Hunsaker Brill, III, Her Residence There, According to the Judge, Was Merely Simulated.



Mrs. Carolyn Nolde, Who Was a Waitress When Wealthy Mr. Nolde Married Her. The Pennsylvania Courts Declared the Husband's Reno Divorce, Obtained Years Later, Worthless.

husband would presumably find himself holding the bag. Though Nancy has a long string of names George Macy was, and now again is, her original husband.

A few years ago the wealthy Mr. Converse M. Converse also found himself in an embarrassing situation over a Reno divorce. Under the impression, he said, that his first wife had agreed, he got a Nevada decree, and then married Mrs. Stella Fried-Kahn-Gurdin, in Mexico. But the first Mrs. Converse, the former Marian McCall, said she had made no such agreement, and a New York judge set aside the decree because she had not had a lawyer at the hearing nor been served with a summons within the boundaries of Nevada. As a result, Mr. Converse's legal wife in New York was Marian while Stella was his legal wife in Nevada, with the status of both uncertain in the rest of the country.

Another rich husband who thought he had his wife's approval to a Reno di-

With Nancy's Case for Precedent, ex-Husbands of a Reno Divorcee Could Toss the Lady to Their Predecessors Like Gymnasts Throwing a Medicine Ball, Finally Landing Her in the Arms of the Embarrassed Original Spouse.



Mrs. M. Converse, Who Was Divorced by the Reno Courts but Reinstated as the Wife of Mr. Converse by the New York Courts.

orce was George H. Nolde, of Reading, Pennsylvania. But when Mrs. Carolyn Nolde, who was a waitress before her marriage, denied that she had made an agreement submitting to the jurisdiction of the Nevada courts, the Pennsylvania courts ruled that the divorce was invalid. There are hundreds of similar cases.

But Nancy's situation is perhaps the most interesting of all.

A New York girl, Nancy Brooks, married in 1929 George Henry Macy, son of a wealthy New York tea merchant; and trouble started so promptly that in 1930 she obtained a separation, complaining among other things that her husband had removed all the furniture from their apartment, leaving her nothing to eat or sleep on but newspapers. In 1934 she stopped over in Reno the required six weeks for a divorce on the grounds of cruelty.

In February of last year she was 24 years old when she met Bill Brill, 25, the handsome heir of George Brill, steel corporation executive, in Los Angeles. After a few weeks intense courtship they decided one day to elope.

California requires a three-day delay between the application for a marriage certificate and its issuance. This was too long to wait and besides it would be printed in the papers and Mama Brill might take a hand.

Also, the gilded youth and the young woman who had collected \$100,000 only two years before could raise but \$20 between them. This would not be enough for Mexico but in Bill's car, they could get away with it at Yuma, Arizona. Driving across the desert, the bridegroom stopped the car and with his own hands picked a bridal bouquet of the first flowers of Spring which Nancy thought far more romantic than mere orchids. The near husband banded some more of their slender funds by buying the wedding ring at a ten-cent store.

Everything was beautiful as it should be on a honeymoon until the groom sat up in bed, two days later, in a Los Angeles hotel, and said:

"Darling, I really ought to run over home for a few minutes and pick up some clothes. I'll be right back."

Brill was gone longer than Nan expected, but she consoled herself with the thought that he was telling his mother all about the charm and beauty of his bride. Then the telephone rang. It was Brill.

"Sweet, I'm so tired. I wonder if you would mind a lot if I stayed over here tonight. I—er—perhaps you understand."

Again the bride assented, thinking she understood that Mother-in-law was perhaps being a bit difficult and it would be good policy for Bill to stay there the rest of the night and let her get the necessary hysterics over with. Morning came on schedule but not Bill. Anxious hours passed in that hotel suite until finally Nancy called the house and Mrs. Brill answered.

"No," said Mrs. Brill, "my son isn't here and if you hear from him I wish you would let me know."

Horrors! Bill must have been kidnaped on the streets, perhaps he was murdered by now. Her duty was to inform the police. She informed them for a full two hours and then went back to the hotel to await results. Hardly had she reached it than the telephone rang. A bored voice said:

"We found your husband at the first place we looked. He is at his mother's home."

Well, if the police could see him, then his wife could. With her very last change, she took a taxi to the handsome Brill apartment house in the exclusive Wilshire district and found her husband in the act of placing a lot of clothes in the car, which Nancy thought meant that he was coming back to her at last. But, as she threw her arms around him, he stammered: "Nancy, you better get out of town,

mother is furious about all this."

"But, Bill, what does this mean?" "I don't know. Here are the keys to the car. You better beat it before mother catches you here."

His warning came too late, because just then mother did catch Nan there. "What's going on here?" was her demand of the bewildered couple.

Her son said nothing but fled up the steps. Nan followed in close pursuit, but an instant too late. The door was closed when she reached it.

Distracted and angry, Nan jumped into her husband's car and started driving. She didn't know where and didn't care. Her first stop was fifty miles north of Los Angeles.

Reporters intercepted her there. They had more bad news. Her husband had just filed suit for annulment and, of all things, on the grounds that he was intoxicated at the time of the marriage and didn't know what he was doing. He further alleged that Nan had misrepresented her previous marital status, that her divorce from her first husband wasn't legal.

That was too much. The big yellow Brill coupe speeded north again.

Nan had no money for food which did not matter because she had no appetite either. The car's need for gasoline was satisfied because she fortunately had a gasoline credit card.

There was no stop until she reached San Francisco, nearly 500 miles away. There, in her first heat of anger, she countered with an alienation suit of her own, but when it came to trial withdrew it and fought her husband's suit.

When that came up she produced as witnesses the judge and clerk of the court at Yuma who testified that both Nancy and Bill had been cold sober at the ceremony.

Judge Henderson threw the claim of intoxication out. Nan was jubilant, only to be floored by the void divorce charge, a blow that is echoing around the country.