

Willis W. Case, Jr. (– 10 Feb 1934)

The Denver Post, February 11, 1934, p. 1

Nurse Kills Rich Denver Clubman And Shoots Herself Three Times Willis W. Case Jr. Slain After Lovers' Quarrel Marriage License Obtained by Woman Found in Purse – Tragedy Occurs at Busy Downtown Corner

(CRIME NEVER PAYS)

Miss Anne Wendelin, who shot and killed Willis W. Case Jr. Saturday night and then turned her pistol on herself, died at the Denver General hospital at 1:07 a.m. Sunday.



The romance of Willis W. Case Jr., rich Denver clubman, and Anne E. Wendelin, a beautiful blond nurse, came to a bloody climax when she wrote the last chapter with bullets as they drove down Fifteenth street shortly after 9 o'clock Saturday night.

Within sight and hearing of scores of pedestrians and motorists, she shot him thru the right breast as they crossed the Arapahoe street intersection. Then, as he staggered out of the car and into the Arapahoe market she turned the revolver upon herself and fired three more shots.

Case died a short time later at St. Luke's hospital, the bullet having passed close to the heart, causing internal bleeding.

Hospital attendants said Miss Wendelin had shot herself three times. One bullet entered her forehead, almost in the middle. Another entered the left upper side of her head. The third entered her left breast and lodged in her left arm. One bullet passed thru her head and went thru the top of the car.

A lover's quarrel is believed to have been responsible for the melodramatic murder and suicide.

The first intimation outsiders had of the tragedy came when Case abruptly halted his car fifteen feet past the Arapahoe street intersection as he drove down Fifteenth street.

Case Staggeres Away From Car, Saying to Passerby, 'I Am Shot?'

Staggering from the coupe, he called to A.J. Dunst of 644 South Pearl street, who was driving immediately behind him; "I am shot."



Dunst assisted Case as he staggered across the street and into the Arapahoe market, where he collapsed on the floor.

As Dunst helped the stricken man across the snowy street, other shots rang out from the coupe and Miss Wendelin crumpled between the seat and the instrument board.

The shot which killed Case is believed to have been fired as he drove across the intersection.

On the way to the hospital in a police ambulance, Case, who had retained consciousness, said, according to Police Surgeon R.M. Campbell:

"I'm going to die. She did the shooting."

Dr. Campbell said Case declined to disclose the woman's identity and declined to give any further information. But --

In Miss Wendelin's waist hospital attaches found a marriage license issued in Brighton Saturday.

This marriage license, police believe, explains the shooting. As they reconstruct the tragedy, Miss Wendelin, after obtaining the license, demanded that Case marry her, he refused and she met his refusal with bullets instead of tears.

Miss Wendelin Drove Alone Thru Storm to Get Marriage License

The police theory is strengthened by the discovery that Miss Wendelin went alone, thru Saturday afternoon's snowstorm, to Brighton and obtained the marriage license, and by charges of her father than "this is the fifth girl Case has fooled."

Mrs. Edwin G. Miller, who lived in the apartment house where Miss Wendelin lived, said they lunched together Saturday.

"Anne came up to my apartment for lunch," Mrs. Miller said. "She wanted me to drive to Brighton with her. She said she was going there on business but on account of the bad weather I refused. She seemed in the best of spirits, laughing and joking. She left the apartment about 2 o'clock Saturday afternoon, saying she would go to Brighton by herself."

According to Mrs. Miller, Case and Miss Wendelin had been going together for seven or eight years, but so far as she knew they were not engaged.

Arle J. Tripp, county clerk at Brighton, said he issued the marriage license to Miss Wendelin and that she was alone at the time.

"I remember her because she was so attractive and nicely dressed," Tripp said. "She answered the usual questions about herself and the prospective bridegroom, paid for the license and left."

Police had no opportunity to question Case about the marriage license as he was dead before they learned of its existence. No information could be obtained from her because she was unconscious.

Both Miss Wendelin and Case were removed from the vicinity of the shooting in the same ambulance. First, she was taken to the Denver General hospital and then he was taken to St. Luke's. He was received there at 9:28 o'clock Saturday night, lapsed into unconsciousness a few minutes later and died.

Surgeons said the bullet which killed him entered the right chest and ranged downward to the right kidney. It is believed to have severed an artery and caused death thru an internal hemorrhage.

Besides Dunst, eye or ear witnesses of the bloody tragedy who were found by police included Sam Nilne of 3131 Canosa court and Milton Wilner of 863 South Race street.

Detective Andrew Haze, who was dispatched to the scene with Detective Sam Finnie, John wells and Jimmy O'Donnell, said Case declared, "The woman shot me."

The shooting was done with a .38 caliber revolver. Detective Duffy and Wingren found five empty shells in the gun. According to their theory, Miss Wendelin fired twice at Case before sending the three remaining bullets into her own body.

The first shot, it is believed, missed Case. Then, as he threw up his right hand in an attempt to ward off another shot as he steered his car across the slippery street intersection with his left hand, the second shot was fired, striking him in the right breast. His right hand was powder-burned. Case had stopped his car for a red light at Arapahoe street and the first shot was fired at him just as the machine started across with the green light.

Case had been very attentive to Miss Wendelin for seven or eight years, according to friends. Because of his wealth and social prominence, his romance with the beautiful nurse caused much comment among their intimates.

Case Fifty-Three Years Old And An Investment Banker

Case was in his fifty-third year. For the last fourteen years he had conducted an investment banking business under his own name but it was generally understood that most of his time was devoted to his own personal investments.

Case was born in Washington, D.C. He was educated at George Washington University, Ohio State University and Alfred University. He was a member of the Sigma Chi and Theta Nu Epsilon fraternities and was an honorary member of the Alpha Chi Sigma fraternity of the University of Colorado.

In 1903 he became associated with the Denver Fire Clay company, holding various positions from clerk up to president. He retired from the company in 1918. At the time of his retirement, he was rated a rich man.

For several years Case had devoted a large part of his time to the Cherry Hills club. He took a leading part in the organization of this club and for the last few years had been in charge of its golf course. For several years he was active in the management of the Lakewood Country club, having served as president of that organization.

In golfing circles Case was considered an authority on the development and care of putting greens. Golf course upkeep was his hobby and he also was a devotee of golf.

He was interested also in various other outdoor activities. He was an expert fisherman and a hunter.

Besides his memberships in the Cherry Hills and Lakewood Country clubs, he was a member of the Denver Athletic club, where he lived, and of the Colorado Scientific, Wigwam, Motor, Mulligan Lake Fish & Gun and Chemists clubs of New York. He was a member of the Knights Templar, Scottish Rite and Shrine organizations of the Masons.

Miss Wendelin, who was 42 years old and lived in an apartment at 333 East Sixteenth avenue, was a member of a widely known Englewood family. She was graduated from a nurse's training school here in 1920. Before then she had been employed by a local newspaper.

In addition to being considered one of the most beautiful trained nurses in Denver, she was rated one of the most competent. Her last "case" was Mrs. A.V. Hunter, wealthy woman, who died ten days ago.

An element of mystery was added to the bizarre tragedy in which Case and Miss Wendelin played the leading roles by the fact that at the time of the shooting Case was supposed to be in his room at the Denver Athletic club.

Case had been a resident member of the D.A.C. for the last twenty-five years. A check is kept at the main door there of each member entering or leaving. But at the time he was shot, he was registered "in." Employees believed him to be in his room or somewhere else inside the club building.

No employee of the club could be found who remembered having seen Case since early in the evening or who knew he had left the club building. Whether he was not noticed as he passed thru the door or whether he slipped out some other exit are matters of speculation.

Investigators Certain Case Had No Suspicion He Was Going to Death

Where Case met Miss Wendelin Saturday night and for what destination they were headed as they drove down Fifteenth street also are matters of speculation. Investigators are certain Case had no suspicion he was about to keep a tryst with Death as he steered his coupe over the snow encrusted pavement down Fifteenth street. But they have no idea how early in the ride the quarrel developed which terminated so suddenly and so bloodily in the deadly volleys from the blond nurse's revolver.

Deputy District Attorney Anthony J. Zarlengo hastened to St. Luke's hospital to obtain a dying statement from Case, but arrived there too late. He then went to the Denver General hospital and waited there to question Miss Wendelin and obtain her version of the shooting, but she was unconscious.

In Miss Wendelin's purse, hospital attendants found 35 cents, a powder puff, lipstick and a newspaper clipping announcing the death of David E. Town, 62 years old, former chairman of the board of the Hearst corporation. It is believed that she became acquainted with him while he was in Denver managing a local newspaper.

Charles Boettcher II and Dr. John M. Foster Jr., warm friends of Case, called at the Denver General hospital at 11 o'clock to inquire about Miss Wendelin and the circumstances of the shooting. Dr. Foster said he had known Miss Wendelin several years and held her in high esteem.

The Denver Post, February 11, 1934, p. 1

Nurse's Aged Father Bitter Toward Case

My Daughter Is Fifth Girl That Man Has Fooled,' He Says

The romance of Willis W. Case Jr., wealthy clubman, and Anne E. Wendelin, pretty nurse, had been causing discord in the Wendelin household for more than a week before the affair reached a climax Saturday night in a blaze of gunfire.

Mathew Wendelin, 80-year-old father of the nurse, made that disclosure Saturday night when he spoke bitterly of Case, although neighbors did not have the heart to tell him of the shooting.

Mrs. Wendelin, old and feeble, was ill in the family home at 1403 East Stanford avenue, Englewood, at the time and it was feared that the tragic news might prove too much for her.

Tried To Get Her To Forget Clubman

Consequently, Wendelin was told that his daughter and Case had been in an automobile accident.

"Anne's mother and I have been trying for a week to get her to forget Case," the elderly father declared with the fervor that strong conviction breeds.

"My daughter is the fifth girl that man has fooled."

At that moment, Case, rigid in death, was lying in the county morgue pending the completion of the police investigation but the neighbors and friends continued to give the father no clew.

Going Together For Eight Years

"Annie has been going with him for eight years and he has been fooling her all that time," said Wendelin.

"Didn't she have an idea of marrying him?" someone suggested to the father.

"No. No. Never." He replied emphatically.

The Wendelins live in a modest cottage and the nurse-daughter has made her home in a downtown apartment for several years.

Neighbors were in a quandary as to how the news could be broken to the parents and planned to take them to the hospital Sunday morning if their daughter should survive the night.

Had Made Light Of Own Troubles

Friends of the family found themselves repeating one question to themselves many times Saturday night.

It was: How could Anne, happy, carefree and blessed with a delightful sense of humor, have suddenly become infuriated or despondent to the point where she could shoot her sweetheart?

Miss Wendelin had no characteristic stronger than her ability not to take life too seriously or agitate herself with worry, those friends said.

She was always willing to joke at her own expense and make light of her own troubles.

Her love affair with Case was a quiet one and she always gave the impression of being entirely happy with the way it was going.

Although Case's wealth entitled him to a place in the exclusive society sets and the outstanding social functions, he apparently preferred to spend his evenings quietly with Miss Wendelin, her acquaintances said.

Occasionally they would be seen at picture shows together or dining inconspicuously in some downtown restaurant.

Nurse's Brother Is Denver Patrolman

Miss Wendelin is a sister of Patrolman Frank Wendelin of the Denver police department. He called at the Denver General hospital late Saturday night but was refused permission to see his sister.

Wendelin said his sister and Case had been keeping company for some time.

"I believed in my own mind that they were secretly married some time ago," Wendelin said. "I never questioned my sister about it, however."

The Denver Post, February 11, 1934, p. 2

Slain Denver Clubman Had Colorful Life

Willis W. Case Jr. Was Held Prisoner by Chinese Soldiers in 1926

Willis W. Case Jr., prominent Denver clubman, who was shot to death Saturday night by Anne Wendelin, a Denver nurse, had a colorful career.

One of his most exciting experiences occurred on April 26, 1926, when he and several other men, including Capt. John H. Cowles, formerly a high ranking officer of the Masonic order, were held prisoners more than five hours at Tientsin, China, by Chinese soldiers.

Case accompanied Captain Cowles, who was sovereign grand commander of the Ancient and Accepted Order, Scottish Rite Masonry, on a world tour. Near Tientsin, Captain Cowles' automobile struck a car driven by a Chinese soldier. The soldier's comrades placed Captain Cowles, Case and several other members of the party under arrest. They were held in Tientsin until their release was effected by the American consul-general.

On one of Case's frequent visits to New York, Bide Dudley, note columnist, referred to him as "Denver's richest and handsomest bachelor, who is here to give New York a treat."

Was Roommate Of Bide Dudley

Case and Dudley were roommates here at the Shirley-Savoy hotel before Dudley left Denver to work in New York city.

Case had access to the homes of all Denver society leaders and was one of the most prominent and popular members of the Cherry Hills Country club. On Nov. 3, 1932, the Cherry Hills club presented him with a trophy in recognition of his valuable services to the club.

The trophy consisted of two Grecian columns, wrought in silver, mounted upon a marble base and holding the figure of a golfer. Case was credited with having built and improved the Cherry Hills golf course until it was recognized as one of the best in the country.

The Denver Post, February 12, 1934, p. 1

Nurse Bought Gun Month Ago To Kill Rich Clubman and Self

Tragic Resolution That Brought Death to Willis W. Case Jr.

Believed Formed Early in January – Victim Said He Was Followed

By Charles T. O'Brien

Anne E. Wendelin, pretty Denver nurse, who shot to death her sweetheart, Willis W. Case Jr., wealthy clubman, and then killed herself Saturday night, apparently had planned the killings for some time, according to disclosures Monday by Assistant Captain of Detectives Charles J. Burns.

Police records disclosed that Miss Wendelin purchased her .38 caliber revolver from a Larimer street pawnshop on January 8 for \$3.

Joseph Sobol, proprietor of the pawnshop, recalled Monday that he sold the weapon to her. Police regulations provide that purchases of deadly weapons must tell for what purpose they are going to be used.

Said She Wanted To Protect Parents

"Miss Wendelin told me she wanted the gun for the protection of her aged parent, who live in Englewood," Sobol said. "She said there had been a lot of beggars calling at their home and they were afraid some of them might be dangerous."

Further light on Miss Wendelin's relationship with Case, with whom she had kept company eight years, was shed Monday thru police investigation of events preceding the double tragedy.

Case, according to the stories of his friends to the authorities, had been under the impression in recent weeks that he was being followed. On one occasion when Case was riding with a woman friend in the Capitol Hill district he is reported to have turned into an alley suddenly. When the woman asked him the reason, he is reported to have said he was being followed.

In reconstructing the shooting Saturday night at Fifteenth and Arapahoe streets while the couple were riding in his automobile, the police theorized Monday that Case may have been taking Miss Wendelin to central police headquarters at Fourteenth and Larimer streets, three blocks distant, when she drew the revolver and fired.

"It is possible that Miss Wendelin had threatened Case and that he was driving her to the police station without her knowledge, when the killings occurred," Burns said. "There apparently was no other specific reason for the couple's ride to the lower section of the city."

More than 100 friends and business acquaintances viewed Case's body Sunday at the Rogers mortuary. The body will be sent to his former home in Washington, D.C., for burial in the Case family plot. Definite funeral arrangements are being held up by friends pending opening of his will Tuesday. The will, friends said, may contain instructions as to the funeral.

Refusal To Marry Believed Cause

Case's only relatives are a grand-nephew and a grandniece, Dorothy Woods Peck, who live in New Jersey.

Miss Wendelin's body is at the Olinger Mortuary, Speer boulevard and Sherman street. Funeral arrangements for her have not been completed.

Miss Wendelin shot Case once and then turned the gun upon herself, inflicting three fatal wounds. Case died in St. Luke's hospital shortly afterward and she died in the Denver General hospital at 1 a.m. Sunday.

In Miss Wendelin's dress, hospital attaches found a marriage license issued for her and Case at Brighton Saturday afternoon apparently without his knowledge. Employees of the Brighton county clerk's office said she was alone when the license was issued.

Detectives believe the refusal of Case, one of Denver's wealthiest and most eligible bachelors, to marry Miss Wendelin after she had obtained the license, precipitated the shooting.

The Denver Post, February 13, 1934, p. 1

Case's Will Bequeaths \$5,000 To Sweetheart Who Killed Him Bulk of Clubman's \$250,000 Left for Building of Golf Course – Nurse's Survivors Will Receive Bequest, Despite Double Slaying

By Ruth McCabe

A \$5,000 bequest to Anne E. Wendelin, nurse, who shot him to death and then committed suicide Saturday night when he presumably refused to marry her, is an ironic feature of the will of Willis W.

Case Jr., wealthy Denver clubman, which was to be filed Tuesday afternoon for probate in the county court.

The residue of the estate, after bequests totaling \$80,000 have been paid, is to be used to construct a municipal golf course in Denver, as a memorial to the Case family, or to build an additional course of nine holes at the Lakewood Country Club.

Four persons now dead are among those remembered by Case in his will, but by a strange twist of fate Miss Wendelin, his slayer, is the only one whose heirs will benefit.

Three Beneficiaries Are Now Deceased

Nellie Case, a sister, who had been given a life interest in the estate; George W. Vallery and the former Leone Clayton of 1115 Logan street, formerly a manicurist at the Denver Athletic club, who were bequeathed \$5,000 each, died before Case. But Miss Wendelin, who snuffed out his life, did not die until a few hours after he had breathed his last. Her heirs will receive the bequest intended for her.

Leone Clayton, at the time of her death, was the wife of Paul H. Crawford of 4240 Decatur street.

Case's will was made in 1927 when he had no thought that the pretty nurse whom he desired to reward with \$5,000 for her affection and companionship was destined to be his slayer. And then he was worth close to one-half million dollars.

Since that time the value of Case's estate has shrunk possibly more than half, it was estimated Tuesday. No formal appraisal has yet been made, but the fact that \$100,000 is to be recommended as the executor's bond indicates the possibility that the estate value may have dwindled to that figure. Improvement in the stock market, it was said, may increase the estate to around one-fourth million dollars.

Under the terms of the will, the residue of the estate, after payment of the various bequests, is to be used to construct a municipal golf course in Denver provided city officials agree to name it the "Case Golf course," maintain it as a memorial to the Case family and keep the course in good condition. If city officials do not agree to these conditions, then the money is to go to the Lakewood Country club for construction of an additional golf course of nine holes, to be known as the Case Golf course.

Invalid Niece Bequeathed \$10,000

The bequests to persons now living are as follows:

Dorothy Wood Peck, 24, a niece, who is an invalid, \$10,000, the principal of which, plus interest and dividends from the date of Case's death is to be paid her when she reaches 30.

George A. Byrne of 50 Church street, New York city, \$10,000.

Gus A. Askling, Denver, \$10,000.

Albert Pike Masonic lodge No. 117, \$10,000.

Rocky Mountain Consistory No. 2 of Colorado, \$10,000.

Stanky G. Warner of Denver, \$5,000.

Kathryn Desmond of 2700 Connecticut avenue, Washington, D.C., \$5,000.

Emmett Wilson of Denver, broker, \$5,000.

Case's automobile, fishing equipment, jewelry and other personal belongings, and his life membership in the Denver Athletic club, are left to Askling, who is named as executor of the estate. Askling, who formerly was with the First National bank, was a long-time friend of Case.

The will was to be filed Tuesday afternoon by Attorney Albert T. Orahod, representing Askling.

Shot Saturday Night While Driving Downtown

Case was shot and fatally wounded by Miss Wendelin Saturday night as the couple were driving down Fifteenth street in Case's coupe. He halted the car, just after crossing Arapahoe street, and

staggered out. Miss Wendelin then shot herself three times and died a few hours later at the Denver General hospital.

A marriage license which Miss Wendelin had obtained Saturday afternoon at Brighton for herself and Case was found in her waist. It is believed the shooting followed his refusal to marry her. The couple had been keeping company eight or nine years.

Case's funeral will be held at 11:30 o'clock Wednesday morning at the Rogers mortuary. The pallbearers will be J.M. Meade, Oscar L. Malo, A.D. Wilson, F.W. Bonfils, Will B. Walter and Askling. Interment will be in the Congressional cemetery, Washington, D.C.

Case formerly was president of the Lakewood Country Club. During recent years he had taken a more active part in the affairs of the Cherry Hills club and was in charge of the golf course there.

Six nurses will be chosen from the many professional friends of Miss Wendelin to be pall bearers at her funeral at 2 p.m. Thursday at the Olinger mortuary, Speer boulevard and Sherman street.

Music at the funeral service also will be given by nurses. The Rev. George F. Sevier will conduct the service.

The Denver Post, February 13, 1934, p. 29

Rogers Mortuary

Case – Funeral services for Willis W. Case Jr. will be held at Rogers chapel Wed. [14th], 1:30 p.m. Interment Washington Congressional cemetery, Washington, D.C.

The Denver Post, February 14, 1934, p. 1

City Accepts Case's Gift For Golf Course

**Slain Sportsman's Bequest Will Be Used to Buy
Part of City Park Links Now Leased From State;
Nurse's Family Undecided About Taking \$5,000**

By Ruth McCabe

Denver plans to accept the residue of the quarter million dollar estate of Willis W. Case Jr., wealthy clubman and golf enthusiast, who was shot to death Saturday night by his sweetheart, Anne E. Wendelin, a Denver nurse, according to Mayor George D. Begole.

Case's will read Tuesday, disclosed that he had bequeathed most of his estate to the city for construction of a golf course as a memorial to his family. The will stipulated that should the city refuse to comply with the terms of the will the money should go to the Lakewood Country club for construction of an additional nine holes to be known as the Case course.

"The city most certainly will accept the legacy of Mr. Case, and is indeed pleased to comply with his requests," Mayor Begole said.

"It would be folly to do otherwise when this generous gesture on his part solves a problem that is confronting the administration – the need for large municipal golf courses."

At a meeting of the mayor's cabinet Wednesday morning, officials decided to use the bequest to purchase a fifty-acre strip along the north side of the City park golf course, which is now leased from the state land board, and rename the links the Case golf course.

The land under discussion is a block wide and runs the entire length of the course from York street to Colorado boulevard. The city at present pays \$250 a year for its use. The lease expires this year.

While the city administration was appreciative of Case's bequest, members of Miss Wendelin's family were undecided as to the course they would follow, after it became known that a \$5,000 bequest in his will would legally become part of their late daughter's estate.

“We haven’t thought of the matter at length,” Frank Wendelin, the nurse’s brother and a Denver policeman, said. “We haven’t come to any decision about it.

“We have not found a will among my sister’s effects and we doubt that she left one.”

Would Be Divided Among Family

If no such document is found, the \$5,000 bequest will automatically be divided among her parents, brother and sisters.

A petition was filed Wednesday in Denver county court for probate of Case’s will. Hearing on the petition was set for March 19.

An inventory showed that Case owned real estate valued at \$50,000 and stocks, bonds and other securities valued at \$175,000.