

0. THE REAL ROXIE HART - Story Preface

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Beulah Annan is the real-life basis for the character "Roxie Hart" in Maurine Dallas Watkins's play, "Chicago" (and its film adaptations). In this April 4, 1924 *Chicago Daily News* photo (DN-0076803), we see Beulah with her husband Albert (seated, on the right side of the picture) and a lawyer, William Scott Stewart (seated, on the left side of the picture). Image online via the Library of Congress and the Chicago History Museum.

Beulah Annan, a glamorous Chicago flapper, was married to Albert Annan, a garage mechanic. An unfaithful wife, Beulah (called Roxie Hart in Watkins' play) shot her lover, Harry Kalstedt, in the spring of 1924.

After fatally firing the gun, Beulah played a recording of "Hula Lou" (scroll down 30% to hear a clip) on her Victrola phonograph as poor Harry died in a pool of blood. He had made the fatal mistake of telling Annan he was leaving her. The headline in the *Tribune* read:

Woman Plays Jazz Air as Victim Dies

Beulah drank steadily after she shot Harry. She called her husband to say she had foiled a burglary and killed a man to protect her honor. By the time the police arrived, Beulah was drunk.

Albert (called Amos Hart in the play) initially backed his wife's story. But too much illegal liquor loosened Beulah's lips and she confessed to the crime.

In jail the night of the murder, Beulah met Belva Gaertner (called Velma Kelley in the play). By April 6th, the two women posed together for press photos.

Soon after Kalstedt's murder, Beulah said she was pregnant. Wisely, the prosecutor tried to delay the trial. But Beulah's press-savvy lawyer, W.W. O'Brien, objected. He knew his client was better off going to trial while she was expecting a baby. The *Tribune*'s headline read:

Beulah Annan Awaits Stork, Murder Trial

O'Brien, however, needed more than good press to win his case. He had to come up with a winning defense theme. What better way to get his client off than by claiming:

We both reached for the gun.

See Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/THE-REAL-ROXIE-HART-Chicago-The-Movie>

See Learning Tasks for this story online at:

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/THE-REAL-ROXIE-HART-Chicago-The-Movie>

Media Stream



Beulah Annan

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Albert Annan

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THE REAL ROXIE HART

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