

SHOW NOTES & SOURCES - EPISODE 2

In Camera: Hollywood Scandals, Legal Truths

Errol Flynn - When Robin Hood Became the Outlaw

In January and February 1943, Errol Flynn stood trial in Los Angeles Superior Court on three counts of statutory rape. His accusers were Peggy Satterlee, 15 at the time of the alleged assaults, and Betty Hansen, 17. Flynn's defense attorney, Jerry Giesler, employed tactics that would shape criminal defense for decades. Flynn was acquitted on all counts after nearly 24 hours of jury deliberation.

PRIMARY SOURCES - TRIAL RECORD

1. EBSCO Research Starters, "Film Star Errol Flynn Is Acquitted of Rape" - Draws on contemporaneous AP wire reports. Source for: jury deliberation time (~24 hours); trial chronology; the LA County Sheriff's Department investigation of Peggy Satterlee's 1941 complaint and conclusion that there was no case against Flynn; discovery of the Satterlee complaint during the October 1942 investigation of Betty Hansen's complaint; Giesler's receipt of an anonymous tip about Owen Cathcart-Jones and his pre-trial investigation of the morgue incident; Giesler's manipulation of prosecutor Thomas W. Cochran into calling Cathcart-Jones as a character witness for Satterlee (Giesler later admitted to this tactic); and the jury's reaction to the morgue cross-examination. <https://www.ebsco.com/research-starters/history/film-star-errol-flynn-acquitted-rape>
2. Encyclopedia.com / Great American Trials, "Errol Flynn Trial: 1943" - Based on Great American Trials (W.E. Butterfield, ed.). Source for jury foreman Ruby Anderson's quote, Giesler's jury selection strategy, and trial proceedings. <https://www.encyclopedia.com/law/law-magazines/errol-flynn-trial-1943>

3. JRank Articles, "Errol Flynn Trial: 1943 – J.B. and S.Q.Q." – Same underlying source as Encyclopedia.com. Source for J.B./S.Q.Q. nickname testimony and additional courtroom detail.
<https://law.jrank.org/pages/2972/Errol-Flynn-Trial-1943--J-B-S-Q-Q.html>

ACADEMIC & ANALYTICAL SOURCES

4. The Conversation, "Friday essay: fame, male privilege and a media circus – revisiting Errol Flynn's rape trial 80 years on," Dr. Lisa Milner, October 13, 2022 – Peer-reviewed academic essay. Source for Flynn's courtroom demeanor, crowd scenes, and broader cultural context of the trial.
<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-fame-male-privilege-and-a-media-circus-revisiting-errol-flynnns-rape-trial-80-years-on-188896>
5. Variety Confidential podcast, "When You're a Star: The Errol Flynn Trial," January 24, 2024 – Draws on Variety's 1943 archival sources (AP, United Press, INS wire reports). Source for Giesler's Pantages background, Betty Hansen's birthday, trial timeline, and confirmation that Giesler was retained by Warner Bros. on Flynn's behalf.
<https://variety.com/2024/biz/podcasts/variety-confidential-errol-flynn-1235882116/>

ATTORNEY MEMOIR

6. Giesler, Jerry, and Pete Martin. The Jerry Giesler Story. Simon and Schuster, 1960 (also published as Hollywood Lawyer: The Jerry Giesler Story) – Giesler's own account of his career and methodology. Source for his pre-trial investigative approach and the Pantages case.

BIOGRAPHICAL & CONTEMPORANEOUS SOURCES

7. IMDb, Peggy Satterlee biography – Birth date (September 7, 1926, Dallas, Texas), death date (November 5, 2005, Reno, Nevada), and filmography.
<https://www.imdb.com/name/nm0766413/>
8. IMDb, Arabian Nights (1942) full credits – Confirms Satterlee's role was uncredited.
<https://www.imdb.com/title/tt0034465/fullcredits/>
9. Wikipedia, Beverly Aadland – Flynn's relationship with Aadland (girlfriend, not fiancée), her age at his death (17), and that the relationship began when she was 15.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beverly_Aadland
10. HILOBROW, "Planet of Peril (24)," January 8, 2018 – Draws on contemporaneous newspaper sources. Source for Satterlee's post-verdict quote and additional trial detail. Independently confirms the sheriff's department complaint was filed the day after the cruise and that the grand jury declined to indict.
<https://www.hilobrow.com/2018/01/08/planet-of-peril-24/>
11. New-York Historical Society, "Peter Stackpole, Errol Flynn, and LIFE" – Confirms the Life magazine photographer was present on the Sirocco the weekend of the alleged assault on Satterlee.
<https://www.nyhistory.org/blogs/peter-stackpole-errol-flynn-and-life>
12. Camden Evening Courier, January 1943 (contemporaneous) – Identifies Owen Cathcart-Jones as "Capt. Cathcart-Jones of the Royal Canadian Air Force and one-time technical director at Warner Brothers' movie studios." Source for Cathcart-Jones's rank, nationality, and studio connection.
13. Daily News (New York), October 4, 1959 (retrospective) – Documents the locksmith testimony on the Bel Air mansion bedroom door lock and the Cathcart-Jones morgue cross-examination in vivid contemporaneous detail. Source for jury reaction (gasps, heads shaking) during Cathcart-Jones testimony.
14. Rocky Mount Telegram, January 27, 1943 (contemporaneous) – Names Fred McEvoy's alibi testimony

(Flynn was with McEvoy on the sun porch all evening and never went upstairs) and Lt. Hugh Ernst's testimony regarding Betty Hansen's behavior toward Flynn at the Bel Air party. Source for defense witness accounts contradicting Hansen's version of events.

15. Flynn, Errol, with Earl Conrad. *My Wicked, Wicked Ways*. G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1959 – Flynn's autobiography, published the year of his death at age 50.

LEGAL CONTEXT

16. California Evidence Code § 352 – Balancing test for exclusion of prejudicial evidence. Modern framework for evaluating admissibility of the morgue testimony and other inflammatory trial evidence.
17. California Evidence Code § 1103 – California's rape shield law. Limits admissibility of evidence regarding a victim's sexual conduct in sexual offense cases.