

# Witness Collapses at Trial



Mrs. Aeron Burnet, inset, collapsed Tuesday during examining trial for her husband, charged with murder. Dr. J. M. Pickard revives her as her husband, O. A. Burnet, center, and Defense Attorney Maury Hughes look on.

## Woman Asserts Former Husband Once Attempted to Kill Her

Mrs. Aeron Burnet, 39, collapsed on the witness stand in Justice Court at 11:30 a.m. Tuesday after testifying that her former husband, shot to death Feb. 22, had once tried to kill her and had threatened the life of her present husband, Owen Arthur Burnet, charged with the slaying.

Examining trial for Burnet, ex-sailor, was postponed until 9 a.m. Friday after Mrs. Burnet had been revived by Dr. J. M. Pickard, assistant county health officer, and carried from the courtroom.

She grabbed at her heart and slumped in the chair during a bitter cross-examination by Special Prosecutor Frank Wilson. Justice of the Peace W. L. Sterrett immediately recessed the hearing and called Dr. Pickard to the scene.

**Bruton Shot in Office.**

Burnet, charged with the pistol slaying of Laster B. Bruton, his wife's wartime husband, was present at the hearing. He is free on \$5,000 bond.

Bruton was shot to death in his

office in the Texas Bank Building. Burnet surrendered an hour afterward at the Sheriff's office.

Mrs. Burnet, wearing dark glasses and a turn-down hat, testified that she first married Burnet in 1936, after a childhood romance in Ohio.

**Mexican Divorce Granted.**

She obtained a Mexican divorce, arranged by Bruton, in a lawyer's office in Matamoros in 1942, and married Bruton the same day, Mrs. Burnet said. Burnet, who had enlisted in the Navy, agreed, she said. Bruton had called her for dates as early as 1938, and she played golf with him once, she said.

After the Mexican marriage they were happy for about thirty days, she said.

Later, on one occasion she surprised Bruton with a 16-year-old girl in his office, and on another occasion Bruton became enraged at her during an argument and shot at her with a .22-caliber pistol, but missed, she said. That time she

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# Burnet

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fainted, whereupon Bruton kicked her, she added.

## **Remarries Former Husband.**

She obtained a divorce here in October last year, and shortly after learned that her present husband, Burnet, had returned from the Pacific, Mrs. Burnet said. They were remarried.

A week prior to the killing, Bru-

ton drove alongside their car on Eighth Street in Oak Cliff, opened the door and said, "I'll get you yet," then drove away, the woman said. He had previously given them some trouble, she testified.

The following day, District Judge W. L. Thornton granted an order restraining Bruton from molesting and harassing her. On the day before the killing, she testified, Bruton curbed her automobile in the Triple Underpass, cursed and struck her.

Mrs. Burnet said that she sold part of \$18,000 worth of jewels she owned to pay Bruton to leave her alone.

#### **Defense Puts Witness On.**

Defense Attorney Maury Hughes put Mrs. Burnet on the stand to testify for her present husband. Texas law provides that a wife need not testify unless she so chooses. She said she was of Russian, Italian and Austrian extraction, the daughter of wealthy Kurt von Anders of New York City.

Mrs. Jean Miller, 3103 Culver, and Helen Pryor, 5514 Ridgedale, employees in Bruton's office, related eyewitness accounts of the shooting.

Burnet came into the office with gun in hand, asked for Bruton, Mrs. Miller said. He shoved past them, opened the door, fired one shot, they said. They fled into another office, but heard six other shots fired, the witnesses said.

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# Hearing for Burnet Delayed Indefinitely

Examining trial for Owen Arthur Burnet, 39, charged with the pistol-slaying of his wife's ex-husband, was postponed indefinitely Thursday pending recovery of Mrs. Aeron Burnet, the wife, who collapsed on the first day of the trial Tuesday.

Testimony had been scheduled for resumption at 9 a.m. Friday before Justice of the Peace W. L. Sterrett.

Burnet is charged with the slaying of Laster B. Bruton on Feb. 22 in a downtown office building.

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# Jury to Probe Burnet Case

The Owen A. Burnet murder case will be turned over to the Dallas County Grand Jury for investigation, Justice of the Peace W. L. Sterrett said Monday.

Special Prosecutor Frank Wilson has waived further cross-examination of Mrs. Aeron Burnet, 39, wife of the defendant, Sterrett said.

Mrs. Burnet is still confined to her residence as the result of her collapse during cross-examination at an examining trial before Justice Sterrett March 6.

Burnet, 39, is charged with the pistol slaying of Laster B. Bruton, Dallas business executive, shot to death in a downtown office building on Feb. 22.

Burnet, ex-sailor, free on \$5,000 bond, was married to Mrs. Burnet before the war. She divorced him in 1942 to marry Bruton.