

Section: William S. Burroughs0

Context: Their life in Mexico was by all accounts an unhappy one. Without heroin and suffering from Benzedrine abuse, Burroughs began to pursue other men as his libido returned, while Vollmer, feeling abandoned, started to drink heavily and mock Burroughs openly. One night while drinking with friends at a party above the American-owned Bounty Bar in Mexico City, a drunk Burroughs allegedly took his handgun from his travel bag and told his wife "It's time for our William Tell act", even though they had never performed such an act previously. Vollmer, who was also drinking heavily and undergoing amphetamine withdrawal, obliged him by putting a highball glass on her head. Burroughs shot low and the bullet struck her, killing her almost immediately. Soon after the incident, Burroughs claimed the "William Tell" incident never happened, and that he had dropped his gun and it had accidentally fired. Burroughs spent 13 days in jail before his brother came to Mexico City and bribed Mexican lawyers and officials to release Burroughs on bail while he awaited trial for the killing, which was ruled culpable homicide. Vollmer's daughter, Julie Adams, went to live with her grandmother, and William S. Burroughs Jr. went to St. Louis to live with his grandparents. Burroughs reported every Monday morning to the jail in Mexico City while his prominent Mexican attorney worked to resolve the case. According to James Grauerholz, two witnesses had agreed to testify that the gun had fired accidentally while he was checking to see if it was loaded, with ballistics experts bribed to support this story. Nevertheless, the trial was continuously delayed and Burroughs began to write what would eventually become the short novel *Queer* while awaiting his trial. Upon Burroughs' attorney fleeing Mexico in light of his own legal problems, Burroughs decided, according to Ted Morgan, to "skip" and return to the United States. He was convicted in absentia of homicide and was given a two-year suspended sentence. Although Burroughs was writing before the shooting of Joan Vollmer, this event marked him and, biographers argue, his work for the rest of his life. Vollmer's death also resonated with Allen Ginsberg, who wrote of her in *Dream Record*: June 8, 1955, "Joan, what kind of knowledge have the dead? can you still love your mortal acquaintances? What do you remember of us?" CANNOTANSWER

STUDENT: **When did Vollmer die?**

TEACHER: ⇨ "" (CANNOTANSWER)

STUDENT: **What details surround Vollmers death?**

TEACHER: ⇨ "" (a drunk Burroughs allegedly took his handgun from his travel bag and told his wife "It's time for our William Tell act",)

STUDENT: **Did he shoot him?**

TEACHER: ⇨ Yes, "" (Burroughs shot low and the bullet struck her, killing her almost immediately.)

STUDENT: **Are there any other interesting aspects about this article?**

TEACHER: ⇨ Yes, "" (Soon after the incident, Burroughs claimed the "William Tell" incident never happened, and that he had dropped his gun and it had accidentally fired.)

STUDENT: **Was he prosecuted?**

TEACHER: ⇨ Yes, "" (Burroughs spent 13 days in jail before his brother came to Mexico City and bribed Mexican lawyers and officials to release Burroughs on bail)