



# A Murder in West Covina: Chronicle of the Finch-Tregoff Case

*James L. Jones*

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Rampant greed, sex, and a considerable dose of comedy ensured that this trial of a wealthy doctor and his mistress as joint defendants on charges of murder dominated newspaper headlines for months.

By 1959, Finch, 42, a wealthy Los Angeles, California physician, yearned to elevate his affair with 20-year-old Carole Tregoff to something more permanent. Standing directly in the path of this ambition was Finch's wife, Barbara, backed by the formidable California community property laws.

Divorce would entitle Barbara Finch to half of Finch's estimated \$750,000 fortune. Furthermore, if Barbara Finch could prove adultery-and there was every indication that she intended to do just that-Finch faced financial ruin, since the court could then apportion any percentage of the community property it deemed fit to the aggrieved party.

Despite overwhelming evidence in favor of conviction, a jury deadlocked, primarily because racial tension had pervaded the jury room.

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