

# Pipe Dreams

## The Massie Case: A Primer

*TIME Magazine called it “the case that had everything” and it lived up to its moniker—lurid accusations of sexual assault; a white military wife from a socially prominent family as victim and a “native gang” of young men as the alleged perpetrators; kidnapping, lynching and the famed attorney Clarence Darrow’s final appearance in the courtroom.*

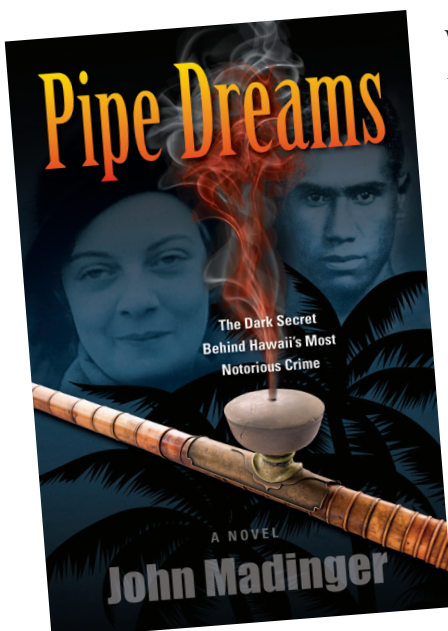
### WHO WERE THE MASSIES?

**Lieutenant Thomas Hedges Massie** was born in 1905 in Winchester, Kentucky. Known as Tommie, Massie wasn’t a particularly distinguished officer, though considered “very agreeable” by his fellows at the US Naval Academy. He married sixteen-year-old Thalia Fortescue in 1927, and upon his assignment to Submarine Squadron 4 at Pearl Harbor, the young couple moved to Hawaii. **Grace Thalia Bell Fortescue Massie** was the eldest of three daughters, born to a high-society East Coast family related to Alexander Graham Bell and President Theodore Roosevelt. Known as Thalia, she was a wild and impetuous young woman and her early marriage to Tommie did nothing to settle her. The couple had a tempestuous relationship with volatile results as they socialized with the party set among the other Navy officers stationed in the Islands.

### WHAT WERE THE EVENTS THAT TOOK PLACE?

In the early morning hours of September 13, 1931, Thalia Massie told her husband, “Come home. Something awful has happened.” The two had been carousing with other Navy couples in Waikiki when Thalia left the group after an argument. Tommie, accustomed to Thalia’s temper, assumed she had gone home and went on to the next party spot without her. When the drunken lieutenant reunited with his wife, who was battered and bloody, she had a chilling tale to tell: She had been gang-raped by a group of four “Hawaiian men.” Tommie phoned Honolulu police, who subsequently arrested five local men. Thalia identified two of them as her assailants. Between the demands of the Massies and the Navy for justice, and the arrival of Thalia’s mother, Grace Fortescue, who brought with her an outsized—and extremely unpleasant—sense of social and racial superiority, the situation quickly spiraled out of control. On one side, the US military and the *haole* (white) social, financial and political elite of the Islands and on the other, the mostly non-white immigrant and native Hawaiian working-class population.

When Thalia’s assault case ended with a deadlocked jury and a mistrial, her mother was enraged. Tommie, Grace insisted, needed to stand up for the honor of his family. As a result of Grace and Tommie’s scheming, two of the Ala Moana Boys, as the local defendants were known, were kidnapped and beaten, and one, Joseph Kahahawai, was shot dead. Grace, Tommie and two of Tommie’s Navy buddies were put on trial for murder. A Fortescue family friend arranged for famed lawyer Clarence Darrow to come out of retirement to defend the group. The affair was dubbed “the trial of the century” for its sordid details, racially charged atmosphere and the question at the heart of the matter: Had Thalia been telling the truth about what had happened to her that September night? And, if she hadn’t, what *did* happen to Thalia Massie?



**A half-century after the case closed, a federal agent with first-hand knowledge of the crime shared his own tale with author JOHN MADINGER, providing the inspiration for PIPE DREAMS—an intriguing novel with a new twist on the case that changed Hawaii forever.**

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