

Tip Sheet

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“The Divorce Seekers is the best book yet about Nevada’s famous dude-divorce ranch business.”

*—Nevada Historical Society,
Reno*

7 Terms for a Reno Divorce

In the 1930s and '40s, publicity about the Reno divorce generated its own jargon.

Tiburon, CA, January 2009—In the 1930s, '40s and '50s, Reno, Nevada was known as the “Divorce Capital of the World” and the place to go when you wanted to get unhitched fast.

The birth of the Reno divorce colony can be traced back to its first celebrity divorce case in 1906 when Mrs. William Ellis Corey, wife of the president of U.S. Steel, came to Reno to get a divorce. Mrs. Corey had to reside in Reno for six months. The case was widely publicized and brought national and international attention to Reno.

In 1931, the Nevada Legislature shortened the residency requirement for a divorce to six weeks and the divorce floodgates opened. Soon Reno became known as a “Divorce Mecca.”

Publicity about the Reno divorce generated its own jargon. Here are seven popular terms:

- **Divorce Seekers:** A term coined by the media to describe the thousands of women and men who flocked to Reno in the 1930s, '40s and '50s for a “quickie” six week divorce.
- **“Quickie” divorce:** A divorce granted in Reno after establishing a Nevada residency in just six weeks. It was a well-known fact that many divorcés, after having sworn in court that they planned to reside in Nevada, boarded planes and headed straight back home.
- **Reno-vated:** A term coined by Walter Winchell for the change that divorce seekers went through while in Reno for six weeks. Variations: **Get Reno-vated; Reno-vation.**
- **The Cure:** The six weeks spent in Reno to get a divorce.
- **Divorce Ranch:** A uniquely Nevada term used by the national media during the “quickie” divorce era for a dude ranch outside of Reno.
- **Divorce Seekers Special:** Any train bringing clients (i.e., divorce seekers) to Reno.
- **The Spare:** A euphemistic term for the man – or woman – the plaintiff brought with them to keep them company during their six weeks in Reno. Some divorce seekers, ready to get on with life, tied the knot with their “spares,” or spouses-in-waiting, at a quick Reno wedding immediately following their six minutes in divorce court.

[From *The Divorce Seekers: A Photo Memoir of a Nevada Dude Wrangler* by William L. and Sandra McGee, (BMC Publications, 2004, \$49.95). Available from www.BMCpublications.com or Amazon.com.