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Norris: A Casebook of Complete Criminal Trials

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A CASEBOOK OF COMPLETE CRIMINAL TRIALS. By *Harold Norris*. Detroit: Citation Press. 1965. Pp. 1073. \$15.00.

In this hefty volume, Professor Norris succeeds admirably in bridging the gap between courtroom and classroom. This book, which is designed to supplement a casebook on criminal law, is essentially an expert selection of nine criminal cases ranging from the simplest misdemeanor of drunken driving to first degree murder. In between there are a forcible rape case, a manslaughter by motor vehicle case, two species of larceny, an armed robbery, a conspiracy, and a narcotics case. In each case, there is a complete trial record beginning with the opening statements of counsel, direct and cross-examination, arguments as to admissibility, final arguments of counsel, and instructions to the jury. In addition, the author presents appellate court opinions in two of the cases demonstrating implicitly the difference between the approach of the trial court and of the appellate court.

It would seem that Professor Norris' premise in bridging the gap between classroom and courtroom is unassailable. "It is at trial," he states, "that the law is genuinely in action. The trial is the natural habitat of the law. It is the trial that is the subject matter of analysis, analysis that shapes effective advocacy." Few will doubt the value of the work of the professors and text writers who restate and synthesize the law, or of the appellate courts which do so much to shape the policies which inhere in rules of law. However, the usefulness of law, insofar as the "consumer of the law" is concerned—to use the late Professor Edmond Cahn's phrase—is determined largely in the trial court. Even the office lawyer and the abstract searcher know that the acid test of every legal instrument is not its length nor its symmetry but how it will stand up in court.

How well has Professor Norris succeeded in bridging this gap between classroom and courtroom? It might be said that the sheer bulk of nine complete cases, together with the addenda, would make this book impractical for day-to-day law school use. It might even be said that at least some of the inanities of both prosecution and defense could well be edited out. But the general usefulness of this all-inclusive volume outweighs any other consideration. It is filled with the realities of the law, and is a marvelous teaching tool. The law comes to life in this volume. Some great legal arguments are presented in several of the cases, and there are some superb examples of direct and cross-examination. As much as anything, however, it is an encyclopedic collection of impromptu examples of what not to do in the trial of a criminal case.

It should be a welcome addition not only in the law schools but also in the offices of lawyers. Perhaps the only possibly helpful thing left out is the author's marginal comments about the various practices, both good and bad, demonstrated in this huge slice of legal life. And if the opinions of several young lawyers now serving as clerks to judges with whom I am acquainted have significance, then this volume is long overdue.

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