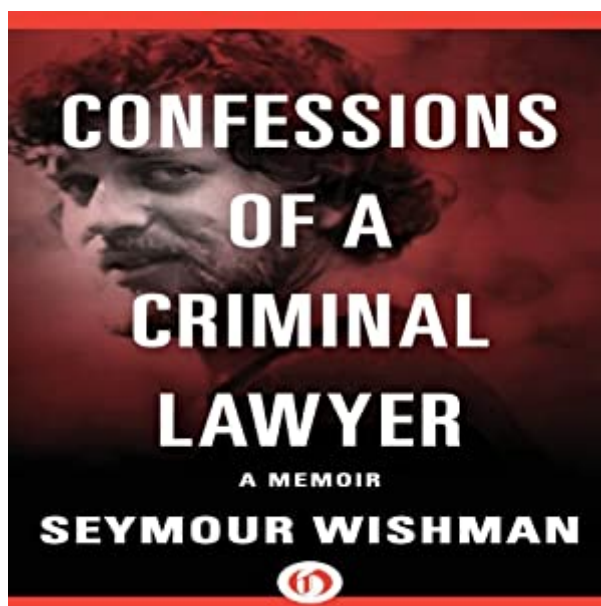


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Confessions Of A Criminal Lawyer: A Memoir



Synopsis

A successful former defense attorney exposes the raw truth about the courtroom "game" and a career spent defending the guilty. As an advocate for the accused in Newark, New Jersey, criminal lawyer Seymour Wishman defended a vast array of clients, from burglars and thieves to rapists and murderers. Many of them were poor and undereducated, and nearly all of them were guilty. But it was not Wishman's duty to pass moral judgment on those he represented. His job was to convince a jury to set his clients free or, at the very least, to impose the most lenient punishment permissible by law. And he was very good at his job. Reveling in the adrenaline rush of "winning," Wishman gave no thought to the ethical considerations of his daily dealings . . . until he was confronted on the street by a rape victim he had humiliated in the courtroom. A fascinating, no-holds-barred memoir of his years spent as "attorney for the damned," Wishman's *Confessions of a Criminal Lawyer* is a startling and important work - an eye-opening, thought-provoking examination of how the justice system works and how it should work - by an attorney who both defended and prosecuted those accused of the most horrific crimes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Thought-provoking look at the criminal justice system by a criminal lawyer. A different take on the law by a lawyer who seems to have more self-awareness and empathy than most of his cohorts. Interesting how his feelings evolved over time.

Seymour Wishman was a criminal defense attorney in Newark, New Jersey, for many years. A committed liberal, Wishman defended many people who were accused of the worst crimes imaginable. Wishman told himself that everyone deserved an excellent defense so that society would not punish innocent people. Eventually, however, Wishman began to feel that he was being dishonest with himself about the role that he played in putting criminals back on the streets. *Confessions of a Criminal Lawyer* is an excellent account of Wishman's career as an "attorney for the damned." Wishman spends much of the book discussing his views of how the criminal justice should work - and how it works in practice. Wishman seems burned out by his job and he goes into a lot detail about how practicing criminal law bruised his psyche. Though Wishman's philosophical musings are interesting, I suspect that most readers will find that the book is most entertaining when Wishman recounts his cases. He defends a schizophrenic robber in front of a biased judge. Wishman encounters an angry rape victim in a Newark hospital; Wishman had defended the woman's attacker by stating that she had consensual sex with his client and got mad only because the client refused to pay her. There are a few drawbacks to the book. I thought that Wishman should have provided a bit more detail on the resolution of some of his cases. Also, Wishman does have a tendency to stray too far from criminal law in some of his discussions. I have always had a fascination with criminals and the law. *Confessions of a Criminal Lawyer* helped me understand what it might like to work around criminals on a daily basis. I highly recommend this informative, entertaining book.

This is the sort of book that surprises you as you read it. It is tightly edited but at first seems rather pedestrian. There is the pall of gloom and depression that one would expect from a criminal lawyer's tales of prosecuting and defending clients in Newark, New Jersey. Yet as the pages go by the book gains in power and effect. It's a dirty business, unfair, but one that has to be done and in the end one that we are doing as best we can, perhaps. Seymour is a card-carrying, bleeding-heart liberal who visited the Soviet Union as a college student in a friendship program in the sixties, a Jew whose father walked halfway across Eastern Europe to immigrate to the US, a man who gets a lot of personal satisfaction from defending the underdogs of society. One of the surprises in the book is how much he reveals about himself that is not positive. Yet he does manage to bottom line it that he is a good guy.

This is a book that it is easy to underestimate. I came to it through following a citation in a law review article. At first I thought it was little more than a run-of-the-mill account of how criminal

defense lawyers set about their job. I was a little uncomfortable about the Damascene conversion that Wishman claims followed a confrontation with "Mrs Lewis", a rape victim that he had bruisingly cross-examined. In my experience lawyers, and I include myself among them, are not given to navel gazing, self-doubts and bouts of introspection. However, by the end of the book Wishman had won me over. The book operates very much on two levels. One is aimed at a broad lay readership and deals with the FAQs that lay persons put to criminal defense lawyers. Wishman deals with these confidently and entertainingly - usually using war stories to illustrate his points. He does a good line in self-deprecation. I particularly liked the tale about the police officer with acute hearing that he uses to illustrate the old advice that you should never ask a question to which you do not know the answer. The second level is one that is really aimed at a professional readership. The subtext of the book is concerned with the ethical dimensions of zealous advocacy. Wishman is all too aware that Donald Schon's "Reflective Practitioner" is more of an aspiration than a reality. He uses the device of his confrontation with Mrs Lewis as a starting point for examining what lawyers, whether for the defense or prosecution, should be doing and how much responsibility they should accept for their behavior in the courtroom. Practitioners who have spent any significant amount of time in the courtroom will recognize many of the dilemmas Wishman discusses - and perhaps will be encouraged to reflect on their role and performance in the way that Schon proposed. All in all, an easy and enlightening read for both laymen and lawyers.

This book is at the same time entertaining and insightful. I am a paralegal student and I am currently taking a criminal law class. This book is a nice companion to the textbook, because it offers real life stories and the author does a great job explaining his feelings, reasonings, and the technicalities of his job. I enjoyed reading about his cases, and also his explanations of ethical behavior for lawyers. The public likes to view a criminal lawyer as someone who puts criminals back on the street, and I found it interesting to read about his feelings about the subject. I have attended a seminar by a local criminal lawyer, and he touched on many similar reasonings as the author. This book can be read by someone who just wants to hear anecdotes about cases, but also offers food for thought for those who want to dig deeper. Copy provided by NetGalley

Mr Wishman shares his observations and insight on the cynicism that one gets from working in criminal law. seminars offered to professionals on both sides of a case attempt to tell and teach what the author shares from his experiences. this is a great book for people who are considering a legal career or for those who are close to someone in criminal law. Mr. Wiseman very candidly

shares his experiences, giving a realistic view into a career in criminal law.

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