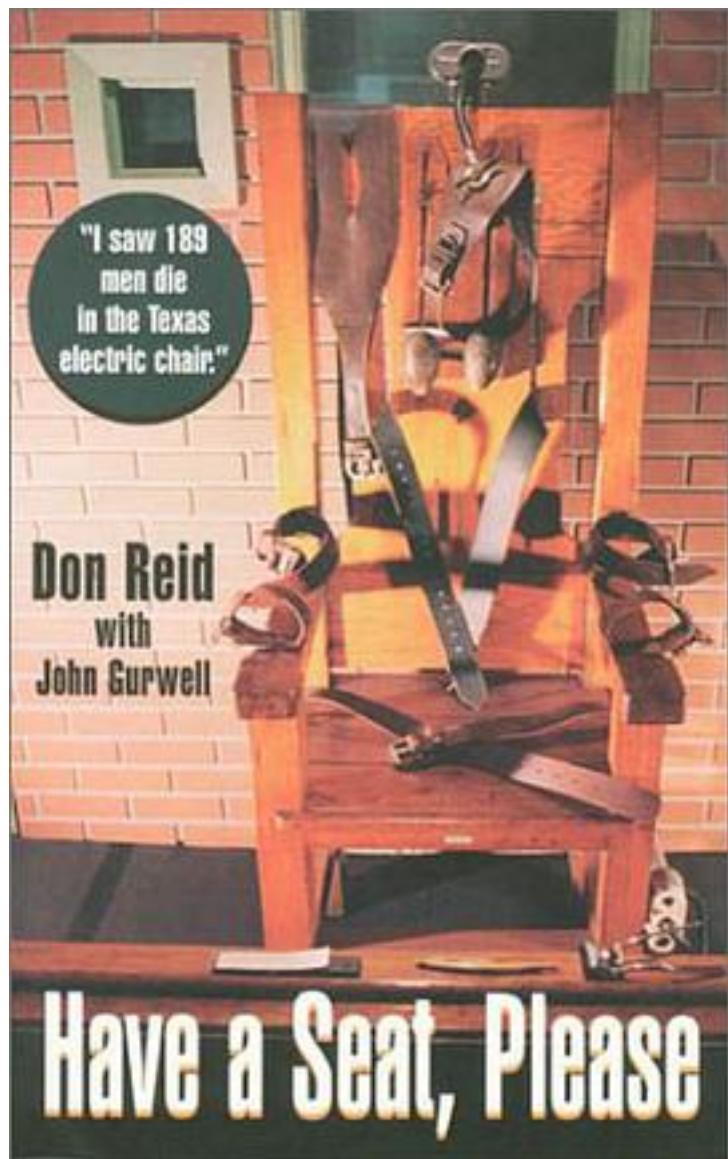


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著者:Gurwell, John

出版者:Texas A & M Univ Pr

出版时间:

装帧:Pap

isbn:9781881515333

"Don Reid", a cub reporter once wrote admiringly, "can see as much humanity in the messy murder of a shady lady as the coronation of a queen . . . ". Reid was a strong but gentle man, wise and compassionate, and his discerning eyes observed all the degradation and nobility mankind is heir to in his thirty-five years of covering the Texas prison system for the Huntsville Item and the Associated Press. For many years he was publisher of the Item and later in his life spent much of his time writing and making public speeches. Reid, who died in 1981, was survived by his widow, Frances. The late John Gurwell, who assisted Reid with the book, was a Houston writer whose daughter Kathy supported the reprinting of this book. "When Don Reid published *Eyewitness* in 1973, the chronicle of his conversion from a supporter of the death penalty to an ardent opponent, the book was an immediate sensation. Perhaps never before in the history of the American penal system has a man witnessed more electrocutions than Reid, who as Associated Press and Huntsville Item representative watched 189 men die in 'Old Sparky,' as the electric chair in the Texas Department of Corrections' death chamber was not so affectionately called. This book is a powerful personal account of Reid's conversations with many of the very men he later watched receive the eighteen hundred volts of electricity from generators reserved for electrocutions and his later, almost evangelical efforts to defend the men on Death Row from a similar fate.

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