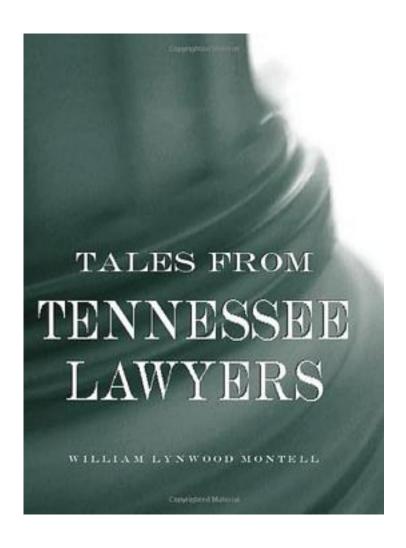
Tales from Tennessee Lawyers



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Perhaps no one has keener insight into human nature than the small-town trial lawyer. All but lost in an era of corporate law firms and specialized practice, this charismatic

figure was once at the political center of a community and was the holder of its many secrets. A small town attorney's only specialization was the town itself. Serving as both defender and accuser, these lawyers witnessed communities and individuals at their best and worst. Men and women of the legal profession often exert influence in seemingly small realms, but they play an important role in the lives of many people and help shape the American legal system. Veteran oral historian and folklorist William Lynwood Montell has brought together a fascinating collection of tales gathered from lawyers and judges throughout the Volunteer State. Montell searched small towns and cities across Tennessee for the law's older and middle age practitioners, and he shares the wealth of their experience in Tales from Tennessee Lawyers. These stories are recorded exactly as told by the lawyers themselves, and they reveal candid and unusual snapshots of the legal system -- both past and present. With a tape recorder and an ear for detail, Montell uncovers events and lives ranging from the commonplace to the extraordinary. A man resorts to prostitution to alleviate the debt brought about by divorce proceedings. Identical twin's are tried for a string of murders. A convict flees his trial by stealing the judge's car. A prosecutor tries the nation's first school-shooting case. Júdge George Balitsaris, a former University of Tennessee football player, escorts a special prosecutor out of a notorious rape trial as a precaution after the defendant's family issues threats. These and similar stories illustrate the strange, complex cases argued daily from Tennessee's largest cities to its smallest towns. Far more than just a collection of lawyer jokes, these recollections shed light on the tense and often dangerous lives of those who work to see that all receive fair representation and treatment in court.

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