

RECOLLECTIONS OF AN OCCASIONAL ATTORNEY

By Francis N. Iglehart

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REVIEWED BY

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Francis N. Iglehart's book *Recollections of an Occasional Attorney* is partly an autobiography and partly a historical description of the life of a prominent person in Baltimore County, Maryland over a period of 75 years. It's as delightful in some respects as it is disappointing in others. Please let me explain.

As a former practicing attorney, I knew "Ike," although not well. Somewhat liberal in his views, he belonged, for a time, to one of two factions warring for political control in the County. In an area where Democrats outnumbered Republicans back then, it was natural that Ike would gravitate toward other Democrats and become associated with Democrat causes. I, being one of the outnumbered Republicans, did not travel in the same circles, but we'd sometimes see each other in the hallowed halls of the old Towson Courthouse, or at a local restaurant at midday, and nod the greeting of those who recognize each other as fellow members of the Bar. He'd been practicing for 13 years when I began in 1965. His reputation as a very good lawyer was already established.

Born into wealth, and raised at Ivy Hill in Greenspring Valley, perhaps the most upscale residential area in the County, Ike was clearly a member of the privileged class. His education was, as you might expect, the best. The schools he attended, Gilman, St. Paul's Preparatory School in Concord, New Hampshire, Princeton (after his Army service) and the University of Maryland Law School, were those to which the wealthy sent their children. Why not? His parents could afford the best. Don't all parents want the best for their kids?

Reading this book, I was struck by similarities between Ike's life and that of William F. (Bill) Buckley, Jr., recognized as the builder, if not the founder, of the American conservative movement. Mr. Buckley, a prolific writer of many novels and a recent autobiography (*Nearer, My God: An Autobiography of Faith*, 1997), was born to wealthy parents, was raised in an upscale Connecticut home, and received the best education, including prep school and an Ivy League university. Like Buckley, Iglehart was introduced to yachting early, an interest that made a lasting impression and led, in later years, to racing and sailing on long cruises with family and friends to exotic ports in the Caribbean and elsewhere. Both men have lived long, fascinating lives.

Which leads me to what I found disappointing about Ike's book. Granted the work is entertaining and will certainly hold the interest of any reader, especially one who, like me, is familiar with many of the people about whom Ike writes. Judges Haile, Jennifer, Menchine, Proctor, Raines and Turnbull, were fine judges and good, honorable men. Haile, Jennifer and Menchine often appointed me to represent indigents accused of crimes, back in the days before the Public Defender. I'm sure they did that for, or to Ike, as well, and as this often became burdensome to a busy lawyer, I can remember

eventually trying not to be seen as I sat in the back of one of their courtrooms waiting for my case to be called; a tactic that seldom worked.

The cases Ike selected to describe are gripping. They contain all the elements of the fascinating work in which excellent lawyers are involved daily. Because of that, and because I'm a writer myself (*The China Connection*, 2003 and *Little Sister Lost*, 2004), I came away wishing that Ike had read Quentin Reynolds's *Courtroom*, Darrow's *Verdicts out of Court*, *My Life in Court*, by Louis Nizer, or Philip Friedman's *Inadmissible Evidence* or *Reasonable Doubt*, before venturing to write.

His descriptions of his cases are too short and leave me, the reader, unsatisfied, wishing to learn more. Who exactly are these clients? How did they react to the legal scene unfolding around them? What of Ike's case preparation, including the investigatory stage, discovery process (interrogatories and depositions), motion hearings, jury selection, and of course, the trial. Often of interest to a reader is what became of a client after the case was concluded. But perhaps the most important thing a reader wants to know is how he himself felt, as he represented these people and handled their litigation.

True, Ike seems to have the storyteller's gift, and his dry wit and humility come through clearly. But he has not used these attributes well or often enough, preferring instead, brevity. He has a good command of the English language, though not Buckley's great literary powers. But who does?

Having said all that, I recommend the book, especially to those readers in Baltimore County, Maryland who may know or have known those about whom the author has written. His friends and his large family will be interested in the genealogy he has included as Chapter 1, tracing both paternal and maternal lines.

Rating it? I'll give it a 4 for holding my interest, while wishing that Ike had taken more time to learn the craft well or had hired the services of a ghost writer to help. Either could have transformed a good book into a great one.