

■ *Book Reviews, continued from page 53*

pense to the lawyers and firms involved.

For firms wanting to establish community service programs or to set up *pro bono* projects, this book is an indispensable guide. There may come a time when no government-funded legal services programs exist, or when they will be so limited in scope that they can no longer vigorously represent clients in cases that involve important legal and social issues. It would be greatly to our credit as lawyers if we established a strong alternative, one that is free from political whims and the vicissitudes of government funding. The ABA's Law Firm Pro Bono Project and the Law Firm Pro Bono Challenge may provide us with that alternative.

What remains unanswered is whether the choice of *pro bono* projects undertaken by large law firms will be influenced by the firms' clients. Can we expect lawyers to bring major consumer, employment, or environmental actions that would have an adverse effect on large corporate clients? This question is not addressed directly in *The Law Firm and the Public Good*. If the ABA's challenge is taken up by the firms, problems of this nature will surely arise.

We all have an interest in achieving a healthy society, and equal access to justice is an essential component of one. The Governance Institute and the Brookings Institution have done a valuable public service to the profession by publishing this book. The proposals it contains are not likely to make headlines, but they can revitalize and revolutionize our system of justice. One can only hope that the current leaner and meaner legal climate, in which the bottom line looms ever larger, will not doom this worthy project. ■

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■ *On Appeal: Courts, Lawyering, and Judging, by Frank M. Coffin; W.W. Norton & Company, New York, NY, 1994. 373 pages, \$27.50 (hardcover), \$12.95 (paperback).*

Reviewed by Marie Morris

Reading *On Appeal* is like attending a series of law school or political science lectures by a knowledgeable and frequently entertaining professor. Frank M. Coffin, a senior appellate judge with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the First Circuit, covers a variety of topics relating to appellate courts and appellate practices. Like most professors, Coffin is at his best when he is dealing with personal experience. The chapters on his "chambers family," his reflections on how he reads briefs, what he likes and dislikes in briefs and oral arguments, and how he works with his law clerks, are outstanding. They are informative and engaging, and the reader feels as if he or she has been admitted to the author's confidence. Any law student applying for a clerkship with Judge Coffin would be well-advised to read the book.

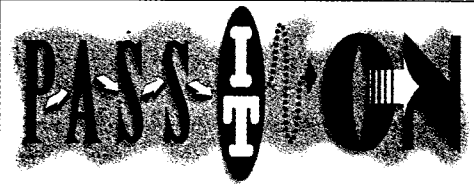
Expertly handled, interesting, but not nearly as engaging, are chapters on appellate law today, the federal-state court system, and the brief appendix on the appellate idea in ancient and medieval world history. Most frustrating are the chapters on judging appeals. Here Coffin veils his personal opinions and observations in an analysis of the theoretical and philosophical concerns brought to bear in deciding appeals. In the weightier topics he addresses in these chapters, his heavier prose keeps the reader at a distance. Although Coffin

discusses several First Circuit cases that were reversed by the Supreme Court, he reveals nothing that the reader could not have learned by reading the cases themselves; e.g., the First Circuit was more protective of individual rights than was the Supreme Court. The reader is left to infer how Judge Coffin reacts to these reversals. Does he stick to his convictions (no pun intended), or does he conform his analysis to that of the majority of the Supreme Court?

Douglas Coffin's light-hearted chapter illustrations are a real treat. Like a good speaker who wins over an audience with a few well-timed one-liners, Judge Coffin allows his son to win over the reader with warm-hearted cartoons of his chapter topics.

This is a book for students — students of political science, law students, and lay students interested in how our government works. I wish I had read *On Appeal* in law school. It would have humanized the authors of those impersonal opinions. ■

Marie Morris is a legislative attorney with the Congressional Research Service at the Library of Congress.



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