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Book Note

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BOOK NOTES

LAW OF DISPUTED AND FORGED DOCUMENTS. By J. Newton Baker.
Charlottesville, Virginia: The Michie Company, 1955. Pp. 560.

The author of this treatise is a nationally known expert in the field of forged or disputed documents, especially qualified on the subject by his vast personal experience and research. The book seems unnecessarily long and repetitious, but it is clear that the author's purpose was to exhaust the topic. A more complete work in the field of disputed or forged documents would scarcely be conceivable; each facet of the subject is treated in great detail. Topics discussed include the individuality of handwriting, alteration of documents, techniques of forgery, identification of type-writing, admissibility of expert testimony, and the mental and educational factors in identification. The scientific use of the microscope, ultraviolet light, chemical tests for ink composition, and direct, reflected and transmitted light photography are discussed, with particular reference to the introduction into court of exhibits thus obtained.

Perhaps the greatest value of this book to the lawyer lies in its discussion of the admissibility of expert testimony and the use of comparative techniques in the courtroom. These matters are discussed in great detail from a historical point of view. The statutes in every state relating to expert testimony are set out. The strict common law rules relating to the admissibility of such evidence are shown to have been replaced by a modern set of rules which permit expert comparison of disputed documents with genuine standards so as to determine the validity of the contested writing. Numerous cases dealing with the admission of such evidence, including the famous *Hauptmann* (Lindberg kidnapping) case, are discussed to show the value and the proper use of expert testimony.

Any attorney is likely to find this book of value in the introduction of evidence relating to contested writings and in the examination of documents to determine whether or not they are fraudulent. In the field of wills alone, the use of this book could prove invaluable.

Robert N. Best

TAX ASPECTS OF REAL ESTATE TRANSACTIONS. By Martin Atlas. Washington: Bureau of National Affairs, 1956. Pp. iv, 200. \$12.50.

Here is a valuable aid, not only to all lawyers, but also to all property owners. Mr. Atlas has conveniently outlined every conceivable real estate transaction and the tax consequences thereof, ranging from a simple sale to the calculation of depreciation. Each transaction is made the subject of a chapter; there are fourteen in number, while a fifteenth chapter is dedicated to tax-avoidance traps.

Since the Government is a partner in all transactions today, this book is a worth-while addition to any businessman's library. The problems of taxation are not simple and the tenuous distinctions noted by Mr. Atlas are not of his own making, but consist of necessary aspects of the Internal Revenue Code. The book is a practical one, there being no effort to moralize or to rationize the propriety of the situations, but rather to clearly state the tax outcome of certain transactions and the best way to deal with a problem.

One especially noteworthy feature of the book is the wealth of examples under each topic. The charts and diagrams also are very impressive, especially in the chapter concerning depreciation of real property. About the only criticism that could be leveled at the book would be its failure to note the particular section of the Internal Revenue Code which is applicable to the tax aspect under review.

John R. Vandervoort.

YOU MAY TAKE THE WITNESS. By Clinton Giddings Brown. Austin: University of Texas Press, 1955. Pp. 223. \$3.95.

Fifty years is a long time to practice before the bar of justice and of the few lawyers who may claim such a distinction, even fewer reduce their experiences to the printed word. Clinton Giddings Brown, a veteran of Texas courtroom battles for half a century, has reached back into the past and selected the most me-

morial of his experiences for presentation in this short, non-technical and easy-reading book.

Disclaiming any thesis and admittedly enlisting the catalyst of fiction on occasions, the author has created a framework within which he is free to present his experiences in a manner which is most entertaining and refreshing. Interspersed throughout the book are suggestions as to trial tactics which have been validated by the author's long experience in that field. Because these are presented in the form of friendly advice rather than pedantic instruction, the book preserves its non-textbook flavor. All in all, this is an enjoyable book and one which both lawyer and layman should find to be a pleasant and worthwhile evening's reading.

H. Wayne Wile.