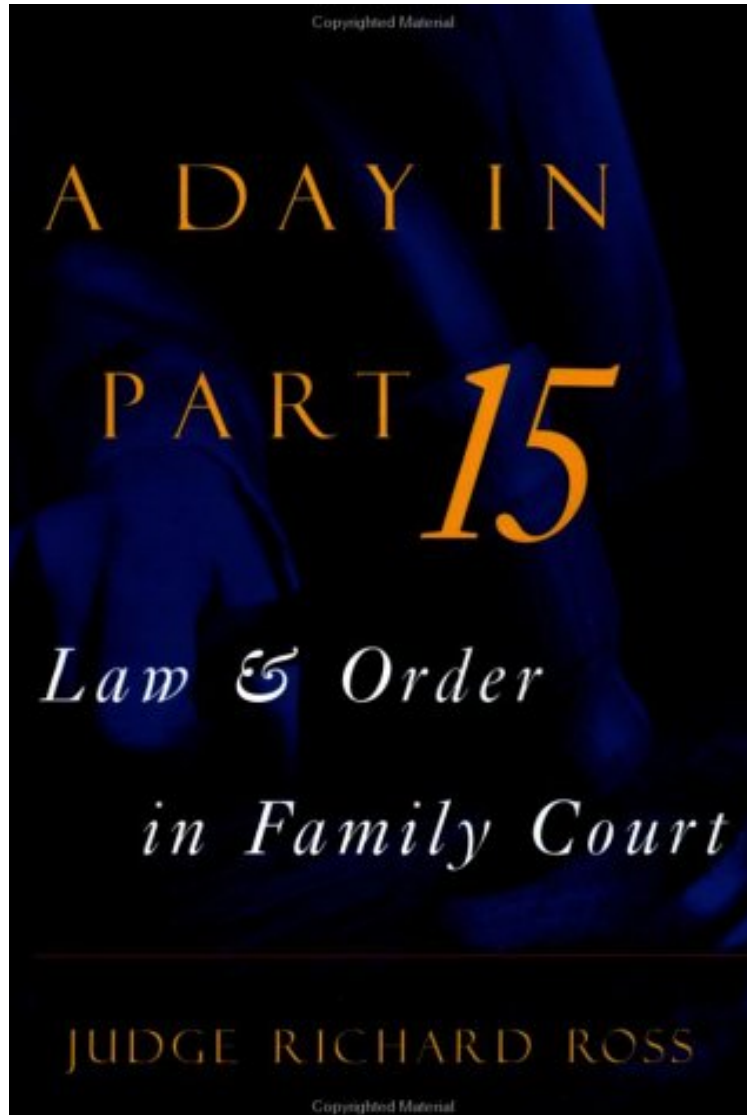


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## A Day in Part 15: Law and Order in Family Court

*Judge Richard Ross*

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**Judge Richard Ross : A Day in Part 15: Law and Order in Family Court** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised A Day in Part 15: Law and Order in Family Court:

A family court judge in the Bronx, New York, chronicles a typical day in the nation's busiest family court, offering a play-by-play description of the adoption, paternity, child abuse, and other cases that threaten to overwhelm the system. IP. "

From Library Journal Ross gives us here the judge's-eye view of the Bronx Family Court, the busiest in the country. From his first day on the bench in Part 15 (i.e., Courtroom 15) in 1991, he appears to have kept a diary of the domestic violence, child custody and visitation cases, child neglect and abuse, paternity, termination of parental rights, adoption, and juvenile delinquency proceedings he rules on?60 or more cases every day. Of the 47 court judges, Ross writes, "Mostly we're judging people's credibility all day and applying basic good human values within the legal standards." In addition to demonstrating this, Ross explains court arcana and terminology and shows the court's reliance on an efficient law clerk and court officers to keep the calendar moving. Unlike Edward Humes's *No Matter How Loud I Shout* (LJ 2/15/96), which attempted to give a complete view of the juvenile justice court, Ross confines his scope to what he intimately knows and sees and offers no nostrums for its future. For criminal justice collections. ?Janice Dunham, John Jay Coll. Lib., New York Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Kirkus sA Bronx Family Court judge recounts his first full day on the bench, improvising his way through 57 blood- and tear-stained cases. When Judge Ross ascended to the Family Court bench in 1991 at age 47, he left behind a successful career in court administration. Appointment to the bench would be, he thought, "the crown" of his career, but it proved to be eerily isolating, as he discovered while settling into his new courtroom (in New York judicial parlance, a "part"), a tiny, decrepit converted records storage room he dubs "Part 15." There's no honeymoon for Judge Ross: Within minutes of robing, he's dispensing instant justice to the "jammed-up lives" that come before his creaky bench, issuing temporary orders of protection from violent spouses, removing children from crack-infested homes, assessing allegations of pedophilia in nasty custody battles. The incessant parade of unhappy families leaves Ross scant time to reflect: "Decide and move on," he tells himself. Besides, "it's an imperfect world and you're an imperfect judge." Ross's complacent attitude may possibly save him from bench-burnout, but it makes for a shallow, rather pointless memoir. A few of his cases are particularly haunting, such as that of the eight-year-old girl sexually abused by her grandfather, and the case of the four-year old cerebral- palsy patient tortured by her adoptive parents, but all Ross offers in the way of jurisprudence is a tip of the hat to due process of law and a pledge to take abused children out of abusive homes: "The law requires it: end of story." The frequent use of civil- service jargon lends authenticity but also obfuscation. "Had justice been done? . . . I wasn't asking," writes Ross at the end of his day. And he still isn't. -- Copyright 1997, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.