



RULE 53

Capturing Hippies, Spies, Politicians, and Murderers in an American Courtroom

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The courthouse is the grand bazaar of American life.”

The Education of a Courtroom Artist Sketching, Eavesdropping, and Learning

Chicago, September, 1969—On the 23rd floor of the federal courthouse for the Northern District of Illinois, the trial of anti-war activists who came to be known as the Chicago Seven is underway. Artist Andy Austin, new to the city and not yet an official member of the press, works feverishly to capture subjective portraits of the fleeting moments cameras are barred from recording. Deputies confiscate her paper and pens.

A month later, with the media short an artist, Austin approaches local TV reporter Hugh Hill, tells him she can draw, and gets herself hired as a courtroom artist for ABC News.

“Because I came to love so much what I was doing, it didn’t seem like work,” she reflects. “The stories I heard as I drew fascinated and educated me. I learned that nearly everything that happens in a contemporary city ends up in court, that the courthouse is the grand bazaar of American life. What I heard and what I saw began to sketch in a portrait of the city I had come to love.”

In *Rule 53: Capturing Hippies, Spies, Politicians, and Murderers in an American Courtroom*, Austin shares the intensity of her experiences observing newsworthy judicial proceedings and illustrating the moments and faces that defined each drama. Through her eyes, the public could witness the American legal system in action. Through her compassion, wit, and insight, a record of the impact on human lives of each matter brought to trial becomes a rich serving of history that cameras alone can’t catch.

Rule 53’s vivid images include:

Chicago 7 defendant Bobby Seale, bound and gagged in the courtroom, in a famous Austin sketch that was picked up by the Associated Press and widely distributed.

Serial killer John Wayne Gacy, who obliged Austin with a smile for her sketch of him.

Harry Aleman, Ken Ito, John D’Arco, Frankie “the German” Scwheis, Joey “the Clown” Lombardo, Solly di Laurentis, and a roster of other alleged mobsters, whose depictions draw even more color from Austin’s detailed recollections of court testimony.

Members of the meta-gang El Rukns, whose alleged criminal activities included terrorist conspiracies.

Remembrances of Austin’s family, friends, and colleagues, including her son John, who was killed in a car accident, and the late Jim Gibbons, reporter and mentor to the artist.

An engaging memoir and firsthand account of how the drama of the courtroom stage really unfolds, *Rule 53* will delight history and true crime buffs, court watchers, *CSI* fans, and anyone fascinated by the nuances of character only an artist can capture.