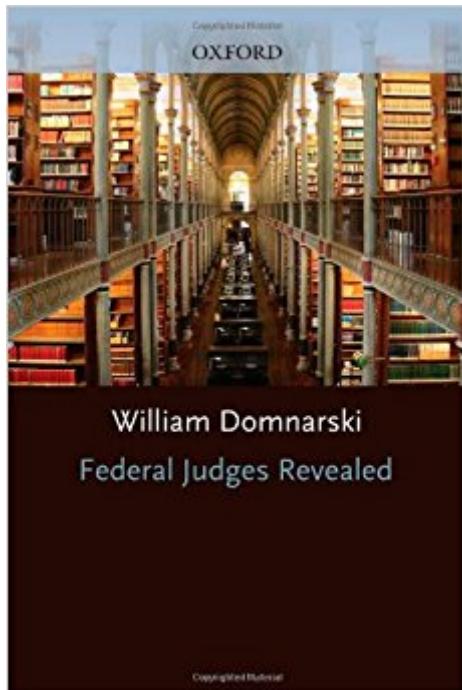


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# Federal Judges Revealed



## **Synopsis**

The power and influence of the federal judiciary has been widely discussed and understood. And while there have been a fair number of institutional studies-studies of individual district courts or courts of appeal--there have been very few studies of the judiciary that emphasize the judges themselves. Federal Judges Revealed considers approximately one hundred oral histories of Article Three judges, extracting the most important information, and organizing it around a series of presented topics such as "How judges write their opinions" and "What judges believe make a good lawyer."

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

"Federal Judges Revealed offers a captivating look inside the personal and professional lives of judges as well as insight into the workings of the federal judicial system as a whole. Domnarski has done the legal community a service by collecting this information and organizing it into a cohesive and readable whole." --Emily Judge, The Federal Lawyer "Federal Judges Revealed stands as a valuable addition to the literature on judges and judging. It provides a useful introduction to, and overview of, a previously overlooked resource for studying how a broad range of judges understand their role." --Chad M. Oldfather, Associate Professor, Marquette University Law School George Washington University Law Review

William Domnarski is an attorney in Riverside, California who practices exclusively in the federal

court system. He has written *In the Opinion of the Court* (University of Illinois Press, 1996) and *The Great Justices 1941-54: Black, Douglas, Frankfurter, and Jackson in Chambers* (University of Michigan Press, 2006).

Of all government officials, federal judges are the most private and shielded from public view. Yet, these holders of life-time appointments wield tremendous power to shape our lives. There are many studies of federal judges from a variety of perspectives, but this one is somewhat unique. The author, a practicing attorney in Riverside, California, has drawn his material from over 100 oral histories given in interviews with various local court historical groups. Such oral histories were encouraged at least as early as the bicentennial by national judicial officials, along with circuit and district court histories, as a commemorative device. The author's reliance on these oral histories means that the judges speak for themselves literally, and the interviews cover across the country. However, it must be noted that most of the interviewees were at senior or retirement status, so we are hearing from judges who were shaped by the 1950's through the 1980's or so. Moreover, these interviews were not a random sample (in the statistical sense), with the 9th and 7th Circuits most heavily represented. There are also a number of District of Columbia federal judges quoted as well, and I found this particularly interesting since I had appeared before several of them. And no Supreme Court Justices are included. Nonetheless, recognizing these limitations, the book is extremely informative and insightful. The author follows the general pattern of the interviews themselves. That is, he begins with the judges' early life, their education, clerkships, and legal practices. I found the chapter on judicial appointments extremely interesting because it well explores the nitty-gritty of how these judges (out of all the zillions of lawyers) managed to grab the golden ring of appointment. One can only read these accounts with amazement as to the different pathways and the role of luck in judicial selection. Also quite interesting is the chapter on transitioning to the bench. Further chapters focus on important topics such as the nature of the job (basically, one becomes a case manager with hustle); activities in chambers and interacting with other judges; and the drafting of judicial opinions (the judges generally strongly defend the role of clerks in cranking out opinions). Finally, the judges comment on good and bad practices of lawyers that appear before them--an eye opener for practicing lawyers I should think. The book runs 218 pages, and has a complete listing of all the oral histories that are quoted. Footnotes wonderfully appear at the base of the page, not in endnotes. The author has well arranged the material in chapters and subdivisions so it is quite easy to follow the development of the analysis. There is also an index. One of the many advantages of the book is that these judges speak with candor about

topics that otherwise we the public would never have access to. So, some important light is cast on this innermost sanctuary of our public officials.

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