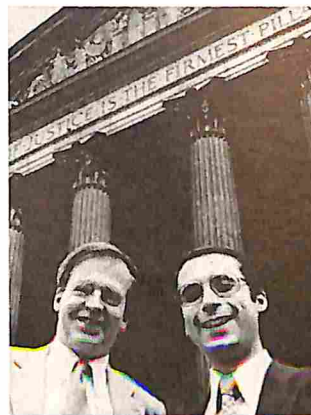


## A Letter from the Publisher

In spite of its flaws, the American judicial system remains a truly democratic institution, touching the lives of citizens in every walk of life—including journalists. For Reporter-Researcher Alain Sanders, who has a law degree from Columbia University Law School, the call to jury duty came at a particularly inopportune, if apt, moment. Sanders was called by both the New York State and federal courts while in the midst of checking this week's cover story on the U.S. jury system. A former New York City attorney, Sanders claimed an exemption on the grounds that he was actively engaged in reporting and researching the law, even though the exclusion clause technically applies only to practicing lawyers. Says Sanders: "I would love to have served, but as a lawyer and journalist I would probably never have been allowed to sit on a jury. If they accept my excuse—as it seems they have—I doubt I'll ever be asked again."

Washington Correspondent Evan Thomas found that his own background in law was a definite asset when interviewing lawyers and jurors in the capital. Thomas, who got his law degree from the University of Virginia and wrote TIME's Law section from 1978 to 1979, was struck as he observed a local murder trial by "how emotionally racking jury duty can be for those who serve. One woman juror on

the case burst into tears when it was all over." Correspondent Jay Branegan, who logged four years as a court reporter in Illinois before joining TIME in June, visited those at the other end of a jury's guilty verdict—convicts in some of the state's toughest prisons. Correspondent Barbara Dolan, who spoke with jurors, lawyers and judges at the New York Supreme Court in Manhattan, was impressed with jurors' commitment to justice: "With a few exceptions, they seem to work very hard, and most lawyers and judges seem to accept their verdicts. Nobody wants to think they have made a mistake."



Friedrich and Sanders

Senior Writer Otto Friedrich, who wrote the story, is also well acquainted with the workings of the law. Friedrich edited TIME's Law section from 1971 to 1973 and from 1975 to 1978, and wrote about politics and the law for last February's American Renewal issue. Says he: "Trial by jury is perhaps the only time when ordinary citizens are given the intimate details of a person's life—and then given the authority to make a binding judgment." Adds Sanders: "Most law cases are basically a matter of simple common sense. The truth is that most people can

make those common-sense judgments just as well as lawyers and judges."

*John A. Meyers*

## Index

Cover: Illustration by Jean-Michel Folon



**44**  
**Cover:** Three million innocent Americans are summoned to court every year to be interrogated, kept waiting, often sequestered. Jury service needs reform, but many victims find it a rewarding experience. See LAW.



**18**  
**Nation:** Reagan warns of "blood, sweat and tears" over new budget cuts. ▶ To taxpayers, a good harvest means bad news. ▶ Haig and Gromyko at the U.N. ▶ The Justice Department is Reagan's right arm of the law.



**68**  
**Big Fight:** Sugar Ray Leonard shows Tommy ("Hit Man") Hearns he can hit, man, though Hearns looks pretty sweet himself. When it's over, Leonard is the champ—and \$10 million richer. See SPORT.

**34**  
**World:** British politics are in turmoil, right and left. ▶ The Soviets talk tougher to the Poles. ▶ Costa Rica: paradise lost.

**58**  
**Religion** Egypt's Copts regroup after Sadat's crackdown and their patriarch's banishment. ▶ Pope John Paul exalts work.

**62**  
**Press** Major changes rock the networks as David Brinkley moves to ABC and nightly news shows may grow to one hour.

**63**  
**Education** Business grants to colleges swell research budgets—and bring headaches. ▶ A new weekly chronicles lower education.

**64**  
**Video** Every day 12 million viewers watch *General Hospital*, the most lascivious daytime show available without a prescription.

**65**  
**Environment** High in the Andes of Peru, archaeologists are putting an Inca canal system to use for the first time in 500 years.

**70**  
**Economy & Business** A new air-fare price war breaks out. ▶ France plans to nationalize its top 36 private banks. ▶ Brinkley beer.

**78**  
**Science** A book on future evolution describes odd creatures that may inherit the earth. ▶ The telltale jawbone of a "new" mammal.

**81**  
**Books** Why psychoanalysis is the impossible profession. ▶ A valedictory collection shows why Ogden Nash/ is worth the cash.

**87**  
**Cinema** *The Mystery of Oberwald*—Antonioni's excursion in technique. ▶ *Raggedy Man*—Spacek as a switchboard operator.

**93**  
**Essay** There will be hazards ahead for all if the New Right succeeds in its multibill attack on the authority of federal courts.

**6 Letters**  
**16 American Scene**  
**67 People**  
**79 Medicine**  
**94 Milestones**

TIME (ISSN 0040-781X) is published weekly at the subscription price of \$36 per year, by Time Inc., 3435 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90010. Principal office: Rockefeller Center, New York, N.Y. 10020. J. Richard Munro, President; J. Winston Fowlkes, Treasurer; Charles B. Bear, Secretary. Second class postage paid at Los Angeles, CA, and at additional mailing offices. Vol. 118 No. 13. © 1981 Time Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part without written permission is prohibited. TIME and the Red Border Design are protected through trademark registration in the United States and in the foreign countries where TIME magazine circulates. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to TIME, Time/Life Building, 541 N. Fairbanks Court, Chicago, Ill. 60611. □□□□□

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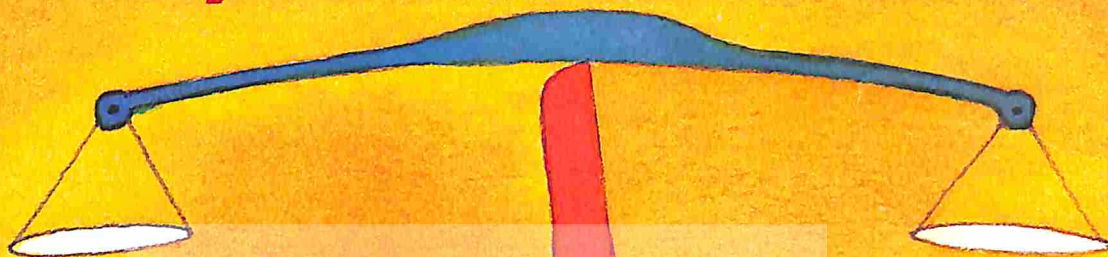
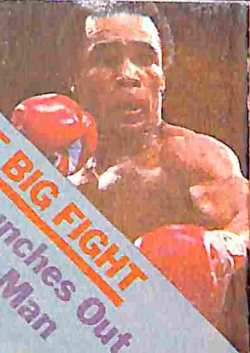
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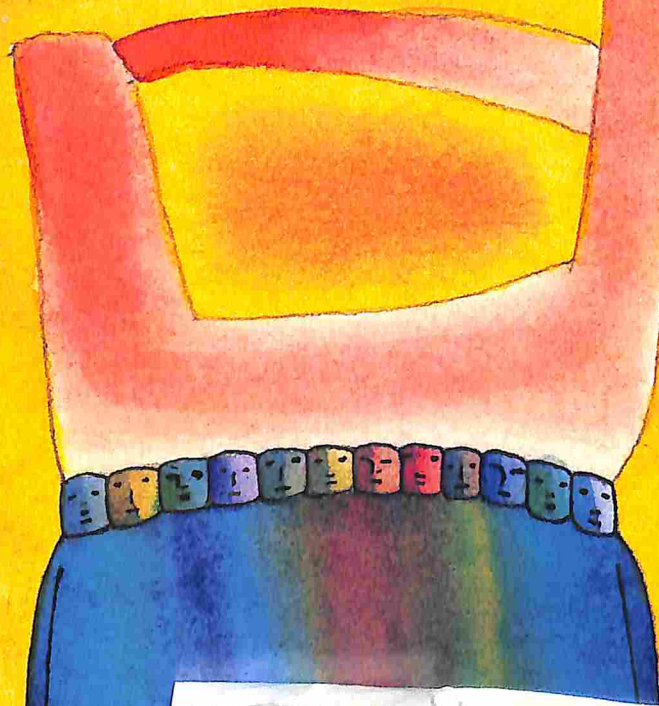
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