

Character Assassination



by
Amos Arthur Holmes

I feel a deep sympathy for any citizen who becomes involved in jury trials. There just isn't any way your wisdom, or even your innocence, is going to counteract a trial lawyer's expertise. You can enter a courtroom absolutely guiltless and when that trial lawyer gets finished with you, the entire world looks upon you as a vile, criminally-insane rogue.

I'd like to tell you about what happened to me last spring.

I do not have a green thumb. If I place a healthy seed into the most fertile soil, that seed will never germinate. Rains will wash it away, miles will eat it, or some strange, foreign fungus will destroy it. I have planted garden after garden and achieved failure after failure. But this past spring I was delighted when I planted an acre of radish seeds and every single one of those buggers emerged from the ground. I stood in awe at this agricultural miracle and could hardly wait for harvest time.

And then, one day, my neighbor got drunk and rode his horse all over my property. While this inebriated fool cackled in debauched glee his horse proceeded to destroy every single

radish in my garden. I sued my neighbor for damages and a trial date was set.

On the day of the trial I sat in the courtroom with my lawyer beside me. My spirits were high because there was no way I could lose this case. The judge looked very friendly and several of the jurors smiled at me. Everything went fine until the defense lawyer said, "I would like to call Amos Arthur Holmes to the stand." My lawyer whispered, "He's going to make you look bad if he can... so just tell the truth and you'll have nothing to worry about."

When I had taken the oath, the lawyer for the defense smiled at me. Then he said, "Mr. Holmes, would you say that you are a good citizen, a dedicated Christian, and a faithful husband?"

"Well," I started, "I feel that..."

"JUST ANSWER THE QUESTION YES OR NO," the lawyer bellowed.

"Yes," I answered.

The judge beamed his approval and several jurors applauded. I could tell those people liked me and that the radish killer was going to be found guilty.

The defense lawyer, still smiling, said, "Isn't it true, Mr. Holmes, that on August 4th of last year you burned the Holy Bible?"

I remembered the incident. I was cooking steaks on my outdoor grill. I had taken my Bible out into the yard

because there was a passage I wanted to read to the family before we ate. My little granddaughter had bumped up against me and the Bible had accidentally fallen into the flames and was pretty well demolished before I could retrieve it.

This was easily explained, and so I said, "Well, you see... my little..."

"JUST ANSWER YES OR NO," thundered the defense lawyer, "DID YOU BURN A HOLY BIBLE IN YOUR YARD LAST AUGUST?"

"Yes," I said.

The judge's friendly smile changed to an expression of doubt. The jurors weren't beaming at me anymore but were shaking their heads in a very noticeable disgust.

"Now, Mr. Holmes, were you ever in a motel room with twenty women?"

The lawyer's question didn't excite me. This would be so easy to explain. It had all been quite innocent. Our church was being renovated and we had rented a large room in the motel where, for that one day, I taught a ladies Bible class.

"Well," I smiled, "Our church was..."

"JUST ANSWER YES OR NO," thundered the defense lawyer, "WERE YOU EVER IN A MOTEL ROOM WITH TWENTY WOMEN?"

"Yes," I said.

The judge was sneering at me and several of the jurors were hissing.

The defense lawyer looked at me in pity, and said, "Mr. Holmes, you have

stated that you burned the Holy Bible and that you once took twenty women to a motel room... now... were you ever arrested for being in an opium den?"

I smiled because this was very funny. I had gone to this house to pick up some mail that had inadvertently been left at the wrong address. While I was there the police had raided the place. Charges against me had been immediately dropped when I got to the police station.

"Well," I smiled, "That experience was..."

"JUST ANSWER YES OR NO," screamed the defense lawyer, "WERE YOU EVER ARRESTED FOR BEING IN A NOTORIOUS OPIUM DEN?"

"Yes," I answered.

The judge began spitting in my direction and several jurors jumped out of their box and began beating the hell out of me. The courtroom was complete bedlam. An old woman was pounding me over the head with her umbrella and the bailiff was kicking me in the face with his wooden leg.

When the courtroom was cleared, and I was lying there on the floor bleeding to death, my lawyer bent over me, and said, "Don't worry, Mr. Holmes, I think I can get us a retrial."

I fetched that last small twitch of strength from the confines of my need and punched him right square in his mouth.