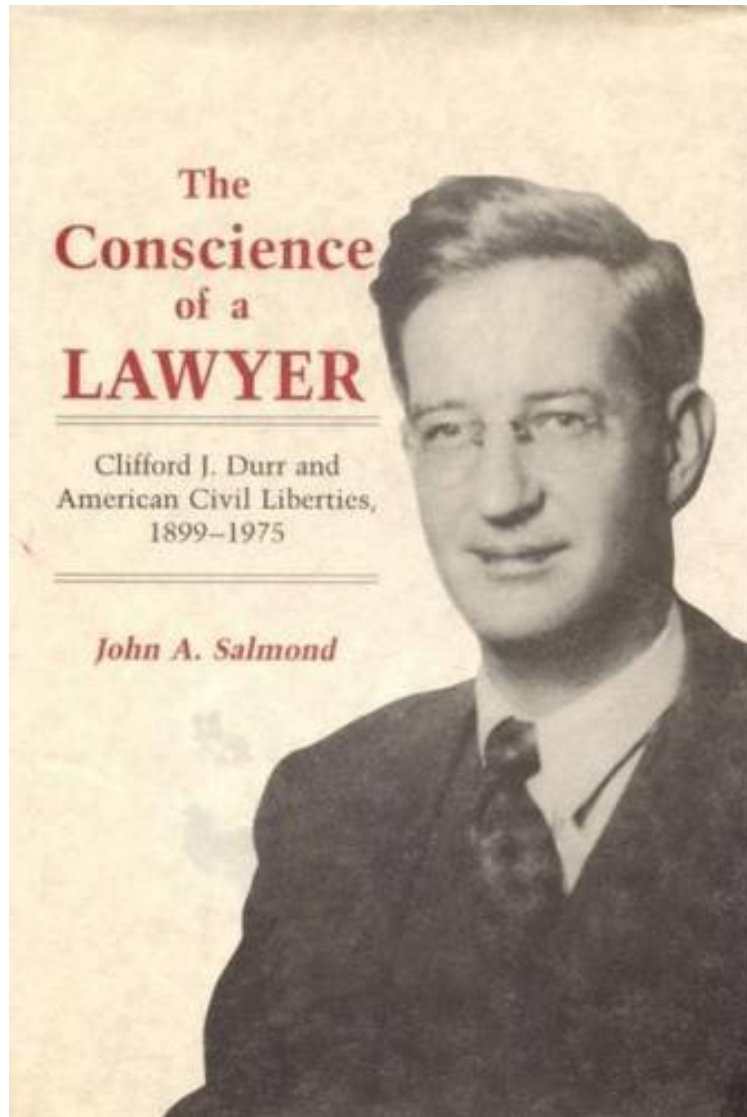


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The Conscience of a Lawyer: Clifford J. Durr and American Civil Liberties, 1899-1975

John A. Salmond

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John A. Salmond : The Conscience of a Lawyer: Clifford J. Durr and American Civil Liberties, 1899-1975
before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Conscience of a Lawyer: Clifford J. Durr and American Civil Liberties, 1899-1975:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A Great Hero Who Should be RediscoveredBy Florence Roisman Clifford Durr truly was a great hero of the struggle for civil liberties in the U.S., and for the struggle for civil

rights, which he considered only a part of the civil liberties battle. He stood up for important principles all through his career, and was punished for that in many ways. He fought the Truman "loyalty" program before McCarthyism became any kind of word, let alone a dirty one. He was the lawyer who went to get Rosa Parks out of jail (Fred Gray being out of town on that day). If Clifford Durr had not existed, the Montgomery Bus Boycott probably never would have occurred. He was a noble, indispensable man who deserves great honor. This book is a careful review of Clifford Durr's life. I recommend it, along with books about his remarkable wife, Virginia Foster Durr: "Outside the Magic Circle," her "autobiography"; the collection of her letters edited by Patricia Sullivan, and Patricia Sullivan's excellent book, *Days of Hope: Race and Democracy in the New Deal Era*.

Clifford Durrs uncompromising commitment to civil liberties and civic decency caused him often to take unpopular positions. Durr was born into a comfortable, upper-middle-class family in Montgomery, Alabama in 1899. He practiced law briefly in Montgomery, Milwaukee, and Birmingham, when at the urging of Hugo Black, his brother-in-law, he moved to Washington to work as a lawyer for the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, a creation of Roosevelt's new Democratic administration, and later to help found the Federal Communication Commission. While on the FCC he opposed bitterly J. Edgar Hoover's attempts to influence the granting of radio licenses for political reasons. As a lawyer in Washington, he found himself appearing on behalf of public servants and educators accused by the House Un-American Activities Committee of Communist leanings during the late 1940s and early 1950s. With his wife, Virginia, who shared his conviction that blacks should enjoy exactly the same rights as other American citizens, he assisted in the defense of Rosa Parks. The Durrs' life in Montgomery during the years of the civil rights revolution was often difficult, as the white South mounted its last defense of segregation.

This book is well-researched and provides much inside information about Washington in the New Deal era and about the New Deal itself. The experience of the Durrs during the McCarthy era attests to the horrors of that period. It also tells much about the plight of Southern moderates during the Civil Rights era. James C. Cobb, University of Tennessee-Knoxville