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The Legal Secretary's Complete Handbook (Bessie May Miller, 1953)

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For a broad treatment of a broad subject, Miss Miller has compiled in this volume a remarkable variety of materials and data concerning practical techniques for running a law office. From filing instructions to form of pleadings, the subject matter covered is uniformly pertinent and accurate. This book should enable a novice in the field to do an efficient job, and should provide a valuable reference manual for even the most experienced.

The primary objective of this volume, in the words of the author, is to describe: (1) what is expected of a secretary in a law office, (2) the training and effort necessary for a lawyer to build a worthwhile practice, (3) the organization and personnel of a law firm, (4) the physical aspects of a law office, and (5) the customary processing of a new matter when it is received by a firm. A detailed discussion of reminder systems, filing methods, contracts with clients, correspondence, and legal bookkeeping completes the first portion, entitled "Usual Duties in a Law Office." Succeeding parts deal with the preparation of legal instruments and documents, court functions and processes of litigation, specialized practice, and legal reference materials.

Much of the matter presented is similar in content to that covered by the usual office practice course offered by law schools to acquaint graduating law students with some of the techniques for plying their trade; for example, such conveniences as progress dockets and daily time sheets. The book might, therefore, serve as a guide for the young practitioner who lacks the advantage of such instruction or who has not completed a comparable apprenticeship in the profession. The approach of the author in explanatory discussions is never academic. Although her discussions usually cover the reasons for a particular suggestion or practice, her primary concern is to tell the reader what to do and how to do it, covering every situation likely to arise in the daily routine of a law office.

Dozens of examples and illustrations are included to simplify the preparation of affidavits and acknowledgements, notices and verifications, as well as forms to aid in the typing of wills, deeds, contracts, powers of attorney, and specimen pleadings. Recognizing that there is no great uniformity of practice in the various states, the author includes chapters covering court procedures and steps in litigation that are reasonably representative, at least from the point of view of one familiar with Florida law and practice; various charts and check lists
afford interesting comparisons with other jurisdictions also.

The concluding sections of the book provide a useful glossary of legal and Latin terms, although neither the glossary nor that part of the volume purporting to serve as a guide to legal bibliography is as extensive or complete as are other portions of the handbook. Compensating for this deficiency, however, the descriptions of specialized practice in corporate work, real estate, foreclosures, probate and estate administration, and commercial collections provide information about these areas of practice that is customarily gained only from long and first-hand experience. Indeed, such information is rarely included in practice manuals of any kind. Miss Miller is to be commended for an unprecedented job in collating aids and instructions peculiar to legal secretaryship.

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BOOKS NOTED

SUCCESSFUL HANDLING OF CASUALTY CLAIMS. By Patrick Magarick.

This volume from Prentice-Hall's Insurance Series is directed primarily toward aiding casualty claim investigators in their work. The author purports to outline the vital data one must know about law, claim techniques, and human psychology. He covers time-saving steps in investigation, what to look for and to include in statements, and what facts and statements are admissible in evidence. Many suggestions are included to help the claim adjuster or investigator eliminate errors and develop skill in his work.