

# At Brittany's, with the law

By Charles Lieurance  
Diversions

"The first thing we do, let's kill all the lawyers."

— II Henry VI, Shakespeare

It is late winter and the lawyers are out. Friday afternoon, they're having their BMWs parked, they're looking at their pocket watches, they're loosening the brass buckles on their silk-lined vests, tossing their cotton jackets over

their arms, hanging their long coats on the hooks at Brittany's — where the lawyers go to unwind, relax and network. It's happy hour and there's nothing in the world happier than a happy attorney.

Making jokes: "Why don't sharks bite lawyers?"

"Why?"

"Professional courtesy..."

The lawyers and those who make their living on the periphery of the

legal system (secretaries, court reporters, stenographers...) are packed into Brittany's... Brooks Brothers as far as the eye can see, weaving in and out of Brittany's Victorian elegance, whispering behind frosted glass and then bursting into laughter, leaning on large oak pillars, sitting in castellated booths. They're everywhere.

The judge bangs his mug on the bar like a gavel. Motion sustained. A couple of lawyers, one of each sex, motion to dismiss.

I'm standing in a far corner. I have an outstanding warrant out for my arrest for non-payment of a failure to disperse fine. Brittany's is no place for a wanted man. The thought crosses my mind that since the place is so packed it might be easy to pick one of the attorney's pockets and make enough to pay my fine. The thought quickly passes. I put on my dark glasses to go for another beer at the bar.

Somebody asks me: "Do you know why..."

"Professional courtesy," I answer.

The guy looks at me funny. He stuffs some popcorn in his mouth and turns his face into his mug of beer, mumbling out the side of his mouth: "Don't look like a lawyer..."

I sneak back to the corner. Some guy in cowboy boots drinking a bourbon has taken my corner. I veer off to another one. A waitress who can obviously smell I'm not a lawyer, asks me if I need anything from the menu I've had tucked under my arm since I came in.

"Shrimp in the shell..." She raises an eyebrow. "No shark on the menu." I shrug. She obviously hadn't heard the joke. Mostly I think she just wanted the menu back.

From my new corner I can actually see into some of the booths. The booths are nicer than some people's homes. The sandwiches being devoured are gorgeous, spilling over with condiments, meat rolled neatly on top of cheese, exotic buns.

I see a frustrated waitress wandering around aimlessly with a shrimp plate. She finally notices I'm back in my corner where I belong and heads for me.

"I thought maybe you'd found a seat," she said depositing the plate in my hands.

"Is there one?" She looks around desperately. "Doesn't look like it yet but I'll keep an eye out."

"Thanks." The shrimp is great like most shrimp. There are too few but then again there are always too few.

The talk is getting loud and when lawyers laugh they really laugh, all the way from their guts, a warbling roar of indefatigable drunken joviality.

I begin to get the feeling I often get when in the company of people I envy, abhor and just can't figure out, that I'm standing on the lunar surface and my space capsule has taken off without me.

On my way out I meet my friend from the bar still with his mouth full of popcorn.

"Why don't pit bulls bite lawyers?" I ask him.

He shakes his head dubiously: "That's not funny."

"No, friend, it's not," I say.

I get a sudden urge to turn myself in to the police here and now, but it passes.



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