

The People's Advocate: The Life and Legal History of America's Most Fearless Public Interest Lawyer

Daniel Sheehan

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"Fearless" is a word that not too many people can appreciate until they are faced with a situation that calls for an actual fearless act. And Daniel Sheehan, with the resources of government actively working against him, has been among US history's most fearless lawyers.

He was fearless from the beginning, when he first learned what the word "political" really meant. At age seventeen, he clashed with Senator Jacob Javitz over an appointment to the United States Air Force Academy. Instead, it went to the son of a major campaign contributor. This teenager would grow up to become a lawyer on some of the most politically hot cases in a generation: the Pentagon Papers, Watergate, Iran/Contra, among many others.

His memories are both fascinating and horrifying. Fascinating because Sheehan places you directly inside the halls of power, and horrifying for the same reason. "Look, Danny," one House investigator tells Sheehan, "if anyone is so ignorant that he doesn't know that the Central Intelligence Agency has been smuggling heroin from Southeast Asia through Cuba into the United States for decades to secretly finance first the Nationalist Chinese and later their covert operations in Southeast Asia, then that person is too ignorant to function effectively in Washington, D.C." At the same time, Sheehan is told, "Don't make the foolish mistake of trying to tell the American people about the secret history of the United States."

Sheehan resolved to do "everything I could to change that operating principle in Washington."

Beginning with the Pentagon Papers—a case that echoes into today's news over the people's right to know what the government is doing—Sheehan has fulfilled that promise to himself. This memoir takes us directly inside Sheehan's fearless mind.

HOWARD LOVY (Fall 2013)

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