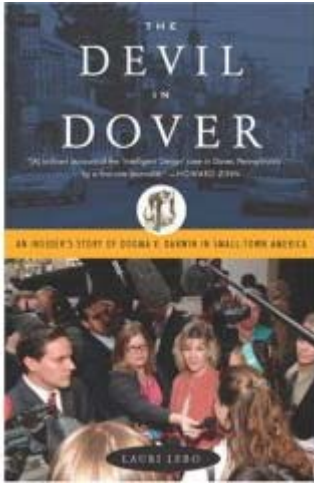


The Devil in Dover by Lauri Lebo

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Reviewed by Steph Campbell



The Devil in Dover is the remarkable tale of the commitment to the separation of church and state by a group of students, parents and teachers in Dover, Pennsylvania who refused to allow Intelligent Design in their school. The case is simply described. It begins with the Dover School Board voting to teach Intelligent Design in the 9th grade Biology class. Eleven parents, all of them religious, sued and were supported in their suit by legal teams from Americans United for Separation of Church and State, the ACLU and the Philadelphia law firm of Pepper Hamilton. The story ends with the entire School Board being replaced at an election just four days after the trial.

One of the wonders of this book is the author. A Dover reporter and daughter of a fundamentalist Christian who owns the local Christian radio station. As she reports the story, she becomes part of the story, as the family conflict plays out.

The sitting School Board felt no fear before Judge John Jones, Republican, appointed by George W. Bush. A major mistake. One of the many errors this School Board made was ignoring the judicial requirement of independence. Another was the multitude of lies and denials (perjury) they made in court testimony. And another was accusing the press of lying.

There are also surprises in the book. It becomes clear that while promoting Intelligent Design, the defendants were unable to define it. They simply hadn't done their homework. One of the more amazing assertions by the defense was that the curriculum change they made was so tiny that any constitutional violations could be ignored. Plaintiff attorney Eric Rothschild, a partner in the Philadelphia law firm, and a passionate believer in church state separation, pointed out that "there is no such thing as a little constitutional violation."

Five weeks after the trial ended Judge Jones filed his verdict: "Defendants' ID Policy violates the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States..."

When you read this book you will understand what evolution is about, what Intelligent Design is about, and why this fight must continue wherever it raises its head. You will admire the bravery of the teachers, parents and students. You will be grateful for a legal team and group of scientists who did an amazing job. If you care about this issue, this is the book to read.

You may be even inclined to follow Lauri Lebo's travels after the trial and new school board election but before the verdict. She went to creationist museums (described as boring) and the Dinosaur Valley State Park (described as enticing and amazing) and at the end of her trip she had a tattoo: the flying spaghetti monster. And then she went home.