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The Innocent Man by John Grisham, Dell 2007

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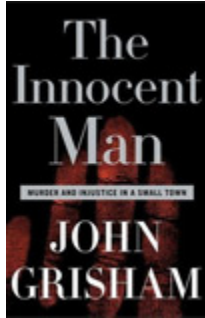
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Recommended Readings



The Innocent Man

by John Grisham, Dell 2007

Reviewed by Judi Morrel

Known for his fiction, John Grisham has written a compelling true crime tale that tells the harrowing story of Ron Williamson, a one-time big league baseball prospect from Oklahoma, who was wrongly convicted of murder and sentenced to death.

Ron, who idolized fellow Oklahoman Mickey Mantle, had his professional baseball dreams destroyed by a combination of drinking, drugs, and his own mental illness. His serious trouble with the law began, however, when he returned to Ada, his hometown. A cocktail waitress, Debra Carter, was horrifically murdered, and for several years the police investigation floundered. Murder was a rare event in Ada, and the police and prosecutor were under enormous pressure to find the killer.

Five years later in 1987 with literally no evidence, Ron and one of his drinking buddies, Dennis Fritz, were charged with the murder. Despite their adamant protestations of innocence, they were convicted in a mockery of a trial populated with lying witnesses, jailhouse snitches, arrogant prosecutors, inadequate defense attorneys, and suspiciously convenient "expert" witnesses.

Grisham's meticulously researched saga details Ron's excruciating stay on death row as he sank deeper into mental illness despite repeated pleas for help from him and from his family and appeal attorneys. Although Ron was exonerated in 1999 by DNA testing, his life was shattered while the real killer went free. If you believe in the principle of justice under the law, *The Innocent Man* is a cautionary tale that will shake your faith.

- Judi Morrel is associate professor of mathematics and associate dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Butler University.