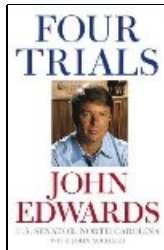


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Book Review
Four Trials
by [John Edwards](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
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When John Edwards was running for President, during the 2004 primaries, he was said to be the one candidate the Republicans were afraid of. As John Kerry's running mate, he added warmth and fire to a candidate who suffered from terminal earnestness. And when Kerry, in his earnest and statesmanlike way, conceded the election rather than wait for the evidence of electoral crimes to be uncovered in Ohio and elsewhere, Edwards was reportedly mad as hell.

John Edwards has made no secret that he's thinking about running again in 2008, and that's a good reason to revisit his memoir *Four Trials*. Though it says almost nothing about his career in the Senate, this account of Edwards' career as a litigator uncovers the roots of his passion for defending the underdog.

The first of the four cases covered in this book is that of E.G. Sawyer, who suffered brain damage when a doctor prescribed a high dose of Antabuse for his alcoholism. The second concerns Jennifer Campbell, who developed cerebral palsy when an old-fashioned doctor chose not to deliver her by C-section, despite her awkward position in the womb. The third is about Greg and Jane Howard, who were killed by a tired and reckless truck driver whose company paid him by the number of miles he could cover in twelve hours.

As terrible as these cases are, they are less dramatic than the case Edwards saves for last: that of Valerie Lakey, a five-year-old girl who went to play in a local wading pool one day in June 1993. When she sat down on the pool's poorly attached drain cover, the powerful suction of the drain trapped her there and pulled most of her intestines from her body. The girl survived, but with a colostomy bag and a "button" in her abdomen for intravenous feeding.

The case of Valerie Lakey arrived at Edwards' office shortly before his own son was killed in a car accident. Edwards could not return to work for several months, but when he did he attacked the case ferociously, and found a pattern of almost unbelievable corporate callousness. Other children had been killed or injured by the manufacturer's defective drain covers, he found, although the means to prevent it would have cost only a few cents per item. In the end, the company was ordered to pay \$25 million for its negligence.

Four Trials doesn't give a complete picture of what a John Edwards presidency would be like, but one thing is sure — it will not be one where the rich and powerful, and the interests of corporations, take priority over the lives of ordinary people.

About the Reviewer

Geoff Wisner is a freelance writer and staff member of IndigoCafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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