

Oral History of
JUSTICE JESSE W. CARTER

EDITOR'S NOTE

The oral history of Justice Carter was recorded in five interviews in the spring and summer of 1955 during his tenure as a member of the California Supreme Court. The interviews were conducted by Corinne L. Gilb, PhD (1925-2003), founding director of the Regional Cultural History Project (later, Regional Oral History Office — ROHO) at UC Berkeley. In Gilb's introduction to the original transcription, she indicated that Justice Carter was interviewed in his chambers in San Francisco on April 14 and 27, May 19, and June 6 and 27, 1955. Thereafter, Justice Carter supplied a number of exhibits to document subjects he had discussed, which approximately doubled the length of the transcription. The oral history itself is presented here in its entirety, but for reasons of space, only a few of the most notable exhibits have been included.

The oral history has been reedited for publication. Citations have been verified or provided. A few of the section headings added by the interviewer have been modified. Notations in [square brackets] have been provided by the editor. The oral history and exhibits are reprinted by permission of The Bancroft Library at UC Berkeley. The original transcription may be viewed at the Library or online at http://bancroft.berkeley.edu/ROHO/collections/subjectarea/law/ca_supremecourt.html.

The Table of Contents of the oral history also serves as a concise biography of Justice Carter. For a personal remembrance of Justice Carter, see Daniel S. Carlton, "In Memoriam — Jesse W. Carter: He Died As He Lived — Fighting," *Hastings Law Journal* 10:4 (May 1959) 353-359. In the companion article by Leon Green, "He Never Declined to Do Battle for His Convictions," *Ibid.*, 360-369, the author examines the contribution of Justice Carter's opinions and dissents to the field of tort law. Additional biographical information may be found in the following articles: Corinne Lathrop Gilb, "Justice Jesse W. Carter, An American Individualist," *The Pacific Historical Review* 29:2 (May 1960), 145-157; and J. Edward Johnson, "Jesse W. Carter," in *Justices of California, vol. II: 1900-1950* (San Francisco: Bancroft-Whitney Co., 1966), 161-169.

Jesse Carter's advocacy for farmers' water rights, during his earlier legal practice, is the subject of a new article by historian Douglas R. Littlefield for this issue of *California Legal History*, to be found immediately following the oral history.

A significant collection of Justice Carter's papers is available in the Law Library of Golden Gate University in San Francisco. Information about the collection is available at <http://www.ggu.edu/lawlibrary/jesseccarter>.

Photographs credited to "J. Scott Carter" are courtesy of Jesse Scott Carter, son of Harlan Carter, and grandson of Justice Jesse W. Carter. He is a retired instructor of history at Shasta College and former mayor of Redding, California.

Photographs credited to "Scott H. Carter" are courtesy of Scott Henry Carter, Esq., of Napa, California, from the collection of his father, John H. Carter, son of Henry Carter (brother to Jesse W. Carter).

—SELMA MOIDEL SMITH