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Biography of Jesse Carter

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BIOGRAPHY OF JESSE WASHINGTON CARTER

JESSE WASHINGTON CARTER, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of California, was born December 19, 1888, on a farm in Trinity County, California, and was the seventh child in a family of eight children; his father, Asa Manning Carter, was born in Kentucky in 1844 and came to California in 1866; his mother, Josephine Amanda Sweet, was born in San Francisco in 1852.

Carter was raised on his father's farm in Trinity County and attended the public schools there. At an early age he worked in mines, logging camps, sawmills, and drove team, whereby he earned the money for his education. He graduated from Golden Gate Law College in San Francisco in June of 1913; was admitted to practice law in California on April 11, 1913 -- two months before he received his degree from the law college. He practiced in San Francisco until January, 1914, when he moved to Redding, California, and opened an office there. He was a candidate for District Attorney of Shasta County in 1914, but lost the election by twenty-three votes; was elected District Attorney of Shasta County in 1918, and reelected in 1922; was elected a member of the Board of Governors of the State Bar of California from the Second District in August, 1927, and was reelected for four consecutive terms, serving a total of six years, during two of which he was Vice-President of the State Bar of California.

In 1927, Carter was appointed City Attorney of the City of Mount Shasta, in Siskiyou County, and in October, 1937, he was appointed City Attorney of the City of Redding, which positions he held until his appointment to the Supreme Court of California on September 12, 1939. At a special election on January 17, 1939, he was elected State Senator from the Fifth Senatorial District in California, comprising Shasta and Trinity Counties, and served during the 1939 session of the Legislature.

Carter is a liberal Democrat, having supported Woodrow Wilson during his two campaigns for President, and was a delegate to the Democratic National Convention at Chicago in 1932, when Franklin D. Roosevelt was nominated President of the United States.

He was one of the original supporters of Governor Culbert L. Olson for Governor of California, having served as Chairman of the Northern California Campaign Committee for the election of Governor Olson in 1938.

During the last twenty years of his law practice, Carter participated in most of the important litigation in Northern California. He represented the farmers of Shasta County in their battles against the Pacific Gas & Electric Company and was successful in every case, forcing that company to pay the farmers over a million dollars in damages to their property as the result of the power development that took place in Shasta County.

When the City of Redding undertook to construct a municipal water system in 1937, suits were brought by the California Water Service Company to prevent the city from constructing its own water system. Carter was employed to represent the city and was successful in defeating every suit brought by the water company to prevent the city from constructing its own system. One of these cases was brought in the Federal District Court in San Francisco, and was appealed to the Supreme Court of the United States. The city was successful in both courts.

Carter has a statewide reputation as a lawyer, and maintained the largest law office in Northern California. He was the head of the law firm of Carter, Barrett, Finley & Carlton, of Redding and Yreka. He had three partners and four associates, and maintained an office both at Redding and Yreka. He participated in the trial of over 1,000 cases and handled over 300 cases on appeal. In 1951, he was awarded a certificate of honorary fellowship in the American College of Trial Lawyers.

Carter has been an outstanding liberal in his political views. He unqualifiedly endorsed the New Deal and the liberal program of the Olson administration. He vigorously supported all of the liberal measures which came before the 1939 session of the Legislature, including the Garrison Revenue Bond Bill, the Central Valley Project Bill, and all of the bills to liberalize the laws affecting labor. He was successful in securing the passage by the Legislature of every measure in

which his district was interested, and was also the author of many laws for the purpose of liberalizing legal procedure.

Carter is an honorary member of the San Francisco, Los Angeles and Shasta County Bar Associations; he is also a Mason, having been Master of his lodge in 1922; he is an honorary member of the Rotary Club of Redding, California, having been president of that club in 1924; he is a member of the California State Horsemen's Association, having been president of that association in 1945; he is also a member of the Commonwealth Club of California.

He is a lover of outdoor sports and finds his recreation in hunting, fishing and horseback riding.

In 1910 he married Tiny E. Gish and they are the parents of three children -- Honorable Oliver Jesse Carter, United States District Judge in San Francisco; Harlan Field Carter, a teacher in the Shasta Union High School at Redding; and Marian (Mrs. Silvio E.) Bui of Redding, California. In 1952, he married Jean Woodward, who is also a member of the California Bar.

Carter was appointed an Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of California by Governor Olson on July 15, 1939, while he was still a member of the Senate, and the Supreme Court of California held that he was eligible to accept such appointment on August 15, 1939. The Commission on Qualifications confirmed his appointment on September 8, 1939, and he took the

oath of office as Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of California on September 12, 1939.

During his more than sixteen years of service as a member of the Supreme Court of California, he has not only written as many prevailing opinions as his associates, but more dissenting and concurring opinions than all of his associates combined. The Supreme Court of the United States has agreed with many of his dissents. He has been an outspoken critic of the views of his associates in many cases, particularly those involving civil liberties and social and economic problems. In many of his dissents he has charged that the effect of the majority holding was to blot out over 40 years of progress in the administration of justice in California. He has vigorously and courageously advanced his liberal views in every case coming before the court, and he is recognized as an outstanding liberal jurist and the greatest dissenter of all time on the Supreme Court of California.

Justice Carter resides with his wife, Jean, on a 36-acre ranch in Sleepy Hollow, Marin County. His address is Oak Knoll Drive, San Anselmo, California. His office is in the State Building, San Francisco.