



Preserving Our Pictorial Legal History

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My life as a lawyer has been enriched for more than thirty years by my avocation as a legal photographer. My photographic work has given me the opportunity to record the pictorial history of our legal profession in California. I am now donating my collection of over 180,000 photographs to the Madden Library at CSU Fresno with the goal of making them available as an online database free to the public. Donations from many organizations and individuals, including a grant from the California Supreme Court Historical Society, have already raised more than two thirds of the funds needed to create the Howard K. Watkins Photographic Archive project.

While much of my work focuses on the legal history of the Central Valley—the area surrounding Fresno where my law practice is located—the collection includes photographs on all aspects of California legal history. Especially notable are photographs of all of the state Supreme Court justices since the 1970s. The collection chronicles the swearing-in ceremony of virtually every State Bar president since 1983 and a large number of Annual Meeting speakers and activities of the Conference of Delegates. Subjects range from California Women Lawyers events to Bernie Witkin (at home in his study) to numerous bar-related activities throughout the state.

A special highlight of my photographic work was serving as official photographer of the California Supreme Court during its special session in Fresno on

TOP LEFT: *Bernie Witkin at home in his study with his manual Royal typewriter.*

TOP RIGHT: *Chief Justice Ronald George administering the oath of office to former California Attorney General John Van De Kamp as the State Bar's 80th president.*

BOTTOM LEFT: *Chief Justice Malcolm Lucas administering the oath of office to Margaret Morrow, the first woman president of the State Bar of California.*

BOTTOM RIGHT: *The Supreme Court arriving at the Fresno Amtrak station for its special session held at the Court of Appeal, Fifth Appellate District. Pictured are (l to r) Associate Justices Carlos Moreno, Janice Brown, Ming Chin, Kathryn Werdegar, Marvin Baxter, and Joyce Kennard, Chief Justice Ronald George, and Fresno Mayor Alan Autry.*

October 8, 2002. It has also been my privilege to photograph events of the California Supreme Court Historical Society, the Administrative Office of the Courts, the State Bar, and the California Judges Association. In return, I have always felt it my duty to make photographs available to such organizations without charge.

Unlike many other photographic collections, the goal of my project is to have the photographs digitized, indexed, and available free to the public via the Madden Library Web site. The Fresno Regional Foundation, a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, is working with me to raise funds for completion of the project. Information is available at www.watkinsphotoarchive.com.

Former State Bar Presidents Don Fischbach and Tony Capozzi noted in a recent letter to State Bar leaders, "It is not often that one can help preserve the legal community's pictorial history for easy retrieval for generations to come. Please join us in helping to ensure this marvelous legacy." I am pleased to express my appreciation to the California Supreme Court Historical Society for helping to support this goal. ★