

Celebrating the Life of Stanley Mosk at the Mosk Courthouse

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The Stanley Mosk Courthouse, the headquarters of the Los Angeles Superior Court, lies in the midst of the Los Angeles Civic Center. Surrounded by the Disney Concert Hall, The County Hall of Administration and City Hall two blocks away, the courthouse, like the man it is named for, is an icon of justice. Upon entering the courthouse at either its East or West entrance, members of the public, litigants, litigators, and others pass by separate displays of pictures and memorabilia of Justice Mosk's life. The displays are critically important to inform people who may not know who Justice Mosk was, and why the building is named for him.

Justice Mosk's service to the State of California for over sixty years touches on many of the issues that shape our society today. It is not just the accomplishments of the man that are significant, but the impact they have had on society that makes the Mosk displays so important. They allow everyone who takes the time to look at the printed material in the display cases to see how Stanley Mosk and his life affects each of our lives.

Every day, thousands of people walk through the Stanley Mosk Courthouse and many hundreds of them pass by the displays. Passersby of all ages and vocations find items of interest. Young people and students see a high school diploma, University of Chicago pennant and a Southwestern Law School graduation photo. The practicing attorney is inspired by various rulings in Justice Mosk's career. The person contemplating public service sees campaign ads related to the Justice's various public offices. The military person sees Justice Mosk's U.S. Army photo, and nearly everyone recognizes photos of Justice Mosk with Martin Luther King, Jr., Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin, and Presidents John F. Kennedy and Harry Truman.

If we look at the panorama of Justice Mosk's life, we see a young man educated in the public school system, an athlete and scholar who excelled in his education through high school, college, and law school, with achievements not beyond the hopes of many people



Photos include Mosk with Indira Gandhi (left), Martin Luther King, Jr. (center), and Robert and John Kennedy (second from right).

today. To young men and women, this says, "I too can rise from my modest beginnings to contribute greatly to society." Then we see the young Stanley Mosk entering a career of public service that is unparalleled by most.

Although the dates and events are generations old, enduring values appear in the displays. Photos with President Kennedy represent the era of the civil rights struggle. Photos with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., represent non-violent social action. The resignation of his judgeship to serve in the military during World War II symbolizes the ultimate in civic duty. Further, Justice Mosk's legal opinions range from permitting Charlie Sifford to become the first African-American golfer to play in a PGA tournament, to the rights of disabled parents, to the right of journalists to refuse to surrender unpublished material without being held in contempt of court. From civil rights to parental rights to freedom of the press, Justice Mosk's legacy touches the lives of many people who come to our court today.

Our thanks go to the California Supreme Court Historical Society for their help in making the Stanley Mosk displays at our courthouse a reality. ☆



One of two display cases donated by the Society at the Stanley Mosk Courthouse. The objects displayed are from the Stanley Mosk Collection, a gift of Justice Richard M. Mosk, in the Archives at the California Judicial Center Library.