



John Keating Regan Papers

Collection Number: S0173

Collection Title: John Keating Regan Papers

Dates: 1939-1980

Creator: Regan, John Keating, 1911-1987

Abstract: The collection contains correspondence, photographs, and newspaper clippings documenting John Keating Regan's career as the United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri (1962-1977).

Collection Size: 0.2 cubic feet
(5 folders, 14 photographs)

Language: Collection materials are in English.

Repository: The State Historical Society of Missouri

Restrictions on Access: Collection is open for research. This collection is available at [The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis](https://www.shsmo.org/research-center). If you would like more information, please contact us at stlouis@shsmo.org.

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Preferred Citation: [Specific item; box number; folder number] *John Keating Regan Papers* (S0173); The State Historical Society of Missouri Research Center-St. Louis [after first mention may be abbreviated to SHSMO-St. Louis].

Donor Information: The papers were donated to the University of Missouri by John Keating Regan on July 2, 1984 (Accession No. SA2633).

Processed by: Processed by Anne Kenny, April 1984; revised by AJ Medlock, March 2023.

Biographical Note:

John K. Regan was born on March 26, 1911, in St. Louis, Missouri, the son of William J. Regan and Elvia Cunningham Regan. He graduated from McBride High School in St. Louis, attended St. Louis University for four years, and graduated from Benton College of Law with an L.L.B.

degree in June 1935. In October 1935, he was admitted to the Missouri Bar. He married Ruth Marie Davis on June 15, 1956, and they had two sons, John Keating Regan Jr., and Richard Bernard Regan.

After admission to the Bar, Regan engaged in the private practice of the law until 1940, when he was appointed Assistant Prosecuting Attorney of St. Louis. In that position, he was assigned to prepare and trial all cases in that office. During World War II, he was a lieutenant in the United States Naval Reserve, doing combat service in the Pacific Theater of Operations as a combat intelligence officer. He was honorably discharged on November 23, 1945.

Upon returning from naval duty, Regan re-entered private practice, specializing in trial work. In August 1948, he was elected Democratic Committeeman for the Seventeenth Ward of the City of St. Louis and served in that position until his appointment on December 22, 1949, as Judge of the Circuit Court of the City of St. Louis, to fill the vacancy created by the death of Joseph J. Ward. In 1954, he was the Presiding Judge of the Circuit Court for criminal cases and set about reducing the then-large docket. He received public notice by setting a record for disposing 125 felony cases in six days.

Regan was appointed United States District Judge for the Eastern District of Missouri in April 1962. In 1977, he became Senior Judge, and Chief Justice Warren E. Burger appointed him Judge of the Temporary Emergency Court of Appeals of the United States. Regan handled several significant criminal and civil cases during his tenure. In 1968 he prosecuted officers of Pipefitters Local 562 for violating federal election laws by contributing to the campaigns of federal candidates. In 1972, he sentenced Martin J. McNally to life imprisonment after his conviction in the hijacking of an American Airlines plane at Lambert Airport. Regan also was considered unsympathetic to civil rights plaintiffs. In 1965 he refused to set aside eight contempt of court convictions against members of the St. Louis Committee of Racial Equality (CORE) for demonstrating at Jefferson Bank and Trust Company, following a restraining order issued by the Circuit Court. He also ruled against the plaintiffs in a landmark open house case (Jones vs. Meyer Co.), which was appealed to the United States Supreme Court.

In 1968 the Supreme Court overturned Regan's decision by citing the 1866 Civil Rights Act, which prohibited discrimination in the sale or rental of property. Regan worked hard to negotiate settlements and clear the court's backlog of cases. In 1970, he mediated a settlement between striking teamsters and the trucking industry, winning praise from both sides for his efforts. He also played a leading role in improving the St. Louis City Jail when he ordered a reduction in the jail's population and other improvements in 1974.

John Keating Regan remained in office until his death due to Hodgkin's disease on March 9, 1987.

Arrangement:

The collection has been arranged chronologically.

Scope and Content Note:

The collection contains correspondence, photographs, and newspaper clippings chronicling Regan's tenure as a United States District Judge for Eastern District of Missouri. Materials of interest consist of correspondence regarding pay increases to United States Marshals and

discussions of court caseloads. Significant correspondents include Senator Stuart Symington and Father Dismas Clark. The materials in this collection date from 1962 to 1973 and are arranged chronologically.

Container List:

- f. 1-2 Correspondence, 1962-1973
- f. 3 Photographs, 1939-1977
- f. 4 Newspaper clippings, 1964-1980
- f. 5 Courtroom drawing of Regan, no date

Index:

Index Terms	Folders	Image
Civil rights--Missouri	4	
Clark, Charles Dismas, 1901-1963	1	
Discrimination in housing--Missouri	4	
Harper, Roy Winfield, 1905-1994	1, 3	Yes
Meredith, James Hargrove, 1914-1988	1, 3	Yes
Race discrimination--Law and legislation--United States	4	
Regan, John Keating, 1911-1987	1-5	Yes
Regan, Ruth, 1916-2013	1-5	
Symington, Stuart, 1901-1988	1-2	
United States. District Court (Missouri : Eastern District)	1-5	
United States. Marshals Service	1	