

**S0173 Regan, John Keating (1911- )**  
**Papers, 1959-1980**  
**5 Folders**

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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 LL.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 have 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 which position he was assigned to the preparation and trial of 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 of 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 a number of 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 to clear the court's backlog of cases. In 1970 he mediated a settlement between striking teamsters and the trucking industry,

and won praise from both sides for his efforts. He also played a leading role in the improvements in the St. Louis City Jail when he ordered a reduction in the jail's population and other improvements in 1974. He also publicly criticized the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development over its refusal to release portions of the 9.9 million dollars in disputed community development bloc grant aid to St. Louis County municipalities.

## **SCOPE AND CONTENT**

Regan's tenure on the District Court is documented by newspaper clippings, photographs, and some correspondence. Significant correspondence includes Stuart Symington and Father Dismas Clark. The Correspondence includes congratulatory letters, letters of recommendation for military academy appointments and letters supporting pay increases to U.S. Marshals, a new courthouse, and a discussion of case loads.

## **FOLDER LISTING**

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3. Photographs
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