

Rights champion Warren dies



EARL WARREN—1891-1974 (R.I.P.)
(AP Wirephoto)

WASHINGTON (AP) — The death of Earl Warren, a champion of the Bill of Rights in his 15 years as chief justice, removes a figure indelibly linked to landmark decisions of the Supreme Court in one of its most controversial eras.

Warren, 83, died in Georgetown University Hospital Tuesday night, a little more than five years after his retirement from the nation's highest judicial post. A hospital spokesman said he died of heart failure.

Under his leadership, the court struck down segregated schools, laid down the rule of "one man-one vote" and greatly expanded the rights of the accused in criminal cases.

Tributes came swiftly for the man whose years on the court were marked by criticism, which included demands for his impeachment. President Nixon, who often was at odds with Warren in their years as California politicians and who criticized many of his court decisions, hailed him as "a partisan for America."

Chief Justice Warren M. Burger, named by Nixon to succeed Warren and steer the court toward "strict construction" of the Constitution, said "his contribution was large indeed."

Rosa Parks, the black seamstress whose refusal to give up her seat to a white man started the Montgomery bus boycott, said, "We have lost a great friend to humanity."

Warren was admitted to the hospital July 2, suffering from a heart ailment. It was his second hospitalization in two months.

With him at his death were his wife, Nina, and the youngest of their three daughters, Mrs. Stewart Brien, known to the family as "Honey Bear." The Warrens also had three sons. Only a few hours before, two of the former chief justice's closest associates on the court, Justices William O. Douglas and William J. Brennan, had left his bedside.

A court spokesman said Warren wanted the two to stay, but they test he was too tired.

Warren served as chief justice from 1953 to 1969 after a political career in which he served 11 years as governor of California and twice sought the Republican nomination for president.

He was vice presidential candidate in the 1960 GOP national ticket headed by the late Thomas E. Dewey, then governor of New York. They lost to President Harry S. Truman.

Though he disapproved of outside assignments for members of the

high court, at age 72 he took on the additional load of heading the commission to investigate the 1963 assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

One of the Warren court's most acclaimed decisions came in June 1954 when it struck down the doctrine of separate but equal schools for the races. But the decision Warren thought most important was the "one man-one vote" ruling in 1962 that forced states to reapportion legislative and congressional districts to make them more equal in population.

"Legislatures represent people, not trees or acres," he said.

As Alameda County, Calif., prosecutor, state attorney general and governor, Warren carved out a reputation for being tough on crime. But the court's decisions under his leadership expanded the procedural protections available to criminal defendants, earning him criticism from law and order advocates. Nixon, campaigning for the presidency in 1968, said the Warren court had "strengthened the criminal forces at the expense of the peace forces."

A common thread in decisions of the Warren court was equality — equal schools, equal representation, equal rights. The court consistently broadened the application of the Bill of Rights.

The decisions plunged the Warren court into controversy, and "impeachment Earl Warren" signs spread along roadways in many parts of the country. His admirers, however, predicted he would rank as one of the great chief justices.

Warren was born in Los Angeles March 19, 1891, the son of a Norwegian-born railroad car repairman and inspector. He served as an infantry first lieutenant in World War I.

A genial and gregarious man 4 feet 1 inch tall, he entered public life as deputy city attorney for Oakland in 1919 and became district attorney in 1925. He was elected governor in 1942 after four years as attorney general.

He was instrumental in swinging the GOP presidential nomination in 1962 to Dwight D. Eisenhower, who as president named him chief justice on the death of Fred M. Vinson.

Besides his widow and daughter, Mrs. Stewart Brien, Warren is survived by sons James, Earl Jr., and Robert; and daughters Mrs. John C. Daly and Mrs. Harry Van Riper.

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Warren never able to find father's killer

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Though proud of his public accomplishments, one personal failure gnawed at the late Chief Justice Earl Warren — he never found his father's murderer. Melvin B. Warren, a somewhat reclusive old man of 71, was brutally bludgeoned to death at his home in Bakersfield on Saturday night, May 14, 1958. The case has never been solved.

His son, Earl, then the Alameda County district attorney running for state attorney general, dispatched his chief investigator and a staff of five experts to the scene.

Los Angeles County authorities also assigned Bakersfield police and soon there were at least 21 suspects. But the top-flight investigative teams cleared all of them.

The most popular theory for the murder was robbery, since the elder Warren was known to be a penny-pincher who invested his savings from a career as a Southern Pacific Railroad division superintendent in lucrative real estate. His wife and daughter moved to San Francisco and his son went to law school, but Warren remained in Bakersfield overseeing 100 homes he owned there.

The Bakersfield police report said someone slipped into Warren's upstairs home that night and caught the old man sitting at his desk. The helpless victim was beaten repeatedly from behind with a piece of pipe, police said, and then his bloody body was dragged to a bed and dumped there.

The only outside lead located was his checkbook found in a nearby field. As the days wore on, producing no more clues nor suspects, the crack investigators left town, leaving only voluminous reports and speculation behind. Little money was missing, and a theory alleging that revenge against the son was the real motive gained popularity.

In 11 years I have sent an average of 10 letters a year to death or prison," Earl Warren declared in rebuttal. "But I have never heard of one who planned any revenge against me or my family."

Warren was of Scandinavian descent, the son of a Norwegian immigrant Melvin Warren and his wife, Christine, who was daughter of the Hermands, immigrants from Sweden.

His father, a car inspector for Southern Pacific Railroad and later an investor in real estate, was murdered at the family home, Niles and Baker streets, May 14, 1958. His death remains an unsolved case for the Bakersfield Police Department.

Young Warren, industrious at an early age, was only 11 when he took on two jobs: making home deliveries for the Los

See Warren—page 2

Warren liked Bakersfield as his 'home city'

By PATTI KELLER

Staff Writer

"I like to come home once in a while, and this is my home city."

The late chief justice of the United States, Earl Warren, was not a native of Bakersfield.

But brought here from Los Angeles by his parents as a small child, Warren was reared and educated in Bakersfield, and called it home.

His last trip home was June 10, 1973, an eventful day for the then 82-year-old jurist, whose vigor and enthusiasm belied his age.

He spent the afternoon of that day with five classmates who were graduated with him from Kern County Union High School in 1908.

The afternoon was light and joyful, with the recollection of escapades of their school days, including Warren's own expulsion from school.

That evening, Warren addressed more than 2,000 persons in the overflowing quad area of Cal State Bakersfield, which that night graduated its third graduating class, numbering 411.

During his address to the graduates, Warren noted that Kern County, once parched and dry, had become "a lush garden spot of the United States."

He said during his youth "We thought many times there was little hope for the future for this county."

Warren's message to the audience called for a return to strict interpretation of the U.S. Constitution, a demand for "truth in government" and an optimistic "It is a time for another renaissance in all the worthwhile phases of life," he

said. "I believe the young people today can lead such a revival."

It was fitting that Warren, educated in Bakersfield, should return to address Kern County graduates.

A former Californian staff writer, the late Bill Blocher, wrote June 27, 1968:

"It has been said that during those years of achievement, the chief justice was significantly motivated by the understanding and lessons he learned during his early school days in the melting pot of nationality backgrounds that Bakersfield produced."

"Here and in early years in public office he learned by actual contact the problems of the minorities. And throughout his public career in office in California he was involved and steadfastly fought for issues and legislation for the common good during what might well have been a chaotic period in the state's history during which it embraced millions and millions of new residents during World War II and the postwar period."

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See Warren—page 2

Inside today Friends say Warren was 'a great guy'

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Page	Sec
Business and Finance	3
Classified	3
Comics	6
Delaplane	5
Editorial	18
Food	4
Metropolitan Section	9
Oil	3
Sports	12
Television	6
Theater	6
Vital Statistics	28
Score	21

By BOB JONES

Staff Writer

Retired Municipal Court Judge Frank Noriega may have summed it up for the other Bakersfield and Kern County friends of former Chief Justice Earl Warren — "He was a great guy."

Noriega, caught just as he and his family were leaving for a visit to the California coast, told The Californian this morning.

"I've known him all my life. He was always proud he was from Bakersfield, and he maintained financial interests here. He was a great guy. I'm proud to have known him."

Former law partner James Petrini: "I feel horrible about it... because he was an outstanding man, besides being an excellent lawyer and judge. It's a great loss to the country."

Classmate Ruth Henley: "He has been a very close friend to all of us. Every

time he came to this part of the world he came to see all of us.

"Yakel Parker: "It's a most unfortunate thing that we have lost such a fine man. I personally feel a great loss. Miss Parker's brother, Bill, was a Warren classmate. He was a life-long friend."

"I served as his appointed representative on five different councils and commissions. I know the family quite well and have sent condolences to his wife, Nina, in Washington, D.C."

"He is one Bakersfield boy who made good."

Mayor Don Hart: "I know him personally. I thought he was a great American and had the courage of his convictions."

"As a little kid, as a small boy in East Bakersfield when I was passing out handbills for Ardizzi-Olcese Grocery,

see Friends—page 2



Last visit of former Chief Justice Earl Warren to his hometown of Bakersfield came in June 1973 when he was commencement speaker at Cal State and attended 65th reunion of his 1908 Kern County High School class. Classmates of Warren, center right, were Nona White Harlow, Ruth Smith Henley, Elmer Robbesky Simpson, Frank Vaughn and Mary Ashe. Warren died Tuesday. — (Californian Photo)

Reunion brought Warren in '73

(Editor's note: This story was written on the occasion of Earl Warren's last visit to Bakersfield, for a class reunion June 18, 1973.)

They say their memories are more vivid because then there were fewer events to remember. But however they do it, surviving members of the Kern County High School Class of 1908 have many stories to tell of their long-ago high school days.

Like the explosion of three class members, including eventual United States Chief Justice Earl Warren, a day after graduation: the hayride that kept some out till 4 in the morning; the dances, picnics and secret trysts in neighborhood homes.

Six class members celebrated their 65th class reunion, their fourth meeting since the golden anniversary of their graduation in 1908, with a luncheon at the Bakersfield Inn Sunday.

Those attending included senior class president, Nona White Harlow, Warren, retired schoolteacher Mary Ashe, Elmer Robbesky Simpson, Frank Vaughn and Ruth Smith Henley. Misses Warren and Vaughn also attended.

The next morning, all three arrived at school about an hour late. "The principal thought we conspired to be late," he recalls. "We insisted we had not, and then he fired (expelled) us."

And then, of course, when he fired us, we wouldn't go on with the play that night."

But the board of education met

the only other survivor of the 17 class members is Hazel Grandy Fuller of Pasadena.

The group, locations and joyful in their reunion luncheon, reminisced at long length about their four years at the old school.

Warren didn't appear the least embarrassed by the tale of his expulsion from school.

His own version is that he and two others rehearsing for their senior play, "What Became of Parker?" missed the last streetcar and had to walk home late that night (a long walk for Warren, whose family home was at Niles and Baker streets in East Bakersfield).

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early that evening and reinstated them, and the show went on a couple of hours late, he said.

They recalled many other occasions, interrupting each other with their own versions and individual recollections of the days when their school consisted of a single building in what now is known as Elm Grove, the center of the Bakersfield High School campus.

Most recall taking Latin — the only way to escape it then was to take the sciences — and cite names each of the other classes they took each year.

Their dances were held in what was then the Women's Club hall, now a city parking lot at H and 16th streets. They were chaperoned, of course, but Miss Ashe recalls, "We never suspected anything. The boys were gentlemen and we tried to be ladies, sort of an era gone by."

"Our things to amuse us and keep us going were very different than today," Mrs. Henley added.

"He was an articulate spokesman for the Bakersfield community," she said. "He did not invite controversy, but neither did he shun it; he fulfilled his duty as he saw it."

Burger said, "His unique half-century career of public service as a prosecutor, attorney general, governor and chief justice spanned one of the most dynamic eras in our history and his contribution was large indeed."

Nixon pays tribute to Warren

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Nixon said Tuesday night that former Chief Justice Earl Warren's "service to America will continue to shape the course of America's life for generations to come."

Mayor Don Hart: "I know him personally. I thought he was a great American and had the courage of his convictions."

"As a little kid, as a small boy in East Bakersfield when I was passing out handbills for Ardizzi-Olcese Grocery,

highest purposes of America forever."

In a statement issued through a White House spokesman, Nixon said of Warren, "Few men have been called upon to do so much in the service of their nation and few have performed with such distinction."