

LEWIS & CLARK
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Court Rules Hiss Can Practice Law Again

Boston

Alger Hiss, who served a prison term for perjury in the most celebrated Communist spy case of the post-World War II era, was ordered readmitted to the practice of law in Massachusetts yesterday.

The Massachusetts Supreme Court's unanimous ruling was the second victory in a week in Hiss' campaign to clear his name. He was disbarred in August, 1952.

On July 31, the Justice Department said it had turned over

to Hiss' lawyers the famous "pumpkin papers" microfilm that figured in his trial and launched then-Congressman Richard M. Nixon into the political limelight.

Hiss was convicted of perjury in January, 1950, and served 44 months in prison. He sought the film of the papers in an effort to prove his innocence.

The conviction hinged on testimony by Whitaker Chambers, a confessed former Communist agent, who claimed Hiss transmitted the secret papers to him. They

allegedly were put inside a pumpkin for safekeeping. At the time, Hiss was a State Department official.

The authenticity of the "pumpkin papers" has since been questioned.

Hiss, now 69 and a salesman for a New York stationery supplies company, applied to the Massachusetts high court for reinstatement last November — more than 22 years after he was convicted. He has maintained his innocence of all charges.

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The Massachusetts Board of Bar Overseers had voted unanimously against reinstatement because Hiss refused to admit his guilt as a sign of repentance and rehabilitation. But it said he was of good moral character, except of his criminal record.

"No person should be required to confess guilt for an offense he honestly believes he did not commit," the court said. Accordingly, the court refused to disqualify Hiss solely because of his continued protestations of innocence.

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