

Judge Sirica: Ex-Boxing

By Donald P. Baker
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John Joseph Sirica arose before 5 a.m. yesterday—a habit that lingers from his college days as a boxing instructor at the Knights of Columbus gymnasium here—put the finishing touches on his latest opinion, and then drove from his Spring Valley home to the U.S.

Courthouse, where he cut loose a legal haymaker.

Target of the blow was the President of the United States. For the first time in the nation's history, a judge (Sirica) had commanded a President (Richard M. Nixon) to produce materials over the objections of the chief executive.

Sirica, at 69 still not far from his old fighting weight, delivered his 23-page opinion at 3 p.m., and within an hour was en route to join his family at an oceanside vacation retreat.

This 5 feet 8, 160-pound son of an Italian immigrant has been taking on the big guys most of his life.

He punched his way through Georgetown Law School with exhibition fights; as a young defense lawyer he punched out a vice squad cop during an argument in the U.S. attorney's office, and during World War II, toured the country with his friend Jack Dempsey to promote the sale of war bonds.

Since accepting the task of being presiding judge in the Watergate trial (as chief judge, the prosecution asked him to appoint the best available judge, and he chose himself), Sirica has won praise from disparate quarters.

On April 30, President Nixon praised Sirica in a major speech as "a courageous judge."

On May 17, Vice President Agnew, while praising the role of the press, said, "I don't believe the press has been as instrumental in the dredging of Watergate as Judge Sirica."

Columnist Kenneth Crawford cited Sirica and Sen. Sam Ervin as "those prima-

rily responsible for lifting the lid."

There are critics, however. Civil libertarian Joseph L. Rauh Jr. complained that Sirica used the Watergate trial "for the obvious 'other purpose' of getting at persons not on trial."

And just this week, a Washingtonian Magazine article on area judges listed Sirica as "unsuited." Author Harvey Katz found that Sirica has become "the darling of many civil libertarians," while his continued presence on the bench "posed a problem for anyone who loves both truth and justice."

Sirica has heard about the article, but not seen it, when he was interviewed on Tuesday. "That fellow (Katz) doesn't like me," said Sirica, warming up to a verbal barrage.

Then sifting through a stack of papers on his desk, Sirica unearthed an earlier article, same magazine same author, same opinion.

"That's a damned lie," Sirica said, pointing to a

paragraph from the September, 1970, issue that he had underlined.

Sirica was equally upset at some of the other ratings. While he didn't mention it, an "unsuited" rating also was given to retired general Sessions Judge Thomas Scalley, who was Sirica's law partner for about 15 years before either moved to the bench.

"I'm pretty upset with this," he said. "I'm going to stop giving interviews, and I'm going to speak to Katharine Graham about this guy."

Told there is no connection between The Washington Post and the Washingtonian magazine, Sirica said, "Good, then sit down."

He still isn't happy with the publicity. "I like you reporters—they are dedicated and sincere—but they make mistakes," whereupon he cited a recent magazine article that he said quoted him out of context.

"This fellow with a little red beard came out to the

Teacher Tosses Legal Haymaker

house with a photographer and we got to talking, and I related a story about a professor I had at Georgetown. It was during Prohibition (class of 1926) and the old fellow told a story that ended with the remark, "I had two loves in life, but Prohibition took care of one of them and old age took care of the other."

The article made it appear that the quote now could refer to Sirica. The judge scoffed. The redeeming feature of the article, he said with fatherly pride, was the picture of him with his daughter, Eileen, who is 10.

"She loves it," he beamed. But the judge wants to protect the privacy of his family life, and so he discourages interviews with other family members.

Sirica was a bachelor until age 47, when he married Lucille Camalier (of the Camalier & Buckley leather goods firm).

They built a brick Cape Cod house on Overlook Road about 19 years ago,

and still live there with their three children: John J. (Jack) Jr., 20, Patricia Anne (Tricia), 16, and Eileen, 10.

Their son, a student at American University, "might end up being a reporter," the judge said. Jack Sirica worked this summer at the Washington Star-News.

Next-door-neighbor Allen E. Throop, an attorney, describes the Siricas as "very devoted to themselves as a family." Although Throop doesn't practice before Sirica, "we never discuss opinions, although I think he has done a very fine job."

Beth Vanderstar, who lives across the street, has found the judge "a private person. After living here two years, we don't know him very well."

As with many of the neighbors, Mrs. Vanderstar has noticed the judge on his daily walks—often three to five miles.

"I saw him clear up at the National Presbyterian Center," she said. "And his wife is a jogger."

Pippa Vanderstar, age 10, added that "their dog's name is Coco—a little toy poodle." Pippa plays with Eileen at the Sirica house, and the girls swim together at the Congressional Country Club.

Sirica has been an avid golfer, but a clubhouse employee said yesterday that the judge hasn't played enough golf at Congressional this month to establish a handicap.

Mrs. Vanderstar, who described herself as an "ACLU libera," said she expected their affluent neighbors to be "very conservative," but learned that after the Watergate trial, one resident sent the judge a card that said "sock it to 'em, baby."

John Vanderstar, a lawyer who does appear in Sirica's court occasionally, talked about the excitement that occurs on the block when "a hot trial is in progress." The judge's house gets round-the-clock protection by federal marshals.

"It's great fun for the kids," Vanderstar said, "and even the judge enjoys part of it. One day he was gleefully showing off a little black box that can emit an ultra high frequency pitch to summon the marshals."

Arch Booth, who moved into his house the same year the Siricas did, recalled that Jack Sirica once babysat for his grandchildren. "But aside from an occasional social event, we don't see much of the Siricas." Booth is chief executive officer of the United States Chamber of Commerce.

The family of William S. Whyte, vice president of United States Steel, has been "good friends and neighbors" for nearly 20 years. Their back yards adjoin.

Whyte knows Sirica as an "enthusiastic sports figure—particularly fond of boxing. He was a crony of Jack Dempsey, and I think Dempsey was the best man at John's wedding."