

IN THE DISTRICT COURT OF THE UNITED STATES  
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF ILLINOIS

IN THE MATTER OF PROCEEDINGS )  
RELATING TO PRESENTATION OF )  
PORTRAIT OF UNITED STATES )  
DISTRICT JUDGE CASPER PLATT )

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

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Transcript of proceedings had in the above-entitled matter on the 21st day of April, A. D. 1961, in the District Court of the United States for the Eastern District of Illinois, at the United States Court House, in the City of Danville, Illinois, the Honorable John S. Hastings, Chief Judge, United States Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit, presiding.

- PRESENT: Honorable Casper Platt, United States District Judge, Eastern District of Illinois;
- Honorable George W. Bristow, Justice of the Supreme Court of the State of Illinois;
- Mr. Samuel Levin, President, Seventh Federal Circuit Bar Association;
- Mr. Carroll E. Snyder, President, Vermilion County Bar Association;
- Honorable Craig Van Meter, former Judge of the Circuit Court, Fifth Judicial District, State of Illinois;
- Also judges, lawyers and friends of U. S. District Judge Casper Platt.

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CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: The United States District Court for the Eastern Division of Illinois is now convened for the purpose of conducting proceedings relating to the presentation of a portrait.

At this time it is the Court's pleasure to recognize the President of the Vermillion County Bar Association, Mr. Carroll Snyder. Mr. Snyder.

MR. CARROLL E. SNYDER: May it please the Court, it's a pleasure to welcome you folks here this morning for the purpose of presenting this portrait to Judge Platt. It's a pleasure to have his Honor, Judge Hastings, as presiding judge, and our friend, Judge Bristow, from the Supreme Court of Illinois, who you remember sat with Judge Platt in the Fifth Circuit for years.

I want to call particular attention to Mrs. Platt and welcome her, the wife of our judge. I suppose she is sitting back. There she is.

As you know, the work load for this meeting was conducted by the Seventh Federal Circuit Bar, of which Sam Levin is president.

If the Court please, I would like to recognize Mr. Levin at this time.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: The Court is very happy to recognize Mr. Sam Levin, President of the Bar Association for the Seventh Federal Circuit. Mr. Levin.

MR. SAMUEL LEVIN: May it please the Court, the Bar

Association of the Seventh Federal Circuit requests the privilege of presenting to the Court a photograph of his Honor, Judge Casper Platt, who has presided in this Court since November 1st, 1949.

The Bar Association of the Seventh Federal Circuit now has 887 active members, of lawyers, who are from Wisconsin, Illinois, and Indiana, who practice in the Federal Courts of the Circuit. It has had ten annual meetings in conjunction with the annual Judicial Conference of this Circuit. In the course of those meetings it has presented valuable and interesting programs, including discussions of procedure and of substantive law. It has presented through that Court examples of pre-trial conferences and other procedural matters. It has distributed to its members a circular known as "The Circuit Rider". It has presented twelve portraits of Judges of the Court of Appeals, including that of Judge Walter C. Lindley, painted from life by very competent artists, and those portraits now hang in the corridors of the Court of Appeals building at 1212 North Michigan Avenue, in Chicago. It has heretofore presented fourteen photographs of the United States District Court Judges to various District Courts, besides the photograph of Judge Platt which we are here presenting. Others are in the process of being framed, and a few still remain to be taken. These photographs were taken by one of the members of our Association, Mr. Albert Hallett of Chicago, who for many years was Assistant Attorney General of the State of Illinois. Mr. Hallett has shown

very remarkable abilities. His photographs rank with those of Karsch of Ottawa, who is, I suppose, the outstanding portrait photographer of our day. Mr. Hallett has given very freely of his time and efforts for this program, and the photograph which we are presenting here today is, to my mind, one of the very best of his products. This has all been done under the direction of Mr. Robert C. Williams, the Chairman of the Portrait Committee, who is here with us today.

The program of preparing and presenting these photographs was undertaken so that in each District Court there might be a photographic record of the Judges who are presiding there.

The decisions, of course, of the Judge constitute his judicial record, but as future members of the bar read these decisions we believe that on occasion it might be both interesting and significant that there be available an opportunity to see exactly what manner of man the Judge who rendered them really was, at least so far as the photograph will reveal. We realize the frailty of all human records. But we do hope that the photographs which it is our purpose to lodge in the courts may be preserved for a long time and serve the purpose for which they are intended.

The distinguished record of Judge Platt on this Bench makes it especially important that a likeness of him should remain in the chambers that he has occupied as a judge.

Judge Platt was born in Danville on June 6, 1892, the son of Louis and Delia Platt. Louis Platt, his father, was one of our most distinguished citizens and a credit to this community because of his fine character and integrity.

Judge Platt attended Danville High School and later the University of Illinois, from which he graduated with an A. B. Degree, in 1914. He then attended the University of Chicago and graduated with a Degree of Juris Doctor, in 1916. He was married to Jeanette Regent, of Chicago, on June 30, 1918, from which marriage there was born Dr. Betsy, who is now Mrs. R Robert Weiner, of Halstead, Kansas, and Julie, who is now Mrs. Dr. George Bemski, who is now with her husband, in Brazil, in South America, where he is a professor giving lectures in a great university of that country; and Nancy, the youngest, who is the wife of Dr. Bernard Martin, an eminent Rabbi of Sinai Temple, in Chicago, who is my Rabbi, and who, I believe, is on his way or is here by now, from Chicago. Mrs. Platt, the Judge's wife, is an eminent and distinguished lady in her own right. She is a graduate of the University of Chicago and is a credit to the civic and other endeavors in the City of Danville. The daughters all have degrees. Nancy has a law degree and is admitted to practice in the District of Columbia. The other two girls have degrees and are eminent in their own right and are great helpmates, for their inspiration, intelligence and encouragement to their husbands, as Judge Platt's wife has been to him through many years.

Judge Platt was admitted to the Illinois State Bar in 1916 and began the practice of law in Danville the same year. He was associated with the late Judge Walter T. Gunn, beginning in 1916, and after joining the United States Army, beginning at the first camp at Fort Sheridan he served in the Army from 1917 to 1919 and was discharged as a First Lieutenant. He then went back into private practice, with Judge Gunn, from 1919 until 1922. He was appointed City Attorney of Danville and served from 1926 until 1928. He was elected Judge of the Circuit Court of the Fifth Judicial Circuit and served from 1933 to November 1, 1949, where he served with distinction; and at the same time on the Circuit the Honorable George Bristow was his associate, as well as former Judge Craig Van Meter of Mattoon. The three of them served as your Circuit Judges on the Circuit at the same time. Judge Platt was then appointed Judge of the District Court for the Eastern District of Illinois, by President Truman, and assumed office on November 1, 1949, succeeding the late Judge Walter C. Lindley, who was elevated as a Judge of the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Seventh Judicial Circuit.

Judge Platt is a member of the Vermilion County, the Illinois State, and the American Bar Associations. He is a thirty-second degree Mason, a member of the B'nai B'rith Order, and of the Elks. He was a charter member and the first Commander of the Curtis Redden Post of the American Legion.

Judge Platt has, from time to time, at the request of

the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals, served with distinction in other District Courts of the Circuit, and on many occasions was called by the Chief Judge of the Court of Appeals to sit in that court, where he has rendered opinions of clarity, brevity, and with a complete understanding of the law involved in the particular case.

Some judges are branded as favoring plaintiffs or defendants, or are noted as conservatives or liberals, or are otherwise catalogued by lawyers with reference to certain types of cases which may come before them, but to the great distinction of Judge Platt no such appellation can be truthfully attached to him. In his quiet, unassuming and judicial manner he has always decided cases according to its true merits, regardless of the nature of the case or the counsel appearing on either side before him.

As Socrates said so long ago, "Four things belong to a Judge, to hear courteously, to answer wisely, to consider soberly and to decide impartially". Sir Francis Bacon said, "Judges ought to be more learned than witty, more reverent than plausible and more advised than confident. Above all things, integrity is their portion and proper virtue".

Judge Learned Hand has described the ideal judge, when referring to the great and revered late Mr. Justice Cardozo, of the Supreme Court of the United States, which is equally applicable to Judge Platt, when he said in the course of his discourse



concerning the late Justice Cardoza, he said, "I have not told you what qualities made it possible for him to find just that compromise between the letter and the spirit that so constantly guided him to safety. I have not told you, because I do not know. It was wisdom: and like most wisdom, his ran beyond the reasons which he gave for it. And what is wisdom -- that gift of God which the great prophets of his race exalted? I do not know; like you, I know it when I see it, but I cannot tell of what it is composed.

"Yet from this self-effacement came a power greater than the power of him who ruleth a city. He was wise because his spirit was uncontaminated, because he knew no violence, or hatred, or envy, or jealousy, or ill-will."

I am proud to say that the lawyers and litigants who have appeared before Judge Platt, both in the State and the Federal courts, will all truly testify that he most eminently comes within the yardsticks laid down by these great philosophers in history as to what qualities of character make a truly great Judge.

If the Court please, it is now my privilege and honor to present to this Honorable Court Judge Craig Van Meter, of Mattoon, who sat on the Circuit Court of the Fifth Judicial Circuit with Judge Platt and Judge Bristow in the courts of this Circuit. Judge Van Meter.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: Thank you, Mr. Levin. The Court is very happy to recognize Judge Van Meter.

HONORABLE CRAIG VAN METER: Your Honor, ladies and gentlemen, it is indeed an honor and pleasure for me to be able to appear here today. Judge Platt and I have been closely associated for many years. That association started in 1933 when we were both running for the Circuit Bench in this district, and our opponents were very able and distinguished Circuit Judges who had a great voter appeal and were well-versed in the manner of taking advantage of that voter appeal. One of our opponents was the Honorable George W. Bristow, now on the Supreme Court of Illinois; and knowing Judge Bristow, you will realize that the opponents we had were more than considerably strong opponents and capable, and we had a tough time in the election and a tough time getting elected. But it so happened that Judge Bristow, and Judge Platt and myself were all elected.

Shortly after that Judge Platt and I were discussing our future, and I stated that I planned to endeavor to stay on the bench and make that my life work, but Judge Platt said no, he was going to serve this one term and then he would return to the practice of law in Danville, Illinois. But the fates decreed otherwise. Upon the death of my uncle, Mr. Donald E. Craig, in Mattoon, Illinois, in the Fall of 1935, I resigned from the Bench effective January 1, 1936; and Judge Platt was re-elected in 1939 and in 1945 and served on the Circuit Bench of this Circuit until the Fall of 1949 when he was appointed Judge in this Eastern District of Illinois.

In the campaign in 1933 one of our opponents was Judge

Charles Shuey, of Charleston, Illinois. And being young and vigorous at that time, we campaigned the whole Circuit, from the political clubs in Westville to the road in Hazel Dell, a little hamlet in Cumberland County, where we addressed a huge crowd from ten to twelve voters from the wagon bed of a spring wagon. After that we, on one occasion, we went to the colored church in Belgium, in Vermilion County, and after the service we were asked to make speeches, and we all made what we considered very eloquent speeches. We felt that we were going to get those votes certainly, but when the speeches were concluded one of the elders arose and asked -- he said, "Which one of these gentlemen is Judge Shuey? He is the one I'm going to vote for." Well, we left there somewhat depressed and felt that we would have to campaign much more vigorously if we were going to be elected.

Judge Platt has made an excellent record, with his ability to combine his kindness and his fairness with his legal learning and acumen, in rendering excellent opinions. He has a very low reversal record in both the Federal and in State courts, and he has always been an active and hard worker and has kept his docket up to date at all times. In recognition of his ability, as Mr. Levin has said, he has been asked on numerous occasions to sit on the Circuit Court of Appeals of this Circuit and has rendered excellent decisions there. Also, as Mr. Levin has pointed out, there is something else, other factors that must

be taken into consideration with reference to the success of Judge Platt, and that is his wonderful wife and his three fine daughters. He has been very fortunate to have the support at all times of his able and talented partner, Mrs. Platt, and his daughters, and I know that he is very proud of all of them.

Mr. Levin has stated here many sentiments and expressed many sentiments and things of telling about Judge Platt's ability, and I will not reiterate those things. I don't think it is necessary, but I do want to say once more that I consider it an honor and a privilege to be here, and I have great admiration for Judge Platt as a man, a lawyer, and a Judge; and I think the people of this District and of this Circuit are fortunate to have such a man to serve on the bench here for so many years.

I believe that this portrait is a fine thing to have here to commemorate the service that Judge Platt has rendered and as a reminder to the people of this District of him, and it will always remain here as a record of Judge Platt's service in this District; and it is certainly a fine tribute to the Judge that you have all come here today to honor him. I think we should thank Judge Hastings and these other judges, and the lawyers and all of you that have come here to make this occasion so unforgettable and pleasant as it has been.

Thank you very much.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: Thank you, Judge Van Meter.

HONORABLE CRAIG VAN METER: Thank you.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: The immediate question for decision before the Court is whether or not we will accept this portrait.

Casper, in order to relieve any apprehension you may have on that score, it is now ordered by the Court, with a great deal of pleasure, that this portrait be accepted both in the spirit and in the manner in which it has been so fittingly presented.

The Court is honored that Mr. Justice Bristow, who graces the Bench here on this occasion, I have been informed by the committee that at the luncheon to follow Mr. Justice Bristow will state the case for the Republicans.

First, I should like to express the appreciation of the Court to the Bar Association of the Seventh Federal Circuit in making this portrait possible. With me here today is Mr. Levin, the President of the Association, Mr. David Shipman, the Secretary of the Association, Mr. Edward Haight, a member of the Board of Governors of the Association, and standing at the door, Mr. Robert Williams, who is Chairman of the Portrait and Memorials Committee of the Association. These gentlemen have come from Chicago in order to lend their presence here and do honor to Judge Platt; and I will say to them now on behalf of the Court that we do sincerely appreciate the interest the Bar Association has taken, not only in the presentation of Judge Platt's portrait but those of many other judges, both on the Court of Appeals and

in the District Courts.

The Bar Association renders a very signal service to the Federal Courts in the Seventh Circuit. We are unique in this respect, that this is the only one of the eleven circuits in the United States which has its own bar association. We are further unique in the respect that at the time of the annual Judicial Conference of the Seventh Circuit, which is held by statute each year and will be in Indianapolis May 10th and 11th, next month, the first day of our Judicial Conference is a joint session with the members of the Bar Association. We find that of great benefit to the Court, and we enjoy the fellowship, naturally, that flows from such an association. They render many services other than this to the judiciary, and I can't speak too highly of the work that they have done over the years and will continue to do.

Now, if I may have a personal word. This is the first time I have had the honor of gracing the Bench of this District. However, I feel that I have had and do have a very close kinship to this Court because the first four months that I served on the Court of Appeals in Chicago I had the very distinct honor of serving with the late Judge Walter C. Lindley. I am happy to see Mrs. Lindley here this morning. We regarded him as perhaps the senior and best Judge on the Court, and I know I have a personal debt to him, because in that four months, two months of which we lived together at the Knickerbocker Hotel almost constantly, I found Judge Lindley to be the source of encouragement to me and

of great help and assistance in learning, in some manner at least, how to embark on duties which were strange to one who had been engaged in the practice for thirty-five years, so to come to Judge Lindley's former courtroom gives me great personal satisfaction.

To be privileged to participate in this ceremony honoring Judge Platt is an equal satisfaction. I suppose that the Court of Appeals has the best opportunity to become acquainted and to, in some way, evaluate the work of the nineteen Federal District Judges in the Seventh Circuit of anyone else. We are constantly called upon of course to review their decisions and you inevitably make an estimate of what you yourself may think of the work product that comes from these nineteen District Judges. And I might say parenthetically that under a bill passed by the House and previously passed by the Senate and now in conference that we will perhaps soon have four more Federal District Judges and an additional Judge on the Court of Appeals. I can say to you, as I have said to many others, that our Court is unanimous in the thought that Casper Platt is one of the best District Judges in the Seventh Circuit. We don't have too many appeals from him. Evidently he keeps them decided down here, and it is on a rare occasion, and then only because of a difference of opinion perhaps about what a statute may mean or what the law is on a particular subject, that we ever have occasion to reverse him, and that is no discredit to him. He might even be right and we might be wrong.

Not only is his work distinguished here by its excellence but I think Judge Platt, perhaps as much if not more than any

living District Judge now in the Circuit, has served on our Court of Appeals by special designation, as I say, perhaps more than any other Judge in the Circuit. I know something about that because for the past approximate two years it has been my job to see that the Court is manned. We have had a vacancy for some eighteen months which has left us short-handed, and I have many times called upon Judge Platt to come and sit with us in Chicago, as a designated Judge of the Court of Appeals, and he has always responded most willingly and happily whenever it was possible for him to come; and we have come to accept his decisions and his opinions as a colleague on the Court up there with equal satisfaction as we do with the active members of the Court.

I say to you gentlemen of the Bar here that you are indeed fortunate to have a man of Judge Platt's integrity, professional intelligence and ability to be your presiding District Judge. I say to you also, you members of the Seventh Circuit Bar Association, that you not only honor Judge Platt in presenting this portrait to the Court, but in doing so you honor the judiciary. Casper, on behalf of my colleagues on the Court of Appeals, the rest of whom regretted that they could not be here today, and as Chief Judge of the Circuit I can speak for the other District Judges in bringing you their best wishes and sincere congratulations today, to which I add my own. We are happy that Mrs. Platt and the Judge's family can be here.

So we now formally accept this portrait, and I think Judge Platt is entitled to at least some rebuttal. Judge Platt.



JUDGE CASPER PLATT: Judge Hastings, my good friend, Justice Bristow, and members of the Bar and good friends, I don't know what I should say after all the things that were said.

First, I want to express my thanks to the Bar Association of the Seventh Federal Circuit for this occasion and for the photograph. I haven't seen the photograph but Mr. Al Hallett took a picture, so I guess I can't deny it. I want to thank Judge Hastings, not alone for taking the time to come down here and presiding, and for the things he said about me; and also my good friend, Sam Levin, whom I have known for about fifty years. There is no need to hide my age since Sam told you when I was born. You know, I spoke at the Rotary Club the other day, and I had to give a history of myself and I termed it an obituary, but I never mentioned when I was born or any date all the way through, so they don't know when I was born or how old I am but this time Sam exposed it all.

I want to thank Craig Van Meter for the good things he has said. And while I am thanking, I want to thank the arrangements committee and Mr. Robert Williams of the Federal Bar of the Seventh Circuit who has arranged this, and our good President, "Spud" Snyder, head of our Vermillion County Bar.

It is a great satisfaction to me to have my youngest daughter and her husband, Dr. Martin, here too, and I'm sorry that my other two daughters couldn't be here, but I am sure that the one in Kansas is with us in spirit because she called me

last night. But the one in Brazil is just too far away to have any contact with.

You know, everything that has been said about me is true to the best of my information, knowledge, and belief. Now you can't get me for perjury on any of that because there is no jurat attached. It isn't often that one has the opportunity during his lifetime to hear personal remarks which would probably be appropriate at a memorial service of the Bar Association. And by the way, I am happy that my old associate and court reporter is here and transcribing all this so that you will all have it later. Bill Carter has been with me as my court reporter for twenty-five years, and he's traveled up and down the roads with me and he's been around this court, and I doubt if we've ever had a cross word between us.

Now, let me warn the Vermillion County Bar Association that whenever you hold a memorial service for me -- we've had discussions about these memorial services -- that I'll be out there and way up in the centerfield bleachers listening, and you're going to have a hard time, a difficult time equalling what has been said about me this morning. Well, let me assure you that the Vermillion County Bar Association has always done itself proud in honoring its brother lawyers. I have attended a great many memorial services and for some very good friends who were excellent lawyers and members of our Bar. I hesitate to mention any of them at this time for fear I might forget some of them. You know, I've always been proud of the fact that I am a member

of the Bar. There are no better fellows, more honorable or honest, than one finds among the members of the Bar, and I can say this with some experience and acquaintance over quite an area of this country. Lawyers have always given good service to our country in both war and in peace, and from the beginning of our good old United States to the present time, and I'm sure they will always continue to do so.

You have been told of some of the high points of my life, and I'm thankful that my faults have not been mentioned, but there are a couple of events that I must emphasize. In the first place, it was most fortunate that I decided to go to the University of Chicago for my law course, or my last two years of law. It was there that I met my wife, Jeanette Regent, and courted her and induced her to marry me. I've had a great help-mate, not only in the household but in sound advice and in encouragement in both my business affairs, outside of my work on the bench, and also political matters. I can well remember that when I decided to run for Circuit Judge the first time, I did so with the thought of being defeated, but outwardly of course I tried to impress everybody that I was going to win. I don't know whether any of you have ever made a race for office but it is a tough job. And it would have been almost impossible for me to have kept at the task of campaigning without the help of Jeanette. My father was living when I made my first campaign. He wasn't a lawyer but he always had a business partner by the

name of E. R. E. Kimbrough who was a lawyer. My father encouraged me to make the race but he, like other old-time Democrats, didn't think any Democrat in this Circuit except Judge E. R. E. Kimbrough, his business partner, could ever be elected. As some of you know, Judge Kimbrough served twelve years, from 1903 to 1915, in our Circuit Court. Fortunately I was elected, with the help of my friends, and I had the pleasure and gratification of my father attending the first time I held court. At that time he was eighty-two years old and not too active. It must have been a great satisfaction to him, too, because it was his desire, and I might say, his direction that I became a lawyer. It was always my desire to be an engineer or specialize in mathematics, which was my forte and best subject at the University of Illinois.

It will be twenty-eight years ago this coming June since I was elected Circuit Judge. These twenty-eight years have gone very quickly and they have been most enjoyable. What record I have made on the bench has been due to the excellent lawyers who appeared in court in the cases I have heard. I will always maintain and will always hold it as a fact that a good Bar gives a judge the opportunity to make the correct decisions. It is the poorly tried case which makes the most difficulty and the greatest possibility for error. When I held my first term of the Circuit Court in Vermilion County in October of 1933 the County Bar, and it was an excellent one, gave me a thorough education for which I will always be thankful.

May I, before I close, pay my respect to the Honorable Walter C. Lindley whom I followed in this Court. He was a most able and energetic judge, and he served in this Court for about twenty-seven years. I considered it an honor to have followed him on this bench. He was a fine person and I treasured his friendship.

I might also say a few words about the gentleman that is sitting next to me, Judge Hastings. John Hastings is not only an able member of the Court of Appeals and a most capable judge but he's a good fellow and he's a good friend of mine. One of the great satisfactions to me, as you fellows know that have been acquainted with me, has been the many friendships that I have been able to accumulate. I have always appreciated my friends and I shall always continue to do so.

Maybe I have said too much and talked too long, but it's been a pleasure to talk to you, and I want to thank you all for attending this ceremony this morning. Thank you very much.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: Thank you, Judge Platt.

Now I have one more personal thought to express, and I didn't express it before Judge Platt responded because I didn't want him to have any opportunity to rebut what I was about to say. We have a vacancy on our Court and soon will have an additional judge to be appointed, so there are going to be two judges appointed shortly, I hope, on the Court of Appeals. Casper, about the nicest thing I can think of to say about you is that nothing would give me or the members of our Court any more pleasure than

to have the President of the United States designate you to sit there permanently.

Mr. Snyder, are there any announcements to be made?

MR. CARROLL E. SNYDER: If the Court please, I think this concludes the courtroom ceremony. However, we hope all those present will meet with us at the Hotel Wolford on the mezzanine at 12:30, for luncheon. We have had some requests for time for additional rebuttal, off the record, and we may extend that privilege at that time.

CHIEF JUDGE JOHN S. HASTINGS: Before I announce the adjournment of the court, I know that all of you will want the opportunity to personally greet Judge Platt down in front of the bench.

Court is now adjourned.

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