

# JOHN JOSEPH SIRICA

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*"Watergate taught us that our system is not invulnerable to the arrogance of power, to misdeeds by power-hungry individuals, and that we must always be on guard against selecting such people as our leaders."*

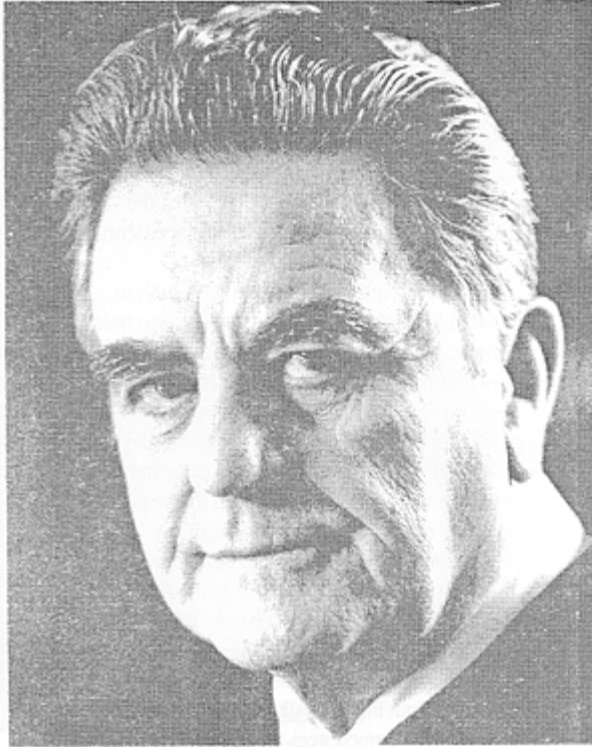
—John Sirica

John Joseph Sirica was born in Waterbury on March 19, 1904. His childhood was spent in poverty as his father tried to earn a living as a barber, a grocer, and a restaurateur. The family moved around the country, finally settling in Washington, D.C. when John was 14 years of age.

As a student at George Washington Law School, Sirica supported himself by working as a boxing coach and sparring partner. He remained a boxing enthusiast and became a friend of Jack Dempsey, the best man at his wedding. He received his law degree in 1926 and set up a private practice in Washington, D.C.

He was appointed United States Assistant District Attorney for the District of Columbia in 1930 and, according to Time magazine, Sirica "developed a reputation as a somewhat excitable courtroom lawyer."

He resigned his post in 1934 and entered private practice. In one of his first important cases he defended columnist Walter Winchell concerning a libel suit. He became active in Republican politics and was a party spokesman to Italian-American organizations. His career flourished when he became chief trial lawyer for the prestigious Washington law firm of Hogan & Hartson.



In 1957, President Eisenhower appointed him to the U.S. District court for the District of Columbia where he tried a wide range of cases including murder, anti-trust, and contempt of Congress trials. For 15 years he earned a reputation as a tough, hard working, forthright and honest judge.

In January 1973, as Sirica was looking forward to impending retirement, he was thrust into the national spotlight when seven men were arrested for burglary and wiretapping of the Democratic National Committee campaign headquarters at Watergate. Sensing the importance of the case, he decided to take the assignment.

Sirica was chief judge of the district court in 1974 when the Watergate grand jury indicted President Nixon's Chief of Staff H.R. Haldermann and Presidential Assistant John Erlichmann on criminal charges. Judge Sirica presided over the case which began October 1, 1974. The Watergate trial, one of the most famous in United States history, unraveled the entire conspiracy and the cover-up by high government officials. It led to the first resignation of an American president.

He was named Time magazine's 1973 Man of the Year, given the Award of Merit of the American Judges Association and became perhaps the most respected and best-known judge in the country.

When he died on August 14, 1992 the New York Times called Sirica a "true American folk hero."