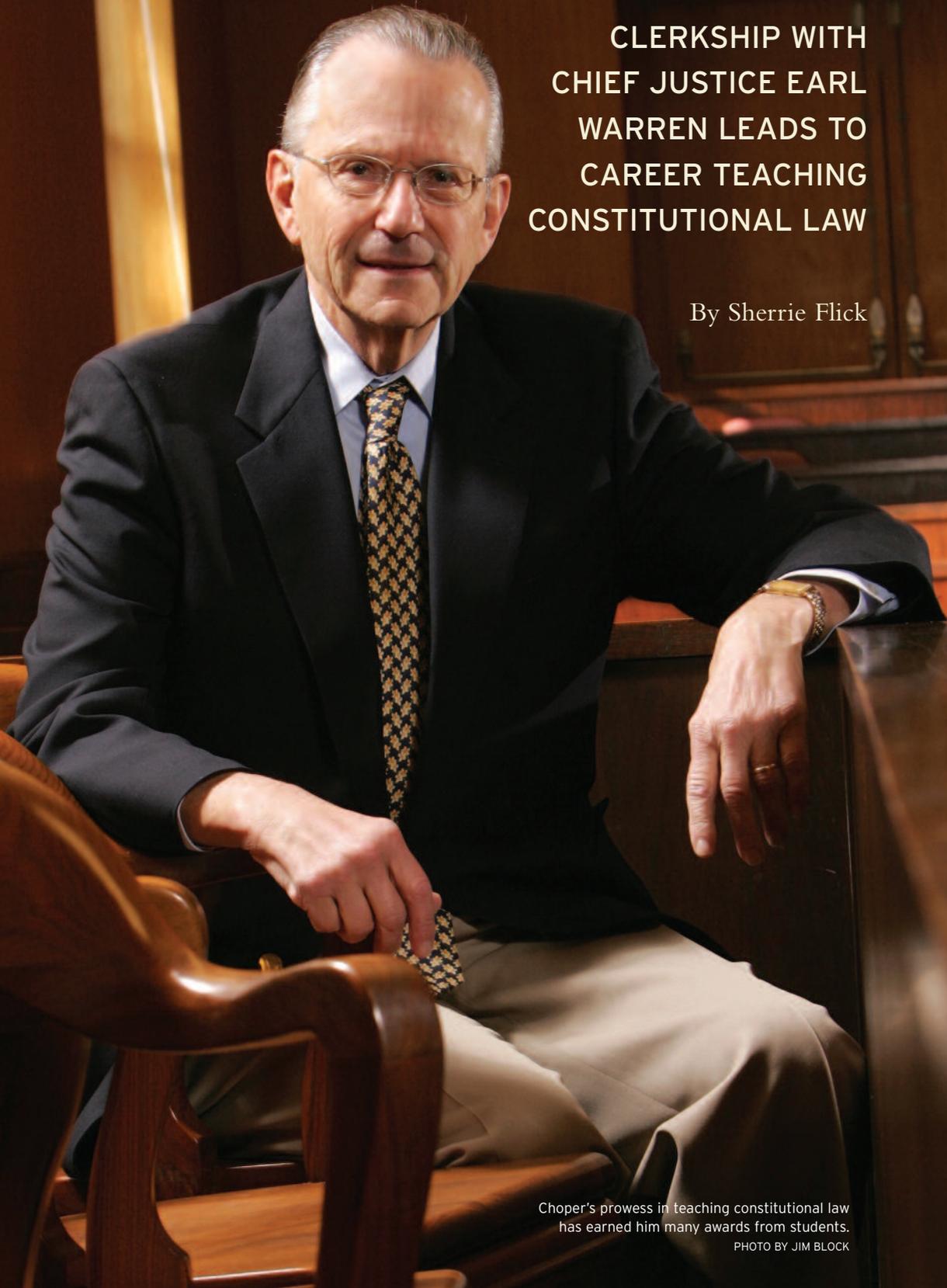


Constitutional

CLERKSHIP WITH
CHIEF JUSTICE EARL
WARREN LEADS TO
CAREER TEACHING
CONSTITUTIONAL LAW

By Sherrie Flick



Choper's prowess in teaching constitutional law has earned him many awards from students.

PHOTO BY JIM BLOCK

Calling

THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA BUSTLED with counterculture in 1965. At University of California, Berkeley, the addition of a new law school faculty member might have flown below the radar of most hippies. But Jesse Choper had served a clerkship with Earl Warren, chief justice of the United States.

With interests in baseball, basketball, football, the racetrack and classical music, he would become an expert in constitutional law and dedicate his life to teaching others, never having owned a lava lamp. The hippies are gone now, but Choper is still there.

The Wilkes-Barre native was born into a Russian-Polish-Jewish immigrant family. He graduated from public high school and then attended Wilkes on scholarship after winning a math competition.

Choper doesn't put on airs. He seems surprised by the success he credits partly to his early years on the Wilkes debate team. "The debate team participated in the major tours in the East, including the national competition in West Point," recalls Choper. "It was a very strong experience for me in terms of learning how to engage in logical thinking. I then sharpened that a good deal in law school."

Choper was initially drawn to accounting and was headed to a job with accounting firm Price Waterhouse when Wilkes English professor and debate coach Arthur Kruger convinced him to try law. Choper attended University of Pennsylvania's law school while teaching accounting at its Wharton School.

After law school, he was offered a clerkship with Chief Justice Warren. Warren took on civil rights and civil liberties during a turbulent time in U.S. history and helped to make the Supreme Court



Choper, right, and John Bucholtz comprised the Wilkes Debating Society two-man team in 1955-56. They're shown prior to a Johns Hopkins tournament where they placed third. PHOTO FROM WILKES ARCHIVES

the extraordinarily powerful and controversial institution it is today.

"It was a heady experience," admits Choper. "Chief Justice Warren was a wonderful person. I was one of three people working for him. He was revered. He was 70 years old at the time, which seemed old to me then," Choper says with a chuckle. His time with Warren piqued his interest in constitutional law.

"Constitutional law involves a large variety of questions about the relationship of our government and its constituent parts. Some are of the highest importance, and some are less important," says Choper. "But they're all very challenging. My study of the U.S. Supreme Court is the study of a critically important institution. I want to have an impact in helping explain that to others."

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ROLE MODELS
for my own career
as a professor.

- Stephen F. Ross, Former Student

Choper served as dean of Berkeley's Boalt School of Law from 1982 to 1992. His greatest pride is in the success of his students. "I've been given a lot of satisfaction from students who have told me what an important impact I've had on their education."

Former student Stephen F. Ross, director of the Institute for Sports Law, Policy and Research at Penn State's Dickinson

School of Law, notes that Choper's influence wasn't purely academic. "His good word to then-Professor Ruth Bader Ginsburg was critical to my selection as one of her first clerks. He truly is one of my role models for my own career as a professor."

He recalls learning the Socratic method. "Jesse would always call on one student for some light, introductory questions, and then on a second student to provoke a disagreement. If the second student disagreed, he'd referee a fine discussion. If the second student lamely agreed, Jesse would then interrogate him/her. Our class quickly learned it was better to argue with a classmate than to tangle with Choper!"

Choper resides in Lafayette, Calif., with wife Mari. He has two sons, Marc and Ted, and two stepdaughters, Molly and Emily.

Jesse Choper, Lafayette, Calif.

B.S., Business Administration 1957

Career: A member of the University of California, Berkeley, law faculty and expert in constitutional law since 1965.

Notable: Clerked for Earl Warren, chief justice of the United States, following graduation from University of Pennsylvania School of Law in 1960.