

Justice William A. Newsom, Jr.

Placer Superior Court 1975-1978

First District Court of Appeal 1978-1995

Justice William A. Newsom, Jr. was born in San Francisco on February 4, 1934. After graduation from St. Ignatious High School he received a Bachelor of Arts degree in French Literature from the University of San Francisco and a Master of Arts degree in English Literature from Stanford University. Upon graduating from Stanford Law School and admission to the California Bar in 1962, attorney Newsom began the private practice of law where one of his clients was the Getty Oil family. In 1973, he assisted the Getty family with the delivery of ransom money after John Paul Getty III, the grandson of the family patriarch J. Paul Getty, was kidnapped. He later developed a sole practice in Tahoe City, where he became interested in environmental cases.

In 1975 he relocated to Dutch Flat after his appointment to the Placer County Superior Court where he presided in the Historic Courthouse in Auburn for 3 years until his appointment to the First District Court of Appeal in San Francisco. He was skilled in business and finance. He was also a scholar and student of literature and language. These skills served to not only enhance his legal analysis but also assisted drafting opinions that were artful and eloquent. He authored a very notable opinion in 1986 where the court held the Bohemian Club could not engage in gender based employment discrimination.

His son, Governor Gavin Newson, describes him as “. . . a public servant of profound accomplishment and a powerful voice for individual rights and enviromental protection.” Even in his private capacity he continued his pursuit of justice, writing to the parole board to advocate for the release of individuals who he thought deserved release, including assisting to clear a man who was framed for committing murders decades earlier. He championed enviornmental causes, and was a long time member of the Sierra Club and helped to form the Mountain Lion Foundation. He is remembered in his Alta/Dutch Flat community and throughout California as a man of compassion, decency, generosity, humor and wit.

He was married to his wife Tessa Menzies from 1966 to 1972 and during that time welcomed their son, Gavin, and later their daughter Hilary.