

Hayden W. Pitman
P.O. Box 4740
Incline Village, NV 89450

November 8, 1980

Mr. Alfred Carlson
County Assessor
70 West Hedding St.
County Government Center East Wing
San Jose, CA 95110

Dear Al:

I have been told you are doing a fine job as Assessor. Of course this pleases me very much.

About the pictures: I can get a picture of my Father. I thought (sic) my picture was tucked away somewhere in the office. The county photographer took a picture of me in the then new (1960) county office building. George Noll talked to me about the same thing you have in mind. He had two prints made of the picture of me and hung one in his office and gave the other to me which I would like to keep. George told me when I was in Santa Cruz that Dwight had taken the picture down during one of his campaigns – but the picture should be around the office somewhere. If not try the county photographer. If you can't get a print, I'll send you the one I have.

About former assessors: My Father, C.Y. Pitman, was elected to office in 1914, and took office the first Monday in January 1915. He remained in office until his death Feb. 4th 1934. The Board of Supervisors appointed me to fill his unexpired term. I was elected for a full term the following August (the primary election was then in August) and was returned to office six more times without opposition. I retired January 1961. I was 33 years old when I first became assessor.

The assessor before my Father and the man my Father worked for beginning in 1902 was Lewis A. Spitzer. Mr. Spitzer became assessor around 1890 possibly 1886. I have a deputy account book of his for 1893 showing salaries etc. which might be of interest to you. Information prior to that time should be available from the records of (1) County Clerk or Recorder (2) Board of Supervisors (3) Morgue of Mercury-Herald. There were many kinds of taxes in those days – infirmity tax, poll tax, unsecured property tax assessed, billed and collected by the assessor, and during my time, a weird one, the alien property tax. The assessor received in addition to his small salary a percentage of the unsecured roll and agricultural reports. The county paid the assessor a small salary which he kept but most of the percentage monies was used in the hiring of part time deputies.

The assessor furnished the furniture and files for his own (personal) office. There was no social security, no retirement fund, no sick or vacation benefits. There was no personnel Department. The assessor hired and fired at will and if defeated in an election all the employees lost their jobs and in some cases (in other offices) this actually happened. All of this meant that there was very little real security in the lives of these people. When I took office all of the percentage allowances had been eliminated and the county paid for all employees which in 1934 were – 1 chief deputy, 5 full time deputies, 1 personal property deputy, 1 map deputy, 23 part time field deputies (4 mo) 7 deputies (4 mo) who wrote the assessment roll by hand and 1 deputy who prepared the unsecured roll (6 mo). Several areas of the county were covered by deputies driving horse and buggies. The salaries ranged from \$100.00 a month for part time office help, 125.00 for field deputies who were allowed \$10 a month for gasoline or hay. Full time office workers received from \$125.00 to \$140.00 a month, the chief deputy \$200 a month with the assessor receiving \$300.00 a month! The total budget (everything) was considerably under \$100,000.00.

The State Board of Equalization was great on statistics. How many tons of hay and the number of acres, prunes apricots (sic), peaches, apples, dairy cattle, beef cattle – calves, yearlings-hogs, sheep, goats, chickens – every damn thing you can possibly think of – all tabulated by hand with the use of a hand operated adding machine. Today the computer would take care of the problem – but then just a headache.

I have rambled on and could tell much more – the Stewart-Riley plan of taxation-assessments of boot leggers, slot machines and automobiles, problems created by the war-problems of better salaries and better help. Of course the real job was the complete re-organization of all Assessors' offices in the State of California. This was begun in 1936 by the creation of a committee with the consent of the State Board of Equalization called the committee on Assessment Practice and Procedure. It was headed by Jack Hartman of Los Angeles Co., one of the best to be found anywhere. The State appointed John Keith-another smart cookie as secretary of the committee and Dixwell Pierce, Secretary of the Board and one of the best known tax attorneys (sic) in the country to be consultant. I was lucky and was appointed to the committee when Hartman retired a few years afterward. I became chairman of the committee. This committee was in those days the final word in assessment procedures.

Our reports drew attention all over the country and John Keith and I were asked to assist in conferences (expenses paid) held in Boston, New York, Miami, Austin, Tex., Medford, Ore., Salt Lake City-even the wild city of Chicago. These trips were exciting and constructive and many by train. We met fine appraisers, and office administrators some who like John Zangerle of Cleveland and Cuthbert Reeves of New York, who some years afterwards appraised the entire Public Utility system for the S. B. of E. These reports plus the attention received led to the selection of the Santa Clara County Assessor's Office and its Assessor as #1 in the U.S.A. by the I.A.A.O. The award was made in Dallas, Texas. These reports and the many books I still have are now only history. They merely show that public officials did care and they tried very hard to improve their offices. Most of these old reports should be somewhere in the office-if not I have a copy of most of them.

Should you wish any of the above please let me know prior to Thanksgiving. My granddaughter-a deputy Sheriff in the Santa Clara County office will be with us and can act as messenger. This also applies to books by Zangerle and Reeves. If you want them you can have them.

Good luck and best wishes.

Hayden Pitman

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P.O. Box 8836
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March 24, 1982

Mr. A.E. Carlson
5142 Mission Dr.
San Jose, CA 95124

Dear Al:

Thank you for your birthday card. I am more than please (sic) that you are "home free" in the 1982 elections. It must be a great feeling for you to know you don't have to go three months of worry and expense.

I was appointed Feb. 1934 – I was 33 years old. I had opposition, primarily because, in those days, elective positions were a sort of retirement haven for ex-business men and it was not heard of, for a "kid" 33 years old to hold public office. Thank God-my hair was grey even in those days. I won easily and then in 1938, 1942, 1946, 1950, 1954 and 1958 – no opposition (Geo. had a free ride in 1962).

I think, of course you are in a different ball game and a new ball park, that the second time around is the toughest. If you are home free in 1982 – from now on should be a breeze – as long as you watch the "little fires" and put them out before they get too hot to handle.

I know the family your wife came from and I have a hunch she helped too. I liked them all.

If you, both of you, ever get up this way, Marjorie and I would be happy if you could stop by.

I had my quarterly medical yesterday. My lungs have cleared which takes the pressure off the heart. The very dry air has done what pills, etc. can't do in San Jose – so it looks like – here is where I stay. The doctors were correct.

Again, thank you for your card and congratulations and best wishes on your term as Assessor.

As always,

Hayden