



PRESIDENT'S PAGE

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Danni Murphy's Indelible Mark on OCBA History

The Orange County legal community recently lost one of its influential leaders with the passing of former OCBA President Danni Murphy. While I never had the privilege of meeting Danni, my service as OCBA President is greatly influenced by the monumental work Danni did in chronicling the first 100 years of the OCBA. In learning about OCBA history, I was inspired to create a podcast focused on delving into the rich history of the the Orange County legal community.

Danni was a native Southern Californian who graduated from UC Berkeley and earned her law degree from Western State College of Law. She worked as an associate for the firm Pohlson and Moorhead and then with the OC Public Defender's Office. In addition to serving as OCBA President in 2001, Danni served on the OCBA Board of Directors, Chair of the OCBA's Law Day community programs, Chair of the OCBA's Legislative Resolutions Committee, among other leadership roles.

Danni was President of the OCBA during its historic centennial year and, in each of her columns, wrote about historic milestones of the OCBA's 100-year history. In her January 2001 column, Danni expressed hope that in looking back at our history, it would help inform the future. She aptly stated, "[a]s contradictory as it may sound, the best way to look forward is by studying the past."

Danni's writings highlight the integral role the OCBA played in the development of the Orange County legal community. She reminded us that the county itself had only been formed twelve years prior to the OCBA. With the convergence of railroads bringing new settlers to the area and the discovery of oil, the population in Orange County grew, and this growth necessitated the development of a more sophisticated legal practice. Danni illuminated the humble beginnings of the OC legal community including that the county's first Superior Court Judge, J.W. Towner, had to hold his first official court session on his front lawn. She also highlighted the OCBA's close historical connection with the Superior Court including the fact that the launch of the OCBA took place at the then newly constructed courthouse in 1901. The OCBA's original constitution was focused on regulating OC attorneys, such as establishing minimum fees members could charge. Before there was a State Bar, the OCBA also sought to protect the integrity of the practice of law and one of its charges was to see that ethical violations were brought to the attention of the courts.

Danni also reminded us of landmark cases that originated in OC including *Mendez v. Westminster*, *Grimshaw v. Ford Motor Co.*, and many others. She educated us about the role the OCBA played in the establishment of legal institutions in OC, including the appointment of a Public Defender in 1943 to represent indigent people in criminal

cases, the formation of Legal Aid Society of Orange County (now CLA SoCal), and the building of a federal courthouse in Santa Ana.

The population continued to surge and by 1966, Orange County became the second largest county in the state. The building of Disneyland in 1955 contributed to that growth and put the county on the map. The surging population growth resulted in an increase in Superior Court cases and in the 1967-68 fiscal year, each Superior Court judge had 1000 cases. The increased filings lead to the opening of new courthouses across the county. In the 80s, the county saw its population exceed 2 million, its median family income increased 73% (from \$28,705 to \$49,916), and the number of businesses rose to more than 50,000. The 80s also ushered in the establishment of a Court of Appeal in OC and the building of a federal courthouse in Santa Ana (which was first proposed by the OCBA in 1973).

As OCBA President, Danni united the OC legal community around its rich history. Alan Crivaro, who worked with Danni at the Public

Defender's Office and served with her in various OCBA roles, shared that Danni "readily realized the opportunity presented by celebrating the 100th anniversary of OCBA's founding during her term. She dedicated her term to inviting all of us to join in the celebration and to welcome the future by understanding the past." Joel Miliband, OCBA's 2000 President, remarked that Danni "was the most caring, loving and devoted friend, who always had a smile and a kind word. She was dedicated to ensuring a fair and just legal system and worked hard to elevate the OCBA to meet the needs of its members and the community at large." Presiding Judge Maria Hernandez, who worked with Danni at the Public Defender's Office, shared that Danni "was deeply involved in



the OCBA and knew the promising work and impact we could have in our community. She was the epitome of a servant-leader and inspired those around her to follow her in her very humble walk. She was able to bring folks together and convene some of the most unlikely partners to achieve better outcomes for those we served."

Danni wrote in one of her columns that "[w]e learn what is right from that which survives and still shines, whether it be the antiques built and the craftsmen who built them at the turn of the Twentieth Century; or in the quality of the practice of law and the members of the Bar, who lived 100 years ago." Danni Murphy made an indelible mark on the Orange County legal community, and she continues to shine.

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