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MAGAZINE



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INNS OF COURT

by Robyn A. Lewis

The Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court kicked off its 2007-2008 season at the Mission Inn on September 12, 2007.

For those of you unfamiliar with the Leo A. Deegan Inn, it is the local chapter of the American Inns of Court, which is an organization designed to “improve the skills, professionalism and ethics of the bench and bar.”

Each inn is comprised of judges and lawyers of different levels of expertise and from different areas of practice. There are 64 members in total. Membership is through an application process, which generally takes place from June until August each year. Every member of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court is required to be a member in good standing of the Riverside County Bar Association.

The members are divided into teams of eight, each of which is led by a judicial officer. Each team has two attorney members of significant experience, known as “Attorney Masters.” There are also two “Barrister” members, who are attorneys with intermediate experience, and three “Associate” attorney members, who are newer members of the bar.

The inn meets on a monthly basis. At each meeting, a different team puts on a presentation regarding various legal topics.

This year, the Executive Board of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, which is chaired by its President, the Honorable Bernard Schwartz of the Riverside Superior Court, made some notable changes to the structure of its programming. Each team has been assigned a legendary judge or attorney from the Riverside legal community and a topic that suits that particular judge or attorney’s own area of expertise. Such legends include attorneys David Moore, Art Littleworth, Virginia Blumenthal, Grover Trask and members of the bench Justice John Gabbert (retired), Senior District Judge Robert Timlin (Central District of California), Judge E. Michael Kaiser (retired) and Judge Victor Miceli (retired).

The Board also voted to bestow two awards at the end of the year on a notable attorney and a notable judicial officer from the Riverside legal

community. The “Attorney of the Year” award has been named in honor of Terry Bridges of Reid & Hellyer. The “Jurist of the Year” award has been named in honor of Judge Elwood “Woody” Rich. Members of the inn will have the opportunity to nominate candidates for these awards during the course of the Inns year and the awards will be given at the end of the Inns season.

There are also two other awards that are given to inn members. A perpetual trophy was instituted, to be awarded to a team for the best presentation. An award in honor of the late Louise Biddle is also given to an inn member who exemplifies the goals of the inn. Prior recipients include Robyn Lewis and Jenna Acuff.

At the September 12th meeting, Terry Bridges spoke to the inn members and asked them to remember its namesake, Leo A. Deegan. Judge Deegan first came to Riverside in 1946 as a deputy in the district attorney’s office. He was an assistant district attorney when he was appointed as the county’s first public defender in 1948. Judge Deegan served as chief deputy county counsel and went on to accept the position of city attorney for the City of Riverside in 1958.

He was appointed to the bench in 1959 by then-Governor Edmund Brown, where he served until his retirement in 1975. The Riverside chapter of the Inns was named after him when it was first organized in 1985. Terry Bridges explained that Judge Deegan personified excellence in professionalism, ethics, civility and legal skills.



Judge Schwartz recognizing Past President of Inns
Paul Grech



Terry Bridges

Robyn A. Lewis, a member of the Bar Publications Committee, is with the Law Offices of Harlan B. Kistler. She is also Co-Chair of Membership for the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court.

