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2018-2019



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Riverside County Bar Association
4129 Main Street, Suite 100
Riverside, California 92501

Telephone 951-682-1015	Facsimile 951-682-0106
Internet www.riversidecountybar.com	E-mail rcba@riversidecountybar.com

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THE LEO A. DEEGAN AMERICAN INN OF COURT

by L. Alexandra Fong

The Leo A. Deegan American Inn of Court (“Deegan Inn”) is a professional organization comprised of attorneys and judicial officers and organized under the American Inns of Court. It was founded in 1992 by Sharon Waters, Honorable Robert J. Timlin, Stanley Orrock, James Heiting, and Terry Bridges. Preparations for the establishment of the Deegan Inn began in 1991 after Presiding Justice Manuel A. Ramirez called upon then-attorney Waters to look into starting a local chapter of the American Inns of Court, which itself was established in 1985. As Mr. Orrock discussed at the September 26, 2018 Orientation, Judge Timlin picked the group of attorneys who would become instrumental in organizing the Deegan Inn.

The Deegan Inn was named for the Honorable Leo A. Deegan, a legend of the Riverside legal community. Mr. Deegan first began practicing in Riverside in 1946 as a member of the District Attorney’s office, before promoting to assistant district attorney. In 1948, he was appointed by the Board of Supervisors as the first Public Defender for the County of Riverside. In 1949, Mr. Deegan transferred to the Riverside County Counsel’s office, where he remained until 1951, when he left to enter private practice. In 1953, he returned to the District Attorney’s office as an assistant district attorney. Later that year, he returned to the County Counsel’s office as chief deputy, a position he held until 1958, when he became the thirteenth City Attorney for the city of Riverside. He was appointed to the bench by Governor Edmund Brown in 1959. He served as a judge on the Riverside Superior Court until his retirement in 1975. Over the next ten years, he served as an assigned judge in various courts in northern California. During 1988-1989, he served for 14 months on the Court of Appeal, Third Appellate District, in Sacramento.¹

The Deegan Inn focuses on improving the skills and professionalism of the bench and the bar. Each month, the organization holds a dinner meeting, during which a team of members presents a program that focuses on matters of ethics, legal skills, civility, and professionalism.

At the September orientation, the Deegan Inn named two emeritus members: The Honorable Robert J. Timlin, who was awarded this status posthumously, and attorney Stanley Orrock. Caroline Timlin, widow of the late judicial officer, was on hand to accept the award. Mr. Orrock spoke to the Inn members about Mr. Deegan’s legacy within the community.

At the September orientation, the Deegan Inn also named the Honorable Meredith Jury (Retired) as the recipient of the Douglas E. Weathers Honorary Member Award. Judge Jury decided to be an active participant in the Deegan

Inn and will be presenting as part of Team Franz Kafka in April 2019.

The theme for the 2018-2019 program year is fairy tales. Each team is named for a writer who is also an attorney. At the September orientation, each team was able to pick the fairy tale, presentation date, and team namesake. Each team’s presentation should generally focus on practical legal skills and emphasize ethics, civility and professionalism in the practice of law.

As part of the Achieving Excellence Program of the American Inns of Court, the Deegan Inn engages in professional outreach with other members of the legal community. At the December 5, 2018 meeting, the Deegan Inn will honor judicial officers serving in Riverside County. At the January 23, 2019 meeting, the Deegan Inn will honor public service attorneys in Riverside County. At the March 27, 2019 meeting, the Deegan Inn will hold an “open house” where current members of the Inn may invite attorneys and judicial officers whom they believe would make excellent additions to the Inn. At the April 24, 2019 meeting, the Deegan Inn will honor its alumni, emeritus, and honorary members.

The Deegan Inn formed two community service teams in its 2017-2018 program year. Continuing this call for service, the Deegan Inn formed one community service team for its 2018-2019 program year, which will hold its presentation in May 2019.

Applications for membership are accepted yearly. Membership is by invitation only and decisions are made by August. Current membership in the Deegan Inn does not guarantee an invitation to return. Scholarships to assist covering the dues (but not meals) are also awarded. Dues, which include the cost of meals, currently range from \$415 to \$565, depending on level of membership. Applications will be posted on the Deegan Inn’s website <https://deeganinnofcourt.org> by February 28, 2019.

Members are required to be active members of RCBA for the two calendar years the program year runs. The Inn’s fiscal year runs from July 1 to June 30 of every year. Applications may be downloaded from the Inn’s website or obtained from Executive Director Sherri Gomez, who may be contacted at (951) 689-1910 or SherriGomez4@gmail.com. Applications may also be available at Riverside County Bar Association offices.

L. Alexandra Fong is a deputy county counsel with the County of Riverside, is president of the Leo A. Deegan Inn of Court, and past president of the Riverside County Bar Association and Riverside County Bar Foundation, Inc.



¹ <https://www.riversideca.gov/sites/default/files/Attorney/2018/cahistory.pdf>

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Riverside County Bar Association

4129 Main St., Ste. 100, Riverside, CA 92501
RCBA 951-682-1015 LRS 951-682-7520
www.riversidecountybar.com rcbadrs@riversidecountybar.com

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