

THE HISTORY OF THE JUVENILE COURT JUDGES OF CALIFORNIA: A 20 YEAR PERSPECTIVE

In December of 1987, Judge Len Edwards of the Santa Clara Superior Court invited a number of California's Presiding Juvenile Court Judges to meet at the Fairmont Hotel in San Jose. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss issues relating to the work of California's juvenile courts. Those who attended included Judge Dan Weinstein from San Francisco County, Judge Wilmont Sweeney from Alameda County, Judge Paul Boland from Los Angeles County, Judge Phil Champlin from Napa County, Judge Judy McConnell from San Diego County, Judge Betty Lameraux from Orange County, Judge Duane Martin from San Joaquin County, Judge Arnold Rosenfield from Sonoma County, Judge William Morgan from Sacramento County, and several others.

During the two day meeting there were presentations by Cal Terhune, Director of the California Youth Authority, Linda McMahon, Director of the State Department of Social Services, and Judge David Grossmann from Hamilton County (Cincinnati), Ohio. Judge Grossmann had significant impact on the assembled judges when he described the Ohio Juvenile Court Judges Association, its organization, history, and activities. As he was leaving, he turned to the California judges and had one final word, "organize."

And organize we did. The plan was to form an association of California juvenile court judges and to approach the California Judge's Association and ask to be a part of CJA. The name chosen was the Juvenile Court Judges of California (abbreviated to JCJC). The vote for this course of action was unanimous. Thereafter discussion addressed the creation of an Executive Committee and how the organization would function, how many times it would meet during the year, and how JCJC would review and respond to proposed legislation. Judge Rosenfield suggested that the Executive Committee have at least 2 members from smaller counties to ensure that their interests were adequately represented. The assembled members agreed and then asked representatives to approach CJA with the proposal. The first meeting of the Executive Committee was scheduled for April 7-9, 1988.

Based on the instructions from the group, Judges Weinstein and Edwards approached the CJA Board of Directors and asked to be recognized as a section of CJA. They pointed out that the status of section for the juvenile court judges was necessary because of the significant responsibilities attached to the position. There was more legislative activity impacting the juvenile court than any other division of the Superior Court, there were national organizations that California judges wanted to have working relationships with including the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ), and juvenile court judges needed to reach out to the community to

connect with service providers so that resources could be provided for the clients who appeared in juvenile court.

Consistent with the wishes of the group that met in San Jose, Weinstein and Edwards also asked that JCJC be granted a special relationship to CJA with regards to the legislative process. Noting that there are typically many legislative proposals affecting juvenile court and that legislative activity moves at a fast pace, they asked that JCJC be able to take quick action regarding legislative proposals, even before getting approval from the CJA Executive Board, so long as they reported to the CJA Executive Board at the next meeting.

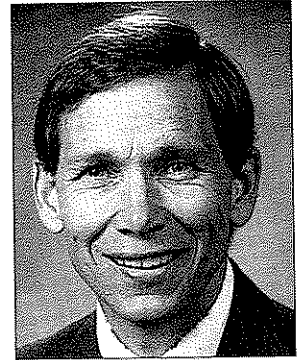
The CJA Board approved the request from the JCJC representatives and drew up a Memorandum of Understanding between the 2 groups, but concluded that the MOU should be tested for a year. In September of 1989 the MOU was extended for a year and then in August of 1990, the CJA Bylaws were amended to reflect JCJC's permanent status as a section of CJA.

The organizational meeting in San Jose had established an Executive Committee, and at the first meeting officers were elected and the legislative review process was put in place. Judge Len Edwards was elected Chairperson and Judge Arnold Rosenfield, Secretary. Through the 20 years of its existence, four judges have held the role as Chairperson, Judges Len Edwards, Arnold Rosenfield, Terry Friedman, Mike Nash, and the current Chairperson, Judge Susan Huguenor. Executive Committee members have included juvenile court judges from many different counties.

Two significant events took place after the creation of JCJC. First, JCJC co-sponsored a conference bringing together child welfare leaders and juvenile court judges throughout the state. The first conference was held December 8-10, 1988. It was given the name "Beyond the Bench." The conference continues to this day. Second, the JCJC Executive Committee visited Sacramento and met with legislators from both parties. The Executive Committee reviewed the JCJC's purposes and expressed its desire to work with the legislature to improve the laws relating to juvenile court.

CJA has staff responded to JCJC's needs by dedicating one staff member to work with the JCJC Executive Committee. The first staff member was Rich Piedmonte. He was followed by Sam Crump, then Rob Waring, Kate Kalstein, and currently the position is held by Jordan Posamentier.

Engagement in the legislative process has been the most substantial aspect of JCJC activity. *(continued on page 14)*



The History of JCJC...continued

The Executive Committee created a legislative review process that has remained substantially the same throughout the life of the organization. Three teams of judges from different parts of the state review legislation on a regular basis and make recommendations. The Legislative Team then takes a position which is sent to the CJA Executive Board. Letters are written in some cases and on occasion a member of the Legislative Team appears in Sacramento.

JCJC has reviewed hundreds of legislative proposals, made comments on them, worked with authors, proposed changes and taken positions whether the proposals should be adopted. The CJA Board has almost always agreed with JCJC positions. JCJC has also proposed legislation, the majority of which has been passed by the legislature. These legislative proposals have had to do with Dual Jurisdiction (W & I section 241.1), Guardianships (W & I section 360), Joinder of Parties [W & I sections 362(a) and 727(a)] and many others. JCJC positions have been taken very seriously by the legislature, and it has been a rare bill that has become law over JCJC objections.

In 1989 JCJC named its first Juvenile Court Judge of the Year Award. This award was presented to the juvenile court judge who had displayed leadership in the juvenile court both locally and statewide. The first award was presented to Judge Wilmont Sweeney, who simultaneously was given the title "The Dean." Judge Sweeney served in the Alameda Juvenile Court for more than 20 years. Judges and judicial officers who have received the award since then have included:

1992 - Judge Wilmont Sweeney - Alameda
1993 - Judge Jaime Corral - Los Angeles
1994 - Commissioner Patricia Bresee - San Mateo
1995 - Commissioner Jeanne Buckley - Sonoma
1996 - Judge Leonard Edwards - Santa Clara
1997 - Judge Michael Nash - Los Angeles
1998 - Judge James Warren - Riverside
1999 - Judge Arnold Rosenfield - Sonoma
2000 - Commissioner Raymond (now Judge) Guadagni - Napa
2001 - Judge Terry Friedman - Los Angeles
2002 - Commissioner Kristine McCarthy - Santa Clara
2003 - Judge Brenda Harbin-Forte - Alameda
2004 - Judge John Dobroth - Ventura
2005 - Judge Susan Huguenor - San Diego
2006 - Judge Dean Stout - Inyo
2007 - Referee Sherri Sobel - Los Angeles
2008 - Judge Kenneth Peterson - Sacramento
2009 - Commissioner Paul Seeman - Alameda

In addition, the JCJC Executive Committee created the 5 Year JCJC Pin to honor those judicial officers who have served 5 years in the juvenile court. This much sought-after pin is given out at the JCJC Annual Meeting each year, held at the Juvenile Institute. More than one-hundred 5-Year Pins have been awarded over the past 20 years.

Currently, the JCJC Executive Committee meets by telephone regularly during the legislative session and by telephone and email when needed. JCJC meets as an organization at the

Juvenile Institute, the CJA Annual Meeting and Beyond the Bench. Under Judge Nash's leadership, the CJA Bylaws were rewritten in 2007 and 2008 and approved by the membership in 2008.

Judicial officers interested in serving on the JCJC Executive Committee should contact CJA or a member of the Executive Committee. Your participation is welcome.

ON NOT TAKING OURSELVES SERIOUSLY

Judge Julie M. Conger, Alameda Superior Court, (Ret.)

Q: Why did you testify that way at your deposition?

A: I don't know. I must have been drunk when I said that.

(Thanks to Mike Stern, Los Angeles Superior Court)

A forensic alcohol expert was testifying before the jury about the effects of alcohol on one's ability to drive when his cell phone started to ring; The jurors began chuckling when it became clear that his phone was playing "wastin away in Margaritaville."

(Thanks to Sharon Waters, Riverside Superior Court)

District Attorney: And do you remember what - can you tell me what either one of them looked like?

A: I believe one of them appeared to be as the judge.

Q: Okay. Handsome man?

THE COURT: Any objection, counsel?

Defense Attorney: No, Your Honor. Submitted. Stipulate.

(Thanks to Ed Sarkisian, Fresno Superior Court)

A ROSE BY ANY OTHER NAME (in Oakland)

Shooting victim testifying to his injuries:

Q: And at any time after this event, have you had occasion to personally evaluate your injuries?

A: Yes, about the third day there.

Q: Okay, what did you see?

A: First thing I saw was the way my privates and stuff was wrapped up, and the doctor said we did the best we could to save little Willie.

Stabbing victim testifying to his injuries:

Q: And did you notice if you had any stitches or staples?

A: Staples here from here, all the way down close to the jewels and a stab wound here.

THE COURT: All right. Start all over again, I need to describe it for the record, Mr. R. The witness has put his hand...

Defense attorney: Judge, can I look at this?

THE COURT: At the sternum. Right at the bottom of the sternum.

THE WITNESS: I had staples from here all the way down close to the jewels.

THE COURT: Okay. He's done about a 10-inch line down to the jewels.

THE WITNESS: Past...

THE COURT: The navel.