



## President's Message



I am pleased to announce the Women Lawyers of Alameda County 30th Anniversary Gala and Silent Auction will take place on October 21, 2010 at the beautiful Claremont Resort and Spa. Traditionally at our annual judges dinner we honor newly appointed women judges and give special recognition to outstanding women judges. For our 30th Anniversary we also want to honor our founding sisters and past presidents who graciously gave their time and talents to ensure the success of WLAC. In keeping with that theme our keynote speaker, for this momentous occasion, is Nancy E. O'Malley. As many of you know, Nancy is the President of California Women Lawyers, the first woman to hold the position of Alameda County District Attorney, and she has been an invaluable member to WLAC.

In continuing our efforts to support women entering the legal profession, the proceeds from our silent auction will go towards our scholarship fund and stipend program for law school graduates who are studying for the bar examination. Please contact me if you are interested in joining our scholarship team or donating an item for the auction.

As President of WLAC I have had the pleasure of meeting some amazing women. Each one of these women serves as a reminder that WE as women share a common bond which is unique from others. We are daughters, sisters, wives, partners, mothers, aunts, grand-mothers striving to be the best lawyers while delicately balancing work and family. Our membership makes our organization strong, and one of my goals is to strengthen the ties between the women lawyers in Alameda County, and men who support the advancement of women in the legal profession.

Please continue to check our website at [www.wlaonline.org](http://www.wlaonline.org) for announcements of our upcoming Summer Social Mixer at a site to be determined, and upcoming MCLEs provided by WLAC. Our MCLE series will cover the following topics: representing tenants post-foreclosure, human-trafficking, and special education.

I look forward to seeing you this summer!

*Toni Mims-Cochran, President*  
Women Lawyers of Alameda County

## in this issue

July 2010

Message from the President	1
Practice Area Spotlight	2
Member Spotlight - Nancy O'Malley	3-4
Annual Members Reception	4-5

## Save the Date!

### WLAC 30th Anniversary Gala.

October 21, 2010,

Claremont Resort and Spa.

No Host Cocktails Begin at 6:00 p.m.

Join us for a fabulous Dinner, Awards, and Silent Auction !

### California Women Lawyers Annual Dinner

in conjunction with the

California State Bar Annual Meeting

September 23, 2010

Portola Hotel and Spa

Monterey, CA

[Register Now!](#)

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### A Voice for Women in the Law since 1980

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## PRACTICE AREA SPOTLIGHT: THE ALAMEDA COUNTY SUPERIOR COURT'S SELF-HELP SERVICES AND THE OFFICE OF THE FAMILY LAW FACILITATOR: Help for the Self Represented Litigant

*By: Candi Goldman, WLAC Board Member, Family Law Facilitator for Alameda County*

Every attorney has a story about dealing with a self-represented litigant. Lay people who represent themselves in court can be funny, frustrating, befuddling, and downright scary. On occasion they do a really fine job for themselves. Attorneys find it very awkward to deal with them....

How did they get to court and what exactly are they asking for? Or better yet, if you are opposing a SRL ("Self Represented Litigant") in a case, is there somewhere you can direct them for help?

Did you know that the California courts have established programs specifically to assist self-represented litigants? Yes, someone actually gets paid to work with them!

The Office of the Family Law Facilitator (FLF) was established in 1997 to assist self-represented litigants with their family law matters. These services are available in every county in California, though the program schedules and structures vary depending on each county's demographics.

The core focus of FLF services is child support – establishing, maintaining, modifying and terminating it - and the ancillary determinations necessary for setting the support. FLF offices liaise with the Dept. of Child Support Services (DCSS), the family law departments and the clerk's offices, in addition to providing direct assistance to self-represented litigants. Many FLF offices assist with law & motion calendar preparation and orders after hearing involving child support.

FLF offices disseminate general procedural and educational materials, run child support calculations (as appropriate), instruct litigants on completing required court forms, make referrals to appropriate community and other agencies, witness paternity declarations, conduct workshops, explain legal procedures to parties, and generally guide self-represented litigants through the process of their family law action – an "a to z" service.

What don't FLF offices do? We don't give legal advice. We don't represent anyone in court; in fact, our services are truly neutral. We can see the Petitioner at 10:00 a.m. and the Respondent at 1:30 p.m. the same day. Isn't that a conflict, you might ask? No – because we have no attorney-client relationship with any litigant, and we disclose this to all who come to our offices. We try to avoid having the same staff

person assist both sides in a case, however. We do not give referrals to private attorneys or for-profit organizations. We do not intercede for a party with judicial officers – we have the same restrictions on ex parte communications as private attorneys. And you thought we had some "inside line." In your dreams! We're bound by the Code of Judicial Ethics (Canon 3 in particular).

Some FLF offices work in tandem or are merged with Self-Help Center services, which were developed for general civil law assistance to self-represented litigants, and modeled directly after the Facilitator program. In counties with both offices, services are enhanced, as litigants receive assistance with small claims, unlawful detainers, guardianships, general civil information, DV and Civil Harassment cases, and additional matters as each office determines.

Alameda County has a merged Family Law Facilitator and Self-Help Services program, so we are a "one-stop shopping center." We have offices at the Superior Courts in Oakland (Renee C. Davidson Courthouse is our main location), Hayward, Fremont, and Pleasanton.

We have a number of workshops, from starting a paternity action to a bankruptcy clinic presented by the Volunteer Legal Services Corporation. We provide in-person drop-in services, have a public enquiry phone line, respond to mail and e-mail requests, and assist in the law & motion courtrooms on pro per days. Did I mention that we are busy? Particularly in these more difficult economic times, we have no shortage of people seeking our help.

If you have an opposing party who is self-represented, or you know someone who is handling their own court case or is about to start one, and they can't afford an attorney, we may be able to assist them. If their issue is not one we can help them with, or they need more specialized assistance, we can refer them to other resources. We make every effort to connect people with the right resources and information.

We're working on a new website, but we can be found on the Alameda County Superior Court site, which is: [www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/courts/](http://www.alameda.courts.ca.gov/courts/)

## WLAC MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

### An Interview with Nancy O'Malley, Alameda County District Attorney

By LaJoyce L. Porter, WLAC Board Member

**LaJoyce:** I'm here with Alameda County District Attorney, Nancy O'Malley who also happens to be the Vice President of Women Lawyers of Alameda County and a longtime member of WLAC. Nancy is also the current President of California Women Lawyers, of which WLAC is an affiliate. We all know Nancy's public persona, but we hope that this article will give our members a glimpse of the 'softer' side of Nancy.

**LaJoyce:** Nancy, tell us where were you born/raised?

**Nancy:** I was born in Concord, CA and lived there until grade school when my family moved to Danville.

**LaJoyce:** Do you have any brothers or sisters? If so, how many?

**Nancy:** My parents had 9 children, eight of whom are alive. My older sister was killed by a drunk driver. I was the 3rd child born to my parents.

**LaJoyce:** Wow. What's the breakdown of boys/girls?

**Nancy:** I have 2 brothers and 6 sisters. There were 7 girls including myself. We also had 2 girl cousins who lived with us when I was growing up so there were 9 girls total.

**LaJoyce:** Wow. That's a lot of women in one household!

**LaJoyce:** Nancy, what made you decide to attend law school?

**Nancy:** Interestingly enough, it wasn't something I was going to do. I was diagnosed with cancer when I was in my early 20s. I was receiving early stage chemotherapy down at Stanford University. I remember that I was always negotiating my chemotherapy schedule with my oncologist. One day he said to me "you should become a lawyer." After I finished chemotherapy, I applied to law school and decided to attend Golden Gate University.

**LaJoyce:** What made you decide to become a District Attorney?

**Nancy:** My father was the District Attorney in Contra Costa County. When I first graduated, I clerked for a business/real estate firm in 1983. It was my first job after I passed the bar. I remember my first time in court, the cases were called in alphabetical order and my case began with A. I didn't know what to do, so I didn't say anything when my case was called and they passed over me. I sat there and watched all of the cases that morning so that I could figure out what to do. I remember as I was leaving the courtroom that day I said to



myself "I am not going to be the kind of lawyer that doesn't know what to do." Later, I met the District Attorney in Alameda County and approached him for a job. I didn't want to work in my father's office. People like to complain about their bosses and I didn't want to feel uncomfortable hearing people complain about my father.

**LaJoyce:** Did you expect to stay there your entire career?

**Nancy:** No, but it feels like I just got here. I'm still excited about working here.

**LaJoyce:** How does it feel to be the first woman District Attorney in Alameda County?

**Nancy:** It's thrilling. In addition to maintaining excellent standards, it is an important responsibility. As a woman, I make sure I'm doing the best I can do. I'm also excited that I am instrumental in helping to open the doors

of opportunities for other women and people of color to move into leadership.

**LaJoyce:** What are most passionate about now that you are a District Attorney? If there is more than one thing, please tell us?

**Nancy:** I am extremely passionate about the protection of victim's rights and I want to raise the voices of victims. Before I became District Attorney, I was instrumental in helping to create laws about victim's right. Now that I'm District Attorney, I am passionate about focusing on outreach measures and having a victim focused office. To create a system that embraces that. My predecessor, Tom Orloff, was an extremely bright and very analytical guy. He was an effective leader. My goal is to make the District Attorney's office more accessible to victims and their families.

**LaJoyce:** Nancy, who were your mentors along the way?

**Nancy:** My Dad was my greatest mentor. He implemented a lot of rules and procedures upholding ethics. He always made his District Attorneys talk to their victims about the deals they were making. My dad always was a person that was active in the community. He usually got home around 8 or 9pm every night. My dad gives good advice and he's very proud of me. Coincidentally, my brother ran for District Attorney in Contra Costa County. Another important mentor to me was Carol Corrigan. She was the head of recruitment and training at the Alameda County DA's office. She taught me that you can work very hard, still have fun and love your job.

**LaJoyce:** Your dad must be really proud to have two of his children follow in his footsteps?

**Nancy:** He really is. He loves going to all of the events with both of us.

**LaJoyce:** Of course all of the WLAC members want to know how do you balance work, life and being a woman?

**Nancy:** If you talk to people around me, they will tell you that I'm the classic Type A personality. Before I got married, I would rent an apartment in Paris every year for 2, 3 or 4 weeks. I got married 3 years ago. My husband works at night. If he was at home during the week, I would probably go home. But I am able to work late into the evening. It is one of the things that help me to balance work and family. I must say that I always strive for others, but I am terrible at doing things for myself. If I wasn't working, I would be volunteering. Fortunately, I have the absolute joy of incorporating what I love with what I do for a living. When I die my tombstone should read "Society got their

money's worth out of her." In high school I was really funny and popular. Then in my twenties I got cancer. I thought to myself "You may not survive this." After that, it taught me whatever it is, be the best I could be. I strive to be the type of person I wanted to be and live the life I wanted to live. It doesn't feel like a bad thing to me.

**LaJoyce:** What are your hobbies?

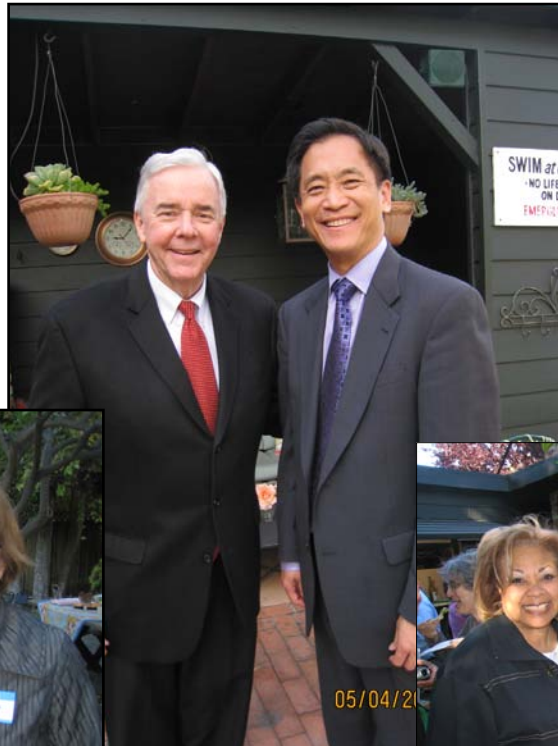
**Nancy:** Playing golf. If I played a lot, I would be much better. Before I moved to Alameda, I lived on a golf course, but I only played five times a year. I also enjoy Sculling/flat boat rowing with Cal Adventures. I love to go to Paris. It is my haven because it is safe and far away. My husband is a retired chef and we cook together.

**Conclusion:**

Thanks, Nancy, for sharing some of your amazing personal history with WLAC members and newsletter readers!

## NEWS FROM FORMER WLAC BOARD MEMBER AND CURRENT WLAC JUDICIAL LIAISON JUDGE STUART HING

On May 4, 2010, Women Lawyers of Alameda County held its Annual Members Reception in lovely Alameda at the family poolside garden of Judge Yolanda Northridge and Judge Bob McGuiness. Thank you Judges Northridge and McGuiness for hosting this special and fun event!



more...

We welcomed board members,  
WLAC members, and friends.



Don't forget to save the date of October 21, 2010  
for the WLAC 30th Anniversary Dinner!

*We want to hear  
from you!*

Tell Us Your News

Have an accomplishment, recent success, good news to share, or know of any for a fellow WLAC member? Let the WLAC Newsletter Committee know and we'll include that person in our "Honor Roll!"

You can send updates and information to: Tara M. Flanagan, Newsletter Committee, at [treasurer@wlaonline.org](mailto:treasurer@wlaonline.org)

