



## Letter from President Maraget Gannon

March is a wonderful month in the Bay Area. Plum trees are in blossom and the first asparagus is coming into the markets. It's renewal time for Women Lawyers of Alameda County, too. If you have received a dues renewal email, please be sure to send your annual dues. Our spring membership reception hosted by one of our gracious Superior Court Judges is in April and I hope to see you there.

This letter is my personal invitation to you to join with me and the entire Board on projects of interest to you. There are a number of projects this year that cry out for membership participation and input. WLAC has kick-started our stipend project for graduating law students by raising an initial \$2300. The next step is to form the committee which will review applications and make recommendations to the board for recipients. Let me hear from you if you can provide your input on this project.

This year WLAC will partner with the Alameda County Justice Center to provide volunteer attorneys to advise domes-

tic violence victims. The project will not provide attorney representation. WLAC volunteers will get training in the



kind of problems Center clients ask about. You don't need to be a family law attorney – your expertise in general plus the specific training at the Justice Center will be invaluable to Justice Center clients. Our volunteers will give a small number of hours over the course of 6 months. We can begin active delivery of this service with a minimum number of volunteer attorneys. If you can spare a

few hours to this WLAC project, I will be delighted to talk with you about the plans.

If you can give WLAC some time on this project, please give me a call at 510-452-1700 or email me at [magannon1@earthlink.com](mailto:magannon1@earthlink.com).

~Margaret



## JUDICIAL SPOTLIGHT: The Hon. Peggy Fulton Hora, (Ret.) Alameda Co. Superior Court

*The Hon. Peggy Fulton Hora will be awarded the Rose Bird Award by California Women Lawyers at CWL's Northern California Judicial Reception on Friday March 20, 2009, at Wendel Rosen Black & Dean, 1111 Broadway, 24th Floor, Oakland, CA 5:30-7:30. To attend, please register at [www.cwl.org](http://www.cwl.org), or call California Women Lawyers at (916) 646-3114.*

The March 2009 Judicial Spotlight is cast upon a judicial member well deserving of our attention, the Hon. Peggy Fulton Hora, Alameda Co. Superior Court (Ret.)

From her humble beginnings as a single mom who put herself through law school, to her career start as a legal aid attorney, to her successful campaign as the first woman judge elected to the Alameda County Municipal Court bench in 1985, to her groundbreaking work in developing drug courts and pioneering therapeutic jurisprudence, and most recently, her selection as California Women Lawyers Rose Bird Award recipient, Judge Hora is truly a "local gal makes good."

Talking with Judge Hora is akin to reading a history lesson about women lawyers in Alameda County and the challeng-

es they faced. Judge Hora's path to the bench began at the age of twenty-four. A single mom with two young sons, she began her college career at Chabot College. She coordinated her own higher education with her youngest son's start in kindergarten, and laughed when reminiscing about family homework time spent at the kitchen table.

From Chabot, she matriculated to Cal. State Hayward (now Cal. State East Bay), and earned admission to the University of San Francisco School of Law. It was a legal clerkship in her second year of law school that helped set the course for her Judge Hora's legal career. She took a clerkship at the Legal Aid Society of Alameda County, in the Hayward office, under the guidance of then attorney, later City of Berkeley attorney Manuela Albuquerque. Judge Hora recalls Albuquerque, recently retired as the longest serving City Attorney in Berkeley, as a "wonderful mentor."

As a certified law student at Legal Aid, she earned valuable experience, and conducted her first trial before she graduated from law school. She remembered her first case as one where a husband and wife were both registered owners of a vehicle that was repossessed, but only the husband received

notice from the financing company; Judge Hora represented the wife as the party whose possessory interests and financial rights were compromised for the finance company's failure to invest in a 32 cent stamp!



After law school and the bar exam, Judge Hora joined the full time staff at the Legal Aid Society and within five years, was the supervising attorney of the Hayward office. In 1984, she learned that a vacancy was upcoming on the Hayward Municipal Court, and, along with three male candidates, threw her hat in the ring.

Judge Hora was nostalgic when recalling that period in Alameda County court history, where, at the time, there were no women bench officers sitting on the Hayward Municipal Court. Despite her limited legal experience (five years in practice!) and implicit gender biases against her, Judge Hora explained that she was able to win the election by calling upon her longstanding coalition of diverse community support, and without spending a dime of her own money.

She laughed when explaining that she didn't spend a dime, because, as a single parent, she didn't have a dime to spend! She proudly remembers fundraising in excess of \$90,000 to finance her judicial campaign, including a \$100 donation she received from feminist/activist Gloria Steinem. And yes, she cashed the check rather than keep it as a souvenir, because she needed the money more than the keepsake!

After a June 1984 general election and a November run-off, Judge Hora won her place on the bench after earning 67% of the vote- at the time, the highest winning percentage in any judicial race in the state's history. She remembers that at that time, although her election to the Hayward Muni. Court was groundbreaking, there were entire states that didn't have a single female judge.

Judge Hora took the bench in January 1985, and served with distinction for an amazing twenty-one years. She quickly earned a reputation as a well-prepared, learned, and fair bench officer. Her favorite assignment and the "best part of her judicial career" was her work in implementing and presiding over Drug Courts in Alameda County. Her work in drug courts has brought her national and international acclaim: Judge Hora has authored countless articles and presented a myriad of drug court/training symposiums on drug addiction, pregnancy and substance abuse, and diverse needs in the drug court system, to name a few.

Though retired in 2006, her work in the drug courts still resonates, and recently earned her a prestigious designation and tenure as a "Thinker in Residence" in Adelaide, South Australia, upon nomination by the judiciary and Courts Administration Authority of South Australia. Her first residence term will begin in August/September of 2009.

Comparing how the field of law is different now then when she started her legal career, Judge Hora ventured that women lawyers and women judges are no longer a rarity- when she went to law school, only 4% of the student body were women, and now, law school classes are often comprised of 50% women or more.

When asked what advice she would offer to WLAC members and especially to up and coming lawyers, Judge Hora enumerated the following "Top Ten" List for legal success:

1. Be kind.
2. Don't burn bridges.
3. Follow your passion.
4. There is no one 'path' to your objective- don't be afraid to make your own.
5. Be careful how you measure success. There is more to life than money or power.
6. Give to others. Philanthropy has measureless rewards.
7. Be tolerant.
8. Be prepared in all your appearances.
9. Be professional, courteous and civil.
10. Don't be arrogant. There is nothing to be gained by unpleasantness.

Thank you Judge Hora, for your groundbreaking work in Alameda County, for your long-time commitment to WLAC, and for serving as a role model for all!

*By Tara M. Flanagan*

**! IMPORTANT  
NEWS**

**Save the Date!**

California Women Lawyers Northern California Judicial Reception, hosted by WLAC, on Friday, March 20, 2009, at Wendel, Rosen, Black & Dean, 1111 Broadway, 24th Floor, Oakland, CA 5:30-7:30. The Hon. Peggy Fulton Hora will be awarded the Rose Bird Award at this event.

To attend, go to [www.cwl.org](http://www.cwl.org), or call California Women Lawyers at (916) 646-3114.



## MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Nancy O'Malley

Longtime WLAC member Nancy O'Malley is the number two in command at the Alameda District Attorney's office, and WLAC's Spotlight Attorney for the month of March.

It took a lot of time to catch up with Nancy for this interview, which is not really surprising when one considers that in addition to supervising over 400 staff in the DA's office, monitoring three pending bills in the legislature, and overseeing the Alameda County Family Justice Center – she's currently prosecuting a felony trial!

When your author finally did sit down for a telephone interview when Nancy had a spare moment, it was 10:00 o'clock at night. Amazingly, Nancy didn't sound tired or stressed at all – an amazing feat for any trial attorney. But what really struck me during the thirty minute interview was her humility and down-to-earth personality: Nancy O'Malley has no idea how truly special she is.

A Bay Area native, Nancy attended Cal State Hayward and law school at Golden Gate University. She has been the Chief Assistant District Attorney for Alameda County since 1999. Nancy describes her days as "action-packed" and "varied" and it's easy to see why. In addition to meeting every morning with District Attorney Tom Orloff and the D.A.'s Chief Investigator, Nancy provides daily supervision for the DA's office, and is in charge of the office budget.

In addition to her 9-5 job, Nancy has an impressive track record in pursuing solutions for violence outside of the courtroom too. Her multi-faceted approach to legal problems in Alameda County includes activism and policy advocacy. For example, she was instrumental in the passage of Measure Y in the City of Oakland in 2004, which provides approximately \$19 million every year, for ten years, to directly fund violence prevention programs, additional police officers, and fire services.

Her commitment to the Oakland community is impressive, but her commitment to issues affecting women is even more impressive. Throughout her career she has used her legal training and acumen to champion for women's rights and family violence prevention. She is a nationally recognized expert in legal issues involving violence against women and interpersonal violence, including sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse, child abuse, stalking and threat management.



Undoubtedly one of the highlights of her career came a few years ago when she helped found the Alameda County Family Justice Center (ACFJC), an organization that provides comprehensive services required by domestic violence survivors and their families, all housed under one roof. In addition to being an original visionary for the ACFJC, Nancy continues to work on the organization's behalf and recently helped the ACFJC secure a grant from Blue Shield Foundation. This grant will create a training center for all justice centers in Northern California at ACFJC, which will help improve service delivery to a broader range of people. Nancy is

excited about this venture as it relates directly to her overarching career objective to reach out to the community and "make law more accessible to everyone."

For a woman who is able to do this much and has won prestigious awards too numerous to list, it seems that she has figured it all out, but Nancy candidly spoke about the difficulties that professional women and attorneys face when often choosing between professional success and

personal fulfillment. For Nancy, being a member of WLAC has enhanced her awareness of how work/life balance issues affect attorneys – both in private practice partnership track and on the promotion track in governmental agencies. During the course of her practice, she has seen great strides made in both of these areas, but believes that the workplace needs to evolve even more to provide a more accommodating work environment for female attorneys. Nancy strongly believes that there are many ways and places to do your job, and technology can assist women with these balance issues.

In addition to challenging the legal community to become more creative, Nancy also stressed the importance of reevaluating our approach to work in financial terms to ensure that we are providing cost-effective solutions for clients and communities in these extraordinary financial times. Nancy's motto these days is "doing more, with less." In these economic times, this is something that we all should aspire to do.

Nancy O'Malley, a dedicated legal professional who will continue to help fight for equality for women in the workplace. We are lucky to have her in Alameda County and as a colleague in WLAC. Nancy, thank you for everything you do!

*by Monica Wiley*

# WLAC "Honor Roll"

## This Issue's Honor Roll:

Cherri N. Allison, Executive Director of the Family Violence Law Center of Alameda County, was recently named "Woman of the Year" for the Justice Category of the Alameda County Commission on Status of Women and will be inducted into the Alameda County Women's Hall of Fame on April 25, 2009.



ter law school. She lived and worked in a small town about two hours from Tokyo, and was drawn to Japan by her own personal Buddhist studies and practice. Roseann loved Japan but found it a difficult place for a western woman, women in general, and especially a woman of color.

In her private practice, Roseann especially enjoys child custody cases, where she can draw upon her own personal experience as a single parent who shares custody of her daughter. Using her own life experience, she encourages clients to act in the best interests of their children, stating that in her view, no one "wins" in family law custody cases. She counsels litigants to look to the bigger picture, and find a parenting plan that is peaceful and healthy for the children first. She also relishes criminal trials, and recently completed a jury trial before Judge Hashimoto in Hayward,

a case she described as 'fun' and with a successful defense result for her client.



When not scrambling as a sole practitioner from appearance to appearance across Alameda County, Roseann enjoys travel- a recent December 2008 to Puerto Rico, and planning a trip for her mother's upcoming 60th birthday are highlights- is an avid reader who usually is reading four books at a time, and is interested in politics. She presently attends the HOPE Institute, a training course for Latina women interested in running for higher office, volunteers at monthly family law clinics at Central Legal de la Raza, and works with the Spanish Chamber of Commerce.

Should you cross paths with Roseann at an upcoming WLAC event, or in court, introduce yourself! You'll be inspired by her upbeat attitude, her sense of fair play as a litigator, and her diverse life experience.



## NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: Roseann Torres

A new feature in the WLAC newsletter is the "New Member Spotlight" which will focus on new or newer members of W.L.A.C., in order to highlight the diversity of our members and their law practices.

This month's WLAC New Member spotlight focuses on Roseann "Rosie" Torres, a sole practitioner with an office in "Old Town" downtown Oakland. Roseann's practice focuses on family law, criminal defense, and personal injury law, drawing upon her previous experience as both a prosecutor and county counsel in San Joaquin County, where she was born and raised.

Now entering her ninth year of practice, Roseann's legal career started after completing her undergraduate degree in marketing at San Francisco State University. After graduation, Roseann initially worked as an account executive for M.C.I. communications, but her political activism on behalf of persons with AIDS, including work with the Names Project/the AIDS Quilt in San Francisco, drew her to apply to law school.

Roseann pored over her law school choices and ultimately choose Albany Law School in upstate New York. She chose Albany for an 'out of state' law school experience, but more importantly, she was lured by the student staffed legal clinics offered at Albany. She knew that there, she could build on her prior AIDS activism, and get hands-on legal experience representing persons with AIDS.

While at Albany Law School, Roseann represented legal aid clients in a variety of family law/custody, benefits, and employment discrimination cases arising out of their HIV or AIDS status. She also served as President of the Latino Law Students Association.

Bilingual in Spanish and English, Roseann also speaks some Japanese, having taught English in Japan for six months af-

## 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 [tara@fvlc.org](mailto:tara@fvlc.org) or Monica Wiley, Newsletter Committee, at [mwiley@ccplaw.com](mailto:mwiley@ccplaw.com).