

Jane W. Carney

RCBA PRESIDENT 1989

A TRAILBLAZING CENTERPIECE OF THE RIVERSIDE LEGAL COMMUNITY

In 1989, when Jane Carney was President-Elect of the Riverside County Bar Association (RCBA), she took a lead role in requiring the group then known as the “Lawyer’s Wives Club” to change its name to “Lawyer’s Alliance” since, to state what was not then obvious to all, not all lawyer’s spouses were “wives.” In retaliation, the club boycotted her inauguration, refusing to provide the centerpieces as they had for the past inaugurations of (male) RCBA Presidents. This is an anecdote that sums up Jane Carney well—she is a leader, she is going to be out in front of societal and political issues, and there probably are not going to be flowers.

Born December 7, 1942, Jane grew up in Minneapolis, Minnesota. She graduated from the University of Minnesota in 1964 and taught high school for three years. She married and had three children, son Michael and twin daughters Lynne and Laura. Following a divorce, with three children in elementary school and determined to be self-supporting, Jane attended law school at UC Davis where, in her class, she was one of four single women with children. UC Davis law school was new then and was purposefully admitting students who were out of the norm for law schools at that time--ethnic minorities, students who had been in the world of work for several years, and single mothers with children. One of the single mothers in Jane’s class dropped out during the first year. The other three tried to show the administration that it was not a mistake to admit them. Jane graduated in 1976 and was awarded Order of the Coif, making it clear her admission was anything but a mistake.

In 1977, she married Francis Carney, a founder and much beloved UC Riverside professor of political science and history, whereupon she moved to Riverside. Her legal career began at the firm of Hennigan & Butterwick, later known as Butterwick, Bright, Pettit, & Cunnison. In 1981, she joined Surr & Hellyer in San Bernardino. In 1985 when Surr & Hellyer merged with Reid, Babbage & Coil to become Reid & Hellyer, one of the senior partners of Reid, Babbage, objected to having a woman partner in the firm. But partner Joe Sax, a curmudgeonly, tough former Navy pilot said, “Carney’s included, or the deal is off.” Joe, of course, loved telling Jane that story. Eventually, the senior partner, like anyone who practices with Jane Carney, came to have great respect for her as a person and a lawyer.

Carney practiced in mergers and acquisitions and business transactions, quickly becoming sought after by business owners throughout the area. She was likewise noticed by colleagues and community leaders. She served on the Inland Counties Legal Services Board from 1979-1982, the State Bar Committee on Professional Responsibility and Conduct from 1980 to 1983, and the Public Service Law Corporation Board from 1984 to 1986. She was elected to the board of the RCBA in 1986 and served as President in the 1989-90 year.

During her term as President of the RCBA, she was tasked with choosing the art for the entryway of the Criminal Courts building, along with fundraising for the artwork. She was joined in her

efforts by the late Judge Victor Miceli and Justice James Ward. As a result, the trio learned just how easy and enjoyable it was to work together.

Judge Victor Miceli, Justice James Ward, and Jane Carney then founded the Riverside-San Bernardino Committee on Federal Courts for the Two-County area in 1990. The three legal stalwarts became known variously as the “Unindicted Co-Conspirators,” “Gang of Three,” and “The Three Musketeers.” Together, they spearheaded the establishment in Riverside of a federal courthouse and bankruptcy court, and the transfer of the 4th District Court of Appeal, Division Two, headquarters from San Bernardino to Riverside. Their leadership shaped downtown Riverside as a state and federal justice center with \$100 million in new construction. Not bad for an attorney who rarely went to court.

As though those feats did not keep her busy enough, Jane Carney also served as President of the Riverside Downtown Partnership in 1991-1992, a member of the board of directors for the Greater Riverside Urban League from 1991 to 1993, a member of the esteemed Monday Morning Group from 1990 to 2003 (serving as President from 1996 to 1998), and on the Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees from 1993 to 1995.

In 1991, The Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce presented Jane with the Athena Award which honors a person who fulfills their mission to open doors of leadership opportunities for women through inspiration, education, cultivation, and mentoring. The Black Voice News named her a “Woman of Achievement” in 1992.

Jane was a candidate for the California State Assembly in 1992. She ran as a Democrat in a heavily Republican district, and narrowly lost—a testament to the respect the community had for her.

In 1994, she formed the boutique business law firm of Carney & Delany, LLP together with partners Frank Delany and Teresa Rhyne, and later, Curt Knudsen and Richard Roth (now a California State Senator). Naturally, her leadership and community service did not rest, nor did her political involvement. She chaired or co-chaired campaigns for several Democratic candidates, including George Brown, Jr., Alan Cranston, Tom Bradley, Kathleen Brown, and Ron Loveridge.

She was honored as the Citizen of the Year by the Greater Riverside Chambers of Commerce in 1997. In order to raise funds for the downtown Riverside statue honoring Martin Luther King, Jr., Jane co-chaired a successful dinner event. She was also co-chair of the Center for Community Action and Environmental Justice 20th anniversary celebration.

In 2000, she was appointed by the California Senate Rules Committee to the South Coast Air Quality Management District Governing Board, a position she held until 2012. She earned the Distinguished Service Award from the Riverside Community College District in 2008. Together with her husband Francis, Jane was given the Distinguished Service Award by the Citizens University Committee of UC Riverside in 2010.

Carney & Delany dissolved in 2008 and Carney spent her last few years of practice with Roth Carney LLP. When Jane retired in 2010, she dyed her hair a vibrant royal blue, proof to the

world she was on to her next adventure and no longer practicing law. When one begins a law career with three small children, in an era that still had “Lawyer’s Wives” clubs, and then goes on to become one of the most respected attorneys and community leaders of her time, one is entitled to do what she wants at retirement. Royal blue suited her.

But of course, this is Jane Carney of whom we are speaking. Retirement has meant time with her children and three grandchildren, but also serving on The California Housing Foundation Board of Directors (2013-2018), the UCR Public Policy Advisory Board (2014 to 2018), the Civil Rights Institute of Inland Southern California board of directors (2012 to current), the James Irvine Foundation Board of Directors (2006 to 2018), and the Board of Trustees of the California State University (2016-2022).

Tireless, sharp, dedicated, passionate, and brilliant, Jane Carney does not need centerpieces because she *is* a centerpiece of Riverside’s legal community.

Written by Teresa J. Rhyne