

**History of the Women in Law Committee  
Orange County, California**

As of 5/13/2009

Submitted by Elizabeth Shaw Smith

A need was felt and articulated in Fall 2005 to involve more women in the Orange County chapter of the J Reuben Clark Law Society. As a Board member in 2005-2007 and also in 1997-2001, I was aware that very few women were participating in chapter activities. I knew of several LDS women attorneys in Orange County who had indicated that they did not feel comfortable attending meetings or other functions because the Society was almost exclusively male, in both membership and leadership.

I expressed this feedback and what I felt was the need for an organized effort to reach out to LDS women lawyers in Orange County in Board of Directors meetings in the fall of 2005. Board chairman Don Sessions was very sympathetic to this input and asked the Board to assist in contacting all the potential women members in Orange County. Each Board member was assigned one or more of the 16 LDS stakes in the county to contact ecclesiastical leaders and other sources for the names and contact information of potential members.

We called our group the Women's Outreach Committee--Women in Law committees had not yet been formed on the international or local levels. After a couple of months of combing lists and calling, we eventually came up with an email list of about 25 potential members. I then contacted each of the women on that list, both by email and by phone to invite them to our initial meeting.

The first meeting was held at Mimi's Café in Lake Forest on 2/27/2006. This was a breakfast meeting, with approximately ten people attending. The meeting was primarily a get-acquainted and organizing meeting, where we handed out JRCLS membership forms and lists of events, reviewed why we were meeting, asked each attendee to introduce herself—where she lived, her relationship to the law. We then had a discussion on future topics, format, locations.

I prepared a list of goals and purposes for the committee (attached).

The second event prompted by our Women's Outreach Committee was one of our regularly scheduled chapter lunches, held on 3/16 at the chapter's regular meeting place—the conference room of Knobbe, Martens in Irvine. We invited Cheryl Preston, BYU law professor, to speak on “Fashioning Women in Law,” based on a video she had prepared regarding perceptions of women in fashion advertising and the different messages sent by and about women, versus men. This was the first time in its history that a woman had addressed the OC chapter of the JRCLS.

The third meeting was our second breakfast for the OC women lawyers, also held at Mimi's Café in Lake Forest, on June 5, 2006. This meeting was a panel discussion entitled, “Full-time, Part-time, No time: Law and the Family.” Chapter chair Jeff Shields

attended this meeting and indicated he was surprised and enlightened by the women's perspectives. Panelists were Catherine Evans (part-time lawyer), Dawn Mosley ("dormant" lawyer), Donna Bashaw (full-time lawyer), and Julie Smith ("dormant" lawyer).

On May 30, 2007, we held a lunch meeting at the Macaroni Grill in Costa Mesa. Approximately ten attended. At this meeting we again had introductions and sharing around the table of issues that the women suggested. Chapter chair Jeff Robinson attended this meeting. In the fall of 2008, the Women's Outreach committee sponsored a joint lunch meeting (all chapter members) featuring Judge Nancy Stock, who spoke on balancing law and home life.

Annual dinner speakers in 2006 and 2008 were both women—the first women ever. 2006 was Cheiko Okazaki and 2008 was Susan Easton Black.

So far in 2009, no WIL section meetings have been held. Current section head is Aggie Dolinska.