

50

YEARS AS A LAWYER



California attorneys hit 50-year mark

By Kristina Horton Flaherty, Staff Writer

A lot has happened since they became California lawyers in 1959. Back then, Dwight D. Eisenhower was president, a first-class postage stamp cost four cents, minimum wage was \$1 and secretaries used typewriters. Alaska and Hawaii became states that year. The Barbie Doll hit the marketplace. And the first microchip was invented.

The Vietnam War, man's first walk on the moon and the launch of the personal computer have long since come and gone.

But Cruz Reynoso, Charles Vogel, John Dutton, Spencer Strellis and Suzie Thorn — along with nearly 500 other veteran attorneys — are still members of California's legal profession five decades later. More than 200 of them remain active State Bar members. And some are still trying cases.

"It's taken me 50 years to learn what I've learned, more than that if you count law school," points out Auburn sole practitioner John Dutton. "And I want to keep on using it. So long as I can still function, I have no plans to retire."

They applied to law school when only some schools required LSAT scores, and began legal careers when \$400 a month was a good starting salary. They've watched the bar's ranks swell from some 21,000 attorneys to more than 220,000. They've seen an increase in laws, litigation and lawyer advertising. And they've seen far more women and minority attorneys finally join the mix.

San Francisco family law attorney Suzie Thorn, 77, recalls being one of just three women in a law school class of 275. Back then, she

says, women lawyers were so rare that when she was sworn in as a lawyer, a local news photographer showed up to take her picture. And finding a job in a law firm was no small feat. "Oh gee, you're great," she recalls them saying, "but we don't hire women."

Then, when she joined her father's San Francisco law firm a few years later, some of his clients thought she was there to file his letters, and the secretary nearly quit rather than take orders from a woman. But Thorn paid little attention. "I kept a sense of humor about it," she says now.

And eventually, she built up a family law practice, handling an increasing number of cases that involved international and multi-jurisdictional issues as society became more mobile. She's seen other changes as well: With the public courts "understaffed, overworked and full of pro pers," she now turns to private judges 80 percent of the time. Conference calls, telephonic court hearings and e-mail have become business as usual. And there are more options now — such as mediation and settlement efforts — for handling divorces and other family law matters. "I spent years litigating when that seemed to be the only choice, and I think the way we're doing it now is the right way," she says. "It's certainly the right way for the kids."

But does she miss anything about the old days? "I'm not a back looker," Thorn says. "There are some things that were better then, and some things are better now."

Many recall a more congenial, tight-knit legal community in earlier times. "We all

The State Bar of California congratulates the 494 lawyers who were sworn in as California attorneys 50 years ago and who, today, remain on our roster. They have helped change laws, lead our state and country, shape our companies, enforce our laws, teach our young and provide vital legal advice to individuals facing myriad personal crises. In this special section, we pay homage to their legacy and good works.

— Howard Miller, President, The State Bar of California

knew each other," Oakland criminal defense lawyer Spencer Strellis, 75, said recently as he geared up for his next murder trial. "To a large extent, we had to live up to our word because if we didn't, nobody would ever talk to us again."

Strellis was one of just 12 attorneys in the Alameda County Public Defender's Office when he began his career. In those days, the same attorney would often represent co-defendants in the same trial — something unheard of today. Criminal penalties were less severe. And he still recalls the jump in the workload after the 1963 U.S. Supreme Court ruling in *Gideon v. Wainwright* gave indigent criminal defendants the right to court-appointed counsel.

He also remembers when state and U.S. Supreme Court rulings began requiring police to give Miranda warnings before taking a statement — but suggests the change, in the long run, did little to influence whether or not suspected criminals talk. "Most people want to talk," he says.

Then there was Berkeley's Free Speech Movement and the advent of mass demonstrations in the mid-1960s. In one instance, Strellis, in private practice by then, and his

partner represented a police officer accused of shooting a demonstrator. In another, he was one of the attorneys who persuaded a judge to release hundreds of demonstrators who, along with some shoppers and visiting parents, were marched into a Berkeley parking lot and arrested.

"It was a circus," Strellis says. "This was a new phenomenon and we were trying to figure out what the hell we were doing."

Sole practitioner John Dutton, 79, recalls representing criminal defendants in San Jose even before Santa Clara County had a public defender's office. He got \$25 a case, \$50 more if he handled the preliminary hearing and "maybe a little more" if he went to trial. "It was a way to get experience, to get your name out there," he says.

Today, after stints as a municipal court judge and full-time law professor, he handles civil matters and still enjoys what he does. But he's seen the law expand and become more complicated and the courthouse experience become more formal and less collegial, he says. And he is troubled by the "big explosion" in litigation. "I see a lot of litigation now that is just not justified," he says. "It hurts the profession in terms of the view of laymen toward attorneys. People get caught up in some of this litigation and they spend a lot of money on attorney fees."

Also, when he first became a lawyer, attorneys were not allowed to advertise, he says. Then, in 1977, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that such a prohibition was unconstitutional and the aftermath, Dutton says, has "not been a good thing."

Former state appellate court justice Charles Vogel, 77, agrees. Lawyer advertising has "run rampant," he says. "It generates litigation for litigation's sake. I suppose it introduces some segments of

our community to the idea that they can pursue their rights, but I think it also tends to generate more litigation."

Vogel, now a JAMS neutral, also has seen the Discovery Act transform litigation from the Perry Mason-style courtroom "showdown" of the 1950s to an

increasingly extensive process involving countless pre-trial interrogatories, record requests and depositions. "Now discovery is an enormous part of litigation practice and probably constitutes the most expensive aspect of trial practice," he said. "I

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Advocates, jurists, leaders and teachers

Cruz Reynoso, the son of farm workers, decided to become a lawyer to "do some good." While he would later become the first Latino to serve on California's Supreme Court, he never forgot the injustices he witnessed as a boy raised in an Orange County barrio.

As a child, he once successfully petitioned the U.S. Postmaster General for rural mail delivery to his barrio. And that early victory, he says, helped inspire him to fight injustice. So, after graduating from Pomona College and spending two years in the U.S. Army, he attended UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall. He was the only Latino in his graduating class.

Beginning his law career as the only Latino attorney in the small town of El Centro and surrounding region, he soon became known as a man of his word who even offered "legal aid" from his home.

In the mid-1960s, Reynoso's reputation led to his appointment as assistant director of the state's Fair Employment Practices Commission; then staff secretary to Gov. Edmund G. (Pat) Brown; and, finally, associate general counsel to the U.S. Equal

Employment Opportunity Commission in Washington, D.C. In the late 1960s, he became executive director of California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA), a pioneering legal services program for the poor, and saw firsthand, he says, what a difference lawyers can make.

In 1976, he became the first Latino appointed to the California Courts of Appeal and then, in 1982, to the state Supreme Court. He left the bench in 1987 after he and two other justices failed to win reconfirmation at the polls following a high-profile campaign against them.

He later served as vice chair of the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights and, in 2000, received the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor.

These days, Reynoso, 78, is a professor emeritus at the UC Davis School of Law. Last fall, he participated in a justice and civil rights agency review as part of President-elect Barack Obama's transition to the White House. He also currently serves on the leadership council of California Forward, a bipartisan organization seeking to transform state government.

He has long stressed the importance of seeking a balanced life, he says, and not giving up. "Particularly with tough social or legal issues, persistence is half the battle."

Carla Anderson Hills graduated from Yale law school at a time when many law firms did not even hire women lawyers. But Hills went on to co-found a prominent law firm and later serve three U.S. presidents as a lawyer, cabinet member and U.S.

trade representative.

She began her career handling civil cases for the U.S. Attorney in Los Angeles. Then, in 1962, she and six other attorneys co-founded Munger, Tolles and Hills, now a 192-attorney law firm with offices in L.A. and San Francisco. During those early years, she also taught antitrust law at the UCLA law school, co-authored the *Antitrust Adviser* and started a family.

In the early 1970s, when U.S. President Richard Nixon was under increasing legal scrutiny, she accepted a job as Assistant Attorney General in the civil division of the U.S. Department of Justice. In 1975, after Nixon's resignation, President Gerald Ford nominated her as Secretary of the Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development — and she became the third woman in U.S. history to hold a cabinet position.

In the late 1970s, Hills returned to private practice in Washington, D.C. But in 1988, she stepped back into government work once again when President George Bush named her as U.S. trade representative. As the nation's chief trade negotiator and Bush's principal advisor on international trade policy, Hills led the U.S. negotiations in the Uruguay Round of multilateral trade talks and concluded the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). According to one account, her tough negotiating style, together with her feminine demeanor, prompted some to dub her the "Velvet Crowbar."

In 2000, Hills was awarded the Aztec Eagle, the highest honor given by the Mexican government to a non-citizen.

These days, Hills, 75, serves as chairman and chief executive officer of Hills & Company, International Consultants, which advises U.S. businesses on investment, trade and risk assessment issues abroad. She lives in Washington, D.C., with her husband, attorney Roderick M. Hills. Three of their four children are now lawyers as well.

Charles S. Vogel remembers his father encouraging him to go to law school. It



would be “good training,” his father thought, for joining the family business. But Vogel instead went on to become a lawyer and, eventually, a presiding justice in the California Courts of Appeal.

Born and raised in Los Angeles, Vogel graduated from Pomona College and UCLA School of Law. After passing the California bar exam, he went to work for Alford, Shelton & O’Connor, a small firm in Pomona. Starting out at \$350 a month (plus 50 percent of any business he brought in), he handled all kinds of cases, from criminal to civil transactional, and eventually became partner.

In 1969, he was appointed to the Pomona Municipal Court. Finding that he had spare time, he volunteered to help out in the Superior Court as well. A year later, Gov. Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Los Angeles Superior Court.

During that time, Vogel also took on assignments in the California Courts of Appeal. He wrote a 52-page opinion upholding the convictions in the infamous

“Onion Field” case involving a police officer’s murder in Kern County. And he wrote a 90-page opinion in the case of notorious killer Charles Manson and his followers, upholding three of the convictions and ordering a new trial for one defendant.

Then, with Jerry Brown as governor, Vogel, a Republican, concluded that any chance of an appellate court appointment was on hold. So in 1977, he returned to the practice of law — first at Nossaman, Krueger & Marsh and then at Sidley & Austin. In 1990-91, he also served as State Bar president.

In 1993, Gov. Pete Wilson then appointed Vogel to the Second Appellate District, Division 4 of the California Courts of Appeal, where he eventually served as presiding justice, as well as the district’s administrative presiding justice, until 2004.

A legal Web site profile once characterized Vogel as the Second District’s version of Chief Justice Ronald George — a smart jurist with good leadership abilities. Others have described him as pragmatic and as someone who has a rare capacity to bring people together.

These days, Vogel, 77, works for JAMS. “I’ve had more than my share of opportunities,” he says, “and I’ve developed many, many friendships that have lasted me a lifetime.”

Willie Lewis Brown Jr. was born into a deeply segregated world of poverty —



working as a shoeshine boy and graduating from a “colored” high school in an East Texas town. But in a rags-to-riches story, Brown headed West in 1951 with a cardboard suitcase and

eventually became California’s longest-serving Assembly speaker and then a high-profile mayor of San Francisco.

Following an uncle to San Francisco after high school, Brown initially planned to become a math teacher. But he soon became involved in campus politics at San Francisco State University and the NAACP, and shifted his focus. He went on to UC Hastings College of the Law, he later said, simply to avoid military service.

As a lawyer, Brown reportedly found he liked solving his clients’ problems. But he remained drawn to politics. In 1962, he ran for the State Assembly and lost. Two years later, he won and became one of just four African American assembly members. And in 1980, after one failed attempt, he was elected Speaker with

mostly Republican votes — and went on to wield legendary power for 15 years.

After being “termed out” of office after 31 years (Brown’s tenure as a legislator is credited with triggering the state’s voter-imposed term limits), he was elected mayor of San Francisco. Dubbed “Da Mayor” and “Slick Willie” by some, the two-term mayor became known for his Brioni suits, flamboyant lifestyle and powerful connections. He even portrayed himself in a few movies.

But he also was known for his political acumen, fiery oratory, loyalty and ability to get things done. As mayor, he broke budget deadlocks and helped change the city’s landscape — restoring City Hall, rebuilding the transit system and paving the way for a second University of California campus.

These days, Brown, 75, maintains his active status as an attorney and heads up the Willie L. Brown Jr. Institute on Politics and Public Service in San Francisco.

He once told the Academy of Achievement that, early on, he just knew there had to be a better life than “having no shoes.”

“In most cases, my turns in the road were not planned,” he said. “They were me taking advantage of the circumstances that presented themselves with the most optimum prospects.”

Spencer Strellis has been an Oakland criminal defense lawyer for 49 years. He



has tried more than 250 jury trials and represented thousands of defendants. And as he prepared for yet another murder trial recently, he said he still loves what he does.

“If you don’t have enthusiasm for it, you’re in the wrong line of work because you surely aren’t going to win unless the jury thinks you give a damn,” he said. “You have to appear to care and you do care.”

Strellis, 75, has never tried a case, he says, where he didn’t wake up during the night after closing arguments and wonder if he should have said something more.

The son of a Navy engineer, Strellis lived all over the world as a child. But after graduating from UC Berkeley’s Boalt Hall in 1958, he went to work at the Alameda County Public Defender’s Office and has never left the area. He still recalls his first court trial (a dental office theft) and his first jury trial (a person accused of making

a false police report). And at one point, he was assigned to try all of the misdemeanor jury trials that came up in Oakland.

After four years, Strellis accepted a new job as chief trial attorney for the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, but he missed criminal law. A year later, he went into practice with prominent Oakland attorney Stanley P. Golde. During the turbulent 1960s, he and Golde represented participants in Berkeley’s Free Speech Movement, as well as a police officer accused of shooting a demonstrator. Since the early 1970s, after Golde’s appointment to the Alameda Superior Court, Strellis has primarily been a sole practitioner.

In 1973, Strellis helped co-found California Attorneys for Criminal Justice — the nation’s largest such organization of criminal defense lawyers and allied professionals. He also helped set up Alameda’s Criminal Court Appointed Attorneys Program and, in 2004, served as president of the Alameda County Bar Association.

One of Strellis’s colleagues recently described him as an old-school, common-sense lawyer with “cast-iron logic” and “a heart as big as Texas.” Another characterizes him as “a true warrior for the defense bar.”

Roster: members for half a century

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Edwin Meese III started his career as an Alameda County prosecutor — capturing attention for his handling of massive student protests that rocked Berkeley in the 1960s. He later became the nation's 75th Attorney General and a close advisor to President



Ronald Reagan.

As a boy in Oakland, Meese published a news sheet with his brothers and bought war bonds. He joined the debate team and a military club in high school and went to Yale University on a scholarship. Returning to California to study law at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall, he interrupted his studies for two years to be a U.S. Army artillery officer (later retiring as a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve).

After law school, he worked as an Alameda County deputy district attorney and eventually caught Gov. Reagan's attention for his role in the crackdown on the mass Free Speech Movement protests at UC Berkeley. In 1967, Meese joined Reagan's staff, serving as legal affairs secretary, executive assistant and chief of staff.

John J. Dutton was still in grade school when he decided to become a lawyer, but he does not know where the idea came from. No one in his family — and very few others in his South Texas hometown of 350 — even went to college. His family ran the



only country grocery store and service station in Vanderbilt, Texas, and did not have indoor plumbing, electricity or hot water at home until Dutton was 11.

"I just had this idea in my mind that I wanted to become an attorney," recalls Dutton, an Auburn sole practitioner who recently served on the State Bar's board.

Starting his college studies at a community college just 35 miles away, he eventually wound up at the University of Texas in Austin. He planned to attend law school there as well, but the Korean War shifted the course of events. Short of funds for college, he enlisted in the U.S. Army and finally left Texas — first to Georgia as an infantry officer, and then to San Francisco to wait for a troop ship to Korea.

In Korea, he assisted an American colonel who advised the head of all South

Meese would ultimately spend most of his adult life working with Reagan. After several interim years as a business executive in the aerospace and transportation industry, then as a San Diego attorney and University of San Diego law professor and legal center director, he worked on Reagan's 1980 presidential campaign. He then headed up Reagan's transition to the White House and served as his counselor and chief policy advisor. He has been described as the Administration's ideological point man.

In 1985, he became the U.S. Attorney General and led international efforts against terrorism, drug trafficking and organized crime. Questioned at a press conference once about Meese's actions as attorney general, Reagan reportedly replied: "If Ed Meese is not a good man, there are no good men."

In 2006, Meese was appointed to the Iraq Study Group, a presidential commission that assessed America's involvement in Iraq and made recommendations. Today, at 78, he holds the Ronald Reagan Chair in Public Policy at the Heritage Foundation, and also serves as chairman of Heritage's Center for Legal and Judicial Studies and as a Distinguished Visiting Fellow at the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

Korean MPs. And in 1953, he headed back to the U.S. and, with fond memories of his military layover in the Bay Area, enrolled at UC Berkeley's Boalt Hall.

Graduating fifth in his class, Dutton began his legal career at McCutchen, Doyle, Brown & Enersen in San Francisco, but soon decided that "big firm practice" wasn't a good fit. In 1960, he went to work for the California Judicial Council when the entire staff was roughly 15, only five or six of them lawyers.

But just a year later, still anxious to practice law and try cases on his own, he launched a private practice in San Jose. Three years later, at age 33, he was appointed to the Santa Clara Municipal Court, where he served until 1971. After that, he worked as an associate law professor and director of the Center for Legal Advocacy at McGeorge Law School and then, briefly, as a deputy district attorney in Yuba County.

What Dutton likes best, he says, is being a general-practice sole practitioner. "The challenge, the new things that you continue learning and the variety of experiences you have both in cases and with people," says Dutton, 79, who is now a great-grandfather, "— it's a headache sometimes, but it's something I enjoy."

Suzie S. Thorn still remembers what it was like to be a woman — one of just three in her class — at U.C. Hastings College of the Law in the 1950s. "The first year, nobody talked to me," she recalls. "And then I was first in my class and, the second year, everybody



wanted to talk to me."

There were professors who tried to embarrass the women, she recalls. But Thorn, who worked her way through law school as a part-time librarian, was neither embarrassed nor bothered, and went on to graduate in 1958. Women lawyers were such a novelty then, she recalls, that a local newspaper photographer showed up at her swearing-in.

Early on, Thorn worked as a law librarian at the University of Washington law school. Then, in 1964, she returned to San Francisco to work in her father's law office — initially handling any case that "came in the door" and eventually focusing on family law matters.

Over the decades, she went on to build up her own family law practice. She

represented well-known author Danielle Steel in a divorce case, and Lia Belli — the fifth wife of celebrity attorney Melvin Belli — in another high-profile split. (Belli, himself, had nine attorneys). And in the late 1970s, she argued a jurisdiction case all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court.

These days, she specializes in high asset property division and multi-jurisdictional/international issues in divorce at Schapiro-Thorn, Inc. and Thorn-Seymour-Mehmet. Half of her work now involves international matters, including Hague Convention child abduction cases.

Thorn has no plans to retire and still travels abroad regularly. But she now devotes more time to charitable causes. She is a trustee of the International Commission on Couple and Family Relations Trust in the United Kingdom and serves on the board of Kids' Turn, a San Francisco organization that helps children through the divorce process. She also is immediate past president of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers Foundation.

"There's a direct relation between what we do here in the office and what the foundation is doing," she says, "because our clients have children, for the most part, who are going through divorce and need to be helped."

Elmer D. Samson, *Houston, TX* • Irwin Edward Sandler, *Palm Desert* • Marc Warren Sandstrom, *Carlsbad* • Lois Jean Scampini, *San Mateo* • Robert Laurence Schaffer, *Fallbrook* • Alfred William Schlesinger, *Los Angeles* • Urban Joseph Schreiner, *Irvine* • George L. Schroeder, *Pebble Beach* • J. Brin Schulman, *Los Angeles* • Richard Malcolm Schulze, *Walnut Creek* • L. E. Schweiner, *Arcadia* • Otis Theodore Schweiter, *Mill Valley* • James E. Scott, *Pittsburg* • Tully H. Seymour, *Newport Beach* • Ralph J. Shapiro, *Beverly Hills* • Aaron E. Shelden, *Encino* • Peter Shenias, *San Diego* • Thomas Joseph Shephard, *Stockton* • Harry William Sherbourne, *Shady Cove, OR* • Milton Sidley, *Los Angeles* • Edmond B. Siegel, *Santa Monica* • Howard Arthur Siegel, *El Dorado Hills* • Lewis Henry Silverberg, *El Cajon* • Richard I. Singer, *San Diego* • Harvey Allan Sitzer, *Beverly Hills* • Ransome Michael Smith, *Fresno* • Robert Barr Smith, *Norman, OK* • Virginia Beatrice Smith, *Walnut Creek* • William Henri Snyder, *Pacific Palisades* • Robert J. Soares, *Ojai* • Lessing Charles Solov, *Los Angeles* • Joshua L. Soske Jr., *Anacortes, WA* • Samuel Leon Sosna Jr., *Los Angeles* • Jerry Glover South, *Mill Valley* • Roland R. Speers II, *Newport Beach* • Marvin Blake Starr, *Walnut Creek* • Richard W. Stegman, *Beverly Hills* • Nathaniel Jason Stein, *Santa Monica* • Jan Stuart Stevens, *Sacramento* • Charles Boise Stewart Jr., *Beverly Hills* • William Clayton Stewart Jr., *La Mesa* • Norman Everett Stolba, *Palos Verdes Estates* • Ivan Strand, *Boise, ID* • Harvey Strassman, *Studio City* • Spencer Weiner Strellis, *Oakland* • Lowell H. Sucherman, *San Francisco* • Arthur Victor Sullivan Jr., *Carlsbad* • Robert Clayton Summers, *Pasadena* • Samuel Sussman, *Escondido* • Alfred Lee Swanger, *Oxnard* • Robert M. Sweet, *Beaumont*

T/U/V Eugene David Tavis, *Yorba Linda* • George Earl Taylor, *Hayden Lake, ID* • Robert S. Teaze, *San Diego* • Howard L. Thaler, *Los Angeles* • Suzie S. Thorn, *San Francisco* • John Victor Tilly, *Lafayette* • Samuel David Timmons, *Santa Rosa* • James O'Malley Tingle, *San Francisco* • Arthur Toll, *Beverly Hills* • Peter Chak Tornay, *Santa Ana* • Lester Eugene Trachman, *Los Angeles* • Xenophon Tragoutsis, *Belmont* • Lewis Knight Uhler, *Granite Bay* • Clark VanderVelde, *Cambridge, MA* • William W. VanAlstyne, *Durham, NC* • David Mynderse VanHoesen, *Orinda* • Michael J. Virga, *Sacramento* • John Virtue, *Newport Beach* • Charles S. Vogel, *Los Angeles*

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50 years from S1

have mixed feelings about that."

As a Los Angeles Superior Court judge in the early 1970s, Vogel regularly handled 30 or 40 cases a day involving discovery and motion practice in L.A.'s now non-existent law and motions court. He helped write the first manual on law and motion, which was later expanded into a *Rutter* book. And while he points out that discovery clearly helps lawyers and clients evaluate their cases, he says, "it's a terrible burden because there's a compulsion to use discovery extensively and maybe beyond what is justified."

Attorney billing, too, has changed. When Vogel first began practicing law in Pomona, the local bar association provided a flat-fee schedule for client billing. But then, he recalls, the Federal Trade Commission ruled that such schedules amount to price-fixing. (Years later, a 1975 U.S. Supreme Court ruling also prohibited bar associations from publishing such guidelines.) Hourly billing then became more common. "It was very, very difficult for some of us to get used to," says Vogel, who also recalls litigation in which clients would make a down-payment and then meet with attorneys at the end to hammer out a fair price. "That world is gone."

Former state Supreme Court Justice Cruz Reynoso recalls 1959 as a time when there were no more than 20 Latino lawyers in the entire state. As a small-town lawyer in El Centro, he says, he was the first Latino attorney in the area.

What he also recalls is that legal services for the poor barely existed. Local bar-sponsored legal aid offices typically consisted of a part-time lawyer who gave advice and only accepted simple cases. And the Legal Services Corporation was yet to be formed. But then, in 1966, California Rural Legal Assistance (CRLA) — one of the nation's first funded legal services programs — was established under President Lyndon Johnson's "War on Poverty."

Reynoso and other CRLA founders worked to create a pioneering program that operated like a "big firm" in how it represented California's rural poor.

"We made a lot of law and protected a lot of people," recalls Reynoso, who also helped defend CRLA against its critics. Then-Gov. Reagan tried unsuccessfully to cut off CRLA's federal funding with a veto.

Reynoso, who later became the first Latino to serve on California's Supreme Court, has weathered other controversies and political battles as well. In 1986, Reynoso, Chief Justice Rose Bird and fellow Associate Justice Joseph Grodin failed to win voter reconfirmation to the Supreme Court after an intense campaign against them — a campaign that Reynoso has always viewed as a "strictly political" attack on an independent judiciary. He believes, he says, that there would be a greater counter response if such a campaign were to take place today.

And Reynoso has seen other changes as well — more emphasis on pro bono work, minority access to the profession and funded legal services. But he sees setbacks, too — reduced judicial discretion and the state's largely minority prison population. And he suggests the "next big step" might be a Supreme Court ruling that entitles the poor to legal counsel in "important" civil cases as well as criminal matters. (The nation's first pilot project recognizing such a right in key civil cases was just signed into law in California.) "We still have to take a great many more steps," he says, "before we really have true social justice."

Describing himself as an "operational optimist," Reynoso has no plans to stop working. Neither do Thorn or Vogel. And Strellis would like to continue trying cases for as long as he can.

"I have a picture of lawyers in their dotage who were coming into court when I was a young public defender," he says. "I would like to stop somewhere a little short of that."

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