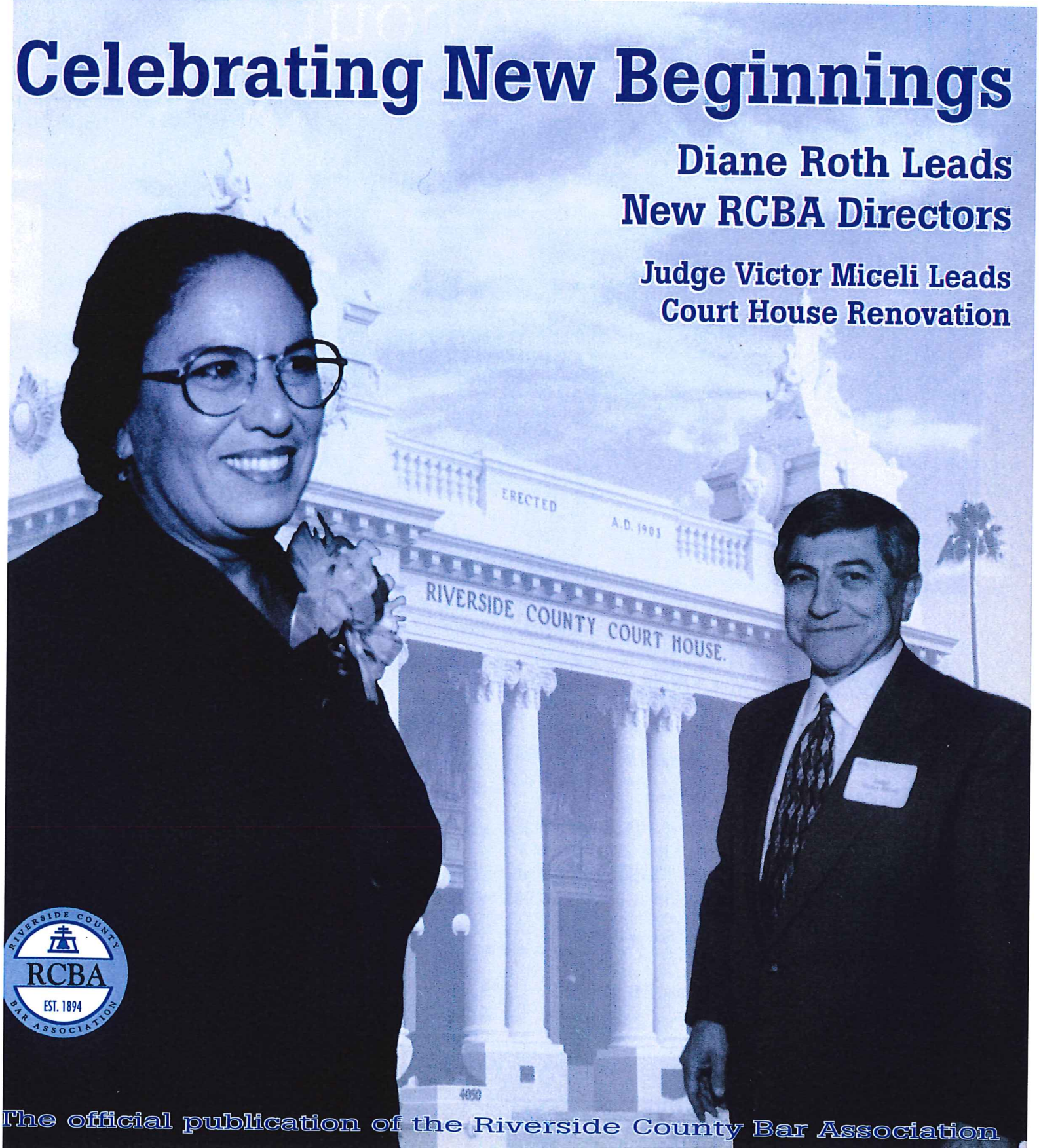
Riverside County LAWYER

November 1998 Volume 49 Number 10

# Celebrating New Beginnings

## Diane Roth Leads New RCBA Directors

## Judge Victor Miceli Leads Court House Renovation




The official publication of the Riverside County Bar Association

# Excavating STALE LATIN

*by Michael L. Bazzo*

Does anyone know the meaning of the Latin phrase that adorns Judge Victor Miceli's beautifully restored ceremonial courtroom, *Justitia Rei Publicae Fundamentum?* At Judge Miceli's prodding, Dan Bernstein of the Riverside Press-Enterprise recently called for a translation. Patricians and plebians alike made various attempts at a valid literal translation.

Few, however, were able to cross the Rubicon with the confidence of å definitive translation. Finally, the die was cast, and a translation was obtained from Prof. Tom Scanlon, chairperson of the Department of Comparative Literature and Languages at UCR.

Professor Scanlon offered that the quote is not from Cicero or any other well known Roman author. Cicero did make a similar statement when he used the word "concordia" in place of justitia, which refers to a "harmony of the people" as a necessary foundation of the republic. The word "concordia", rather than justitia, according to Prof. Scanlon, more clearly embodies the Roman idea of an active pursuit that all people must "get along."

Beyond the sense of protection and fair treatment of the people that the word justitia implies, Prof. Scanlon points out that the ideal of "harmony of the people" is a concept that includes the Roman idea of a smooth working of the government and the people which does not erase the classes, but actively seeks a balance between the classes, providing to all a value of country, pride and sense of belonging.

Why should Latin be so important to us anyway? After all, everyone knows it's a *dead language,* and we're not all running around in togas anymore. (Except on weekends!) A study and knowledge of Latin brings with it benefits other than the ability to translate "graffiti" on courthouse walls. According to Prof. Scanlon, statistics show that Latin is still in the top ten languages taught worldwide, and students who study Latin score on average 140 points higher on their SAT tests. This, he believes, is because studying Latin allows one to develop organizational and critical thinking skills. These skills also eventually translate into the workplace.

The teaching of Latin is presently on an upswing since the 1980s and high school organizations, such as the Junior Classical League, are in full swing. Sadly, Prof. Scanlon adds, out of six local Riverside high schools that had Latin curriculae 15 years ago, none now teach Latin.

More than simply a decoration adorning our newly remodeled courthouse, the Latin quote is a fitting return to our legal roots and Roman traditions. (What would you expect from an Italian attorney!) Over the last few decades, there has been a shift to remove Latin terms from legal writing. The goal is to make legal documents understandable to a greater population.

However, Latin provides a certain clarity to language and the law. This is particularly true of legal terms-of-art which, in Latin, provide precision and universality. The danger in removing Latin terms from legal usage internationally, is that various languages may not attach the exact same meanings to the same terms. It is this precision and clarity that has kept Latin terms in use in the medical field.

The study of Latin also brings with it a cultural appreciation and is a good jumping-off point to the study of other Romance languages and literature (not to mention the ability to order with confidence from menus at French and Italian restaurants!).

Any ideas as to the translation? Prof. Scanlon translates the phrase as, "Justice is the Foundation of the Republic" (or "State"). Whether justice is ***the*** foundation, or ***a*** foundation, of the republic, such words represent immutable virtues and not merely "static" concepts. Even if not written by Cicero, the quote imparts a sense that justice is virtue plus mercy, and that clemency is not mechanical or absolute. ◆

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