



# Grand Jurors' Journal

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## Recruiting Grand Jurors through OLLI

by Lanny Larson

The superior court in Fresno County sometimes has trouble attracting a good-sized, representative pool of prospective grand jurors. This gives our CGJA chapter an opportunity to help.

To promote grand jury service, longtime Fresno chapter leader, Rick Allen, has marshalled proclamations from government bodies; written letters and op-ed pieces in local media; published brochures distributed through libraries; spoken to service clubs and been interviewed by media.

For the past three years, we've partnered with California State University, Fresno's Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program, which offers dozens of classes for people 50 years old and better.

Participants are well educated, diverse (racially, geographically, experiential) and knowledge hungry. Most are retired and have been active in the community for decades. Many want a new community-service experience that challenges them intellectually, makes use of skills honed during their careers and helps make a difference in the community.

Perfect grand jury candidates, yet most have no idea what a grand jury is or how to become involved.

Heck, when you say the word "jury," most folks seem more interested in getting out of service than in volunteering to be a juror of any kind, grand or not.

Like any zealot, I looked for ways to spread the grand jury gospel. Then my pulpit found me.

Leading a class in current events for OLLI, I mentioned my grand jury service. We spent about 30 minutes discussing news events and

the other 60 minutes answering grand jury questions.

Jill Wagner, the executive director of Fresno State's OLLI, agreed to let me teach a class on the grand jury.

After reviewing a multi-class CGJA-Osher curriculum, I developed a 90-minute course tailored to local needs. We tell them civil grand juries don't indict bad guys. We talk about the time investment and acknowledge the occasional difficulty working with 18 other well-intentioned, accomplished people who are as firmly committed to their ideas as you are to yours.

We talk about how declining media coverage complicates a grand jury's ability to let the public know its findings and recommendations and hold agencies accountable.

The results have been growing attendance in the classes and more OLLI participants applying to be grand jurors themselves or encouraging friends and acquaintances to serve.

And the course can be adapted to make presentations to other groups.

*Lanny Larson, a former journalist and grand juror, is currently the Fresno CGJA chapter president.*

### Issue highlights

- Improved search function
- Annual conference
- Media coverage
- Training update
- End of Year donors
- Sherry Chesny
- Ask the Trainer
- Around the state

## Tech Committee Upgrades Grand Jury Report Search by Lou Panetta, Chair, Technology Committee

In its role to implement and support the technical resources used by association members and grand jurors, the Technology Committee recently released a much-improved web feature to search archived grand jury reports from all 58 California counties.

The new report research capability replaces an antiquated one developed several years ago that used an outdated and very limited approach. The new search tool utilizes a customized implementation of Google's popular search engine.

In the past, a grand juror needing to review archived reports or responses from other counties was presented with a small number of responses that were not always relevant. In most cases, the number of counties searched was ten or less. As statewide reports improved, became more numerous and were electronically stored, it became clear that a robust solution was required.

Over the past six months, the CGJA Technology Committee worked with a contract web developer to develop a custom implementation of Google's search tools to focus on all 58 California county or superior court websites where grand jury reports are stored. Now, every county and court archive will get searched when a grand juror, CGJA member or other researcher needs that information. With 58 different approaches to data management by 58 different counties, the search algorithms employed by the CGJA are statistical in nature. Hence, the results, though dramatically better and more accurate, are subject to ongoing changes made by the various IT departments across the state.

Please try out the new [Grand Jury Report Search Function](#), or from the home page ([cgja.org](#)), select **Jury Resources**, then click **Search Topics**. Be sure to let us know what you think. Contact [Lou Panetta](#), Chair, Technology Committee.

## SAVE THE DATE – 2020 Annual Conference by Lloyd Bell, Conference Chair

Planning is under way for the 39th consecutive CGJA annual conference and membership meeting. This year's event will be at the **Embassy Suites by Hilton in San Rafael**. This is an ideal location to spend an extra day or two to explore the region—especially the cultural activities in the San Francisco Bay Area and the wineries of Napa, Sonoma and Healdsburg.

The dates are **Sunday and Monday, October 25 and 26**. By starting the program at 1 the first day and ending it by noon the second day, out-of-town attendees only need to plan on a single overnight stay.

The expanded Annual Conference Committee, chaired by Lloyd Bell, is busily constructing a program that will combine authoritative speakers and panel discussions on topics of interest to both chapters and seated jurors in a format that will allow for ample interaction among the attendees and panelists. Based on the response to last year's session on chapter and member relationships, this year's program will feature another such interactive session that is sure to please all who attend.

There is still room in the program to add topics of interest to our members. If you have one you would like to see added to the program, or a speaker who would be of interest to the CGJA membership, please let us know. Take a few minutes now and submit your thoughts to the [committee](#).

Complete conference and hotel reservation information is now available on our [website](#).

Mark your calendar today and join us in San Rafael!

## GJs in 15 Counties Receive Most Media Coverage

by Jim Ragan, CGJA News Blogger & Chair, Public Relations Committee

In 2019, we posted 784 media articles (print and electronic) from 221 sources about California civil grand jury matters on our website's news blog. Most dealt with news or opinions about 2018-19 grand jury reports. A few cited grand jury reports in prior years in presenting their information.

Here are my overall observations as our main news blogger:

Grand juries in 15 counties received media coverage at least 20 times: Alameda (60), Marin (58), Santa Clara (49), Humboldt (39), San Mateo (39), Kern (37), Santa Barbara (37), Orange (33), San Diego (29), Napa (26), Monterey (25), Riverside (23), Tuolumne (23), Contra Costa (20), and Nevada (20). They accounted for 68 percent of the articles.

Notably absent from substantial media coverage were grand juries in 4 of our 10 most populated counties: Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Sacramento, and Fresno. Grand juries in seven counties received no media coverage – as least insofar as our news blog could find.

Turning to the reporting media, 5 media sources published at least 20 articles each, led by the Marin Independent Journal (43). The others were The Mercury News (39), the Napa Valley Register (25), the Eureka Times-Standard (20), and the Union Democrat (20). The Times-Standard is new to the "top-5 list.

Internet-only media continue making their presence known. They tend to write in-depth articles.

Go to our [news blog](#) to access the articles. Use the blog's search engine to find articles by county, media source and topic.

And remember that you can receive a notice when each article is posted by (1) "liking" CGJA on Facebook and Twitter or (2) going to [Blogtrottr](#) and inputting the CGJA blog URL [cgja.blogspot.com](#) and your email address.

If you would like to receive a simple Excel document displaying the 2019 data I compiled, please email me: [Jim Ragan](#).

And, at the same email address, I invite your comments on the usefulness of this information and how we might utilize it.

## Letters

*Send your thoughts or opinions on CGJA or grand jury matters to [editor@cgja.org](mailto:editor@cgja.org).*

*[View list and contact information for chapters and associations.](#)*

# 2020 CGJA Training Program

## by Marsha Caranci, Training Committee Chair

### Two-day grand jury training seminars

The CGJA Training Committee is pleased to announce that in the summer of 2020, we will deliver all two-day seminars for new and returning jurors and alternates more locally. We are offering to train each grand jury (or sometimes two or three grand juries) "on-site" as opposed to some being trained at regional seminars in large hotel conference rooms, as we have done in the past.

On-site training affords a more intimate learning environment – better for both the attendees and the trainers. Jurors who have previously had to travel to regional seminars can now attend closer to home. The training team can tailor the program to better meet the needs in each county. Additionally, all alternates should be able to attend because of reduced travel costs.

We are now finalizing the training calendar so that all courts can notify prospective jurors of the training dates during the application and interview process.

### Foreperson and pro tem workshops

CGJA offers four one-day Foreperson and Pro Tem Workshops:

- Saturday, July 11, San Mateo
- Wednesday, July 15, Sacramento
- Saturday, July 18, Redding
- Wednesday, July 22, Bakersfield

### Legal advisors' workshops

CGJA offers MCLE credit to grand jury civil legal advisors who attend one of our Legal Advisors' Workshops:

- Thursday, July 16, Sacramento
- Thursday, July 23, Bakersfield

**Report writing workshops:** To be scheduled in the fall.

Look for more detailed information on our [website](#) or contact [Marsha Caranci](#).

## Name Change

On January 28, the CGJA Board of Directors voted to change the name of the Membership Relations Committee (MRC) to the **Membership and Chapter Relations Committee (MCRC)**.

Why? Chapter relations are already part of the committee's responsibilities. MCRC is now elevating chapter relations to a new level. We want to do everything we can to facilitate the exchange of information among chapters, to post chapter documents supporting grand juries on our website that might interest other chapters and encourage regular chapter articles in the bimonthly *Journal*.

Thus, the name change says volumes about how important our chapters are.

**Thank You CGJA Members and Friends!**  
**End of Year Donation Campaign for 2019**  
 by Ron Zurek, Finance Committee Chair

The Finance Committee conducted a donation campaign in conjunction with the giving season starting November 21, 2019 through January 14, 2020.

Our 2019 campaign was very successful, raising just under \$3,500. Although those who donated were sent a personal thank-you card from CGJA President Larry Herbst, the Finance Committee wants to publicly thank those members and friends who gave generously. They are

Kenneth Adair	Dianne Hoffman	Virgil M Piper
G. Gayle Baker	Karen Jahr	Lynn Plew
Lloyd Bell	Marianne Jameson	Celino Quilao
Charles Bourne	Marina Kaiser	James Ragan
Thomas Burke	Joann Landi	Adam Rocke
Marsha Caranci	Angeleke Levy	Thomas Simpson
Alfred Dubiel	Gail Locke	Sukhden Singh
Koko Fimbres	Tamara MacLean	Francis M. Small, Jr.
Larell Fineren	Frances Matteucci	Jon Tonsing
Winfred Gredvig	John McDowell	David Van Etten
Kenneth R. Hanna	Ruth McMillian	Andi Winters
Earl Heal	Mary Lou Oliver	Ronald Zurek
Lawrence Herbst	Patricia Pavone	

Your support allows CGJA to promote, preserve, and support the grand jury system through training, education, and outreach. Thank you!

## Recent Board Actions

**Board Meeting, January 28, 2020**

Formally approved moving the responsibility for the website from PRC to the Technology Committee.

Approved 2020 Annual Conference dates, budget and contract.

Retroactively approved the Committee expenses exceeding 2019 CGJA Budget as increased expenses were offset by additional income.

Changed the name of the "Membership Relations Committee" to the "Membership and Chapter Relations Committee."

*All approved board meeting minutes are available on the CGJA [website](#).*

**Barbara Sommer**, Secretary

**NOTE:** We encourage members to attend meetings of the board of directors. They are held on the fourth Tuesday of the month via teleconferencing (no meetings in July and rarely in December). [Read more.](#)

## Sherry Chesny by Jerry Lewi

Those of us who knew and worked with Sherry Chesny were saddened to hear of her death on Thanksgiving Day, 2019. Her daughter, Cathy Goehring, has been very kind to tell us of her situation and of her passing:

She was the best mother anyone could ever have, and she was my best friend. I appreciate all the wonderful people she came to know through the grand jury and CGJA. It has been very nice to hear of the memories of those who worked with her and knew her. Thank you for checking on her and seeing how she was doing these last few years!

Sherry served on the Placer County Grand jury four times: as foreperson 1984-85; committee chair 1988-89; carryover 1989-90, and replacement juror 2003-04. She was the founder and guiding spirit of the CGJA training program and was honored for her work with the Lifetime Achievement Award in 2006, when she stepped down as chair of the Training Committee. She also served on the board from 1994 to 2010 and received the Angelo Rolando Service Award in 2000.



Here are a few remembrances from some of us who knew her best over those years. My remarks are at the end.

**Ron Miguel.** Sherry started teaching with Bruce Olson, who was then contracting with a number of counties to do grand juror training. She worked with him from 1989 to 1993. About 1994, there was a two-day grand jury training session held in Yuba City that was organized by a former juror, Al Alamaro. In 1996, I went to Yuba. Well over 100 jurors in one big room listened to a series of lectures for two days – hardly any interaction.

After it was over, Sherry asked me to help teach there, and I did so with her in '97 and '98 – she doing Interviewing, I doing Investigation and sometimes trading off. Several of us were CGJA members, and by '99 we felt this should be a CGJA-sponsored program. Sherry became the first chair of our committee, and we are indebted to her for the work she did. The Yuba material was quite rudimentary and not at all fleshed out. We used some flip charts and overhead transparencies – that old pre-PowerPoint technology. The original group of CGJA presenters, including some from Yuba, rewrote the old course and provided much original material for a new program.

**Audrey Lynberg:** I met Sherry when Dan Taranto and she drafted the materials that were to be used for the first training program at La Verne University which was in about 1997-98. They had been associated with Al Alamaro, who came to our training program at La Verne University. At the completion of the program, he turned his program over to our group as he felt it was very well presented. After the La Verne program, Sherry, who was a very good presenter, traveled around the state helping different counties regarding the grand jury and how to become a good grand juror.

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**Marsha Caranci:** My earliest memories of Sherry were when she was teaching me the Interviewing presentation. We didn't have PowerPoint then, so we carried around these large posters with a few "bullet points" and one with a large triangle, so we could talk about triangulation. We placed them on an easel and took each one off as we went through them. Boy, have we come a long way!

I also remember Sherry and her husband driving their motor home around the state hauling equipment and training manuals. And my first experience with committee work was volunteering to transform Sherry's hand-drawn color-coded assignment sheets for regionals into an Excel document. Remember when we had the red group, the blue group, etc., with colored dots on their manuals designating which room to go to? That was all Sherry's excellent planning.

**Judi Lazenby:** I met Sherry in July 2000, and the next year she asked me to join the training program. Had it not been for Sherry, CGJA would not have developed such a professional training program. She was liked and respected by all her colleagues and the new jurors who were being trained. A couple of times I heard jurors comment of her, "You are like a breath of fresh air!" I think that was due to her presence and her delivery in presenting any material. She made even the most difficult parts of a subject easy to understand. She was particularly good at responding to jurors' questions. Sherry was a good listener. I believe that Ron and I were among her first recruits, and we served many years with her.

Sherry started the Forepersons' Workshop in Concord. It was a 30-minute session. Later, she turned the idea over to Betty Mattea who perfected it.

At a board meeting in Sacramento about eight or nine years ago, Sherry kept repeating that Dick was coming to pick her up. She was concerned that she may not have told him the correct time. When she had repeated it a number of times, my heart broke. A couple of weeks later I was talking with Sherry on the phone and she was telling me that she was going through old scrapbooks and pictures, so that she could hold on to memories as long as she was able.

I have such fond memories of both Sherry and her husband. I would never have become the juror that I was and the trainer I became had it not been for Sherry.

**Joann Landi:** I recall that Sherry was very supportive when I was a "newbie" director. It was later when I volunteered to help the Training Committee that I came to appreciate how valuable she was to the association.

**Jerry Lewi:** Every year when my wife, Marion, and I put up our Christmas tree, we are reminded of Sherry's kindness of giving Marion a set of Christmas ornaments as a "hostess" gift when she spent a night at Marion's home in about 2005 in connection with training the Los Angeles County Grand Jury. This was before we were married, so it would have been inappropriate for Sherry to stay at my house. Sherry never failed to mention Marion's hospitality whenever we saw her.





## Ask the Trainer by Marsha Caranci, CGJA Training Chair



This regular column allows the CGJA training team to share with Journal readers our responses to questions we receive from grand jurors. Please remember: you may not take any response as legal advice; and you should contact your local legal advisors to answer any question that might divulge confidential information.

Submit your questions to me at [cgjatraining@cgja.org](mailto:cgjatraining@cgja.org). Our response to your edited or redacted question might appear in a future edition of the *Journal*.

**Q. I attended your Report Writing Workshop last fall and found it very informative and helpful. One question I didn't think to ask at the time is this: Is there a general recommendation for the length of a report? I understand that it will vary by topic, but what is the range of how many pages you typically see?**

**A.** We at CGJA read a lot of grand jury reports each year, and we see them range anywhere from four or five pages to fifty or more. So, there is certainly no hard and fast rule. We recommend that a report be easily readable to the governmental entity and official, but also to the public. We believe an average report, usually about 8-12 pages, is most likely to be read.

Here is a link to [Examples of Well-Written Reports](#) on our website. You will note that most of them fall into this 8-12 page range.

Sometimes we see longer reports which include pages of appendices or very long bibliographies, neither of which are necessary. The grand jury does not need to provide references for all of the information gathered during an investigation. The reader should be able to tell from the Methodology section that multiple resources were used and should assume that the jury verified all the facts in their report from multiple sources. A few references might be of interest and informative, but a long list of resources only adds to the length of the report.

**Q. May a grand jury write a report that is informational only and has no findings?**

**A.** There is no authority for issuing just an "informational report."

Penal Code section 933(a) requires grand juries to submit to the presiding judge a "... final report of its findings and recommendations." The grand jury's job is not to just record that it took a tour of a government facility or conducted a single interview and found everything to be fine; but rather to gather evidence, analyze the facts (which have been verified), and draw conclusions (findings) from those facts. That doesn't mean that findings need to be critical. If the grand jury concludes after a thorough investigation that the entity is functioning properly, it can issue a report with only positive findings – which would meet the mandate of PC §933(a).



## News from Around the State

### from San Joaquin by Bert Brown, Chapter President

The San Joaquin County Chapter established the topic of homelessness as its focus for the 2018-2019 year. The following individuals made presentations throughout the year:

**Adam Chesire** , San Joaquin County Program Administrator for Homeless Initiatives

**Amy Smith**, Chief Mental Health Clinician, San Joaquin County

**Angelina Simms**, Veterans Administration

**Ed Figueroa**, St. Mary’s Dining Hall

**Linda Donelson**, Manteca Unified School District and Manteca Police Department

**Mark Armstrong**, Take Back Lodi and **Richard Dunfee**, Community Liaison Officer, Lodi Police Department

**Pat Withrow**, San Joaquin County Sheriff-elect (now the Sheriff)

**Peter Ragsdale**, San Joaquin County Housing Authority

This effort resulted in the chapter filing a complaint with the 2019-2020 Civil Grand Jury asking that they do an investigation into homelessness recommending that the county and all seven cities work together to “establish and implement a multi-faceted, comprehensive and evaluated ‘Marshall Plan’ to provide the resources to those who are homeless and to significantly reduce the number of people who are homeless”.



We won’t know if the Grand Jury took up the investigation because of confidentiality rules. but we are hopeful.

## Keep us Posted

Send us your chapter or association news and accomplishments. Format articles in Word and send as email attachments to Barbara Sommer [editor@cgja.org](mailto:editor@cgja.org). For more details see [How to submit an article](#).

**DEADLINE for submitting articles for publication in the next issue**

**March 23, 2020**

**Change of address** - Please notify the [editor@cgja.org](mailto:editor@cgja.org) of any email address changes.

The mission of the CGJA is to promote, preserve, and support the grand jury system through training, education, and outreach.

Contacts: [Officers and directors](#), chapter and association [presidents](#).

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*Visit our website*

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