

Industry Watch

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Rutan & Tucker Grows Up With Orange County

By Kenneth Davis
Daily Journal Staff Writer

One hundred years ago, 25-year-old Alexander Wallace Rutan came from the East Coast to the orange groves of Orange County with a dream to open a law practice.

The young lawyer didn't allow the rural area to dissuade him from his dream, and he co-founded Daniels & Rutan with Fabius Daniels.

Law Firms

It was rough going at first for the two attorneys. Many of their clients paid with strawberries, oranges and lima beans. Rutan later joined former Utah Superior Court Judge James Tucker to establish Rutan & Tucker in 1940.

Today, Rutan & Tucker is the largest law firm in Orange County, with 145 attorneys and a roster of big-name clients.

The Costa Mesa-based firm is celebrating its centennial with a re-branding initiative and a year of festivities.

Despite its humble beginnings, the firm has grown as the county has.

In 1933, Rutan drafted the legislation that created the Orange County Water District, which became a model for water legislation around the state.

The firm also helped create the cities of Irvine, Cypress, La Palma, Mission Viejo and Yorba Linda by drafting city charters and providing legal assistance.

"Well, it's quite a thing for a firm as relatively as young as ours to have that kind of legacy," managing partner Thomas Crane said. "It's amazing to look out the window here from where I sit and see all the things the we've helped create."

The firm continues to represent major cities in the region, such as Laguna Beach, San Clemente, Yorba Linda and Irvine.

Most notably, it is representing the city of Anaheim in the litigation over the naming of the Angels Major League baseball team. The city sued the team last year when owner Arte Moreno changed its name from the Anaheim



ROBERT LEVINS / Daily Journal

Costa Mesa-based Rutan & Tucker celebrates its centennial this year. Among its 145 attorneys are, from left, Michael T. Hornak, Anthony King, Managing Partner Tom Crane, Ako S. Williams, John Hurlbut and Mike Immell.

Angels to the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim. *City of Anaheim v. Angels Baseball*, 05CC01902 (Orange County Super. Ct., filed Jan. 5, 2005). The city, which had contributed \$20 million to upgrade the stadium where the Angels play, said the new name violates the team's lease at Angel Stadium of Anaheim. The trial began last December and is scheduled to conclude this month.

The firm also is active in mergers and acquisitions. Crane and partner John Hamilton Jr. recently represented

Newport Beach-based Crave Entertainment Group Inc., a distributor of video games, in its \$72 million sale to music distributor Handleman Co. of Troy, Mich.

"And in fact, that's a very, very active area of our practice right now," he said.

The firm also has represented a number of land developers in the Orange County area over the years. Clients have included Western Pacific Housing, Fairfield Residential and Hillcrest Homes.

Some of the firm's other big-name clients include Fluor, DuPont, Alpha Beta, the Orange County Performing Arts Center and Union Bank of California.

Though Rutan & Tucker has been around for 100 years, it is far from being the oldest firm in the state. That title goes to Santa Barbara-based Price Postel & Parma, which was founded in June 1852. Running a close second is San Francisco-based Tobin & Tobin, which was established in October 1852.

Two of the oldest firms in the country are Philadelphia-based Rawle & Henderson, founded in 1783, and New York-based Cadwalader, Wickersham & Taft, which was established in 1792.

To honor Rutan & Tucker's centennial, events will be held throughout the year, including an in-house party in May and a client gala in September. The South Coast Metro Alliance, a nonprofit business association, honored the firm with a luncheon last month for its contributions to the county.

The firm is also in the midst of a re-branding initiative and plans to launch a print advertising campaign, chief marketing officer Bruce Allen said.

Along with its office in Costa Mesa, the firm also staffs three attorneys in Palo Alto. Crane said he wouldn't rule out the possibility of future expansion.

"Within a decade, I wouldn't be surprised to see us move into other areas of California," he said. "I think we're beyond being an Orange County firm. We are a California firm."