



DISTINGUISHED PUBLIC SERVICE

Arthur L. Littleworth

Former RUSD board president and attorney
for Best, Best & Krieger

Sept. 7, 1965, is burned into Arthur Littleworth's memory.

On that day, just three weeks after the Watts riots, an arsonist torched Lowell School in Riverside. The community firestorm that resulted pushed Riverside Unified School District Board President Littleworth and his colleagues into a national hot spot—the integration of schools.

The burning of Lowell, a segregated school at the corner of Victoria Avenue and Cridge Street, and Riverside's response, sparked the "quality integrated education" movement. In the Lowell aftermath, RUSD became the first large school district in the nation to integrate voluntarily without a court order.

Littleworth's recently published memoir, "No Easy Way: Integrating Riverside Schools - A Victory for Community," chronicles his 10 years on the school board.

"The 1965 integration of our schools gave hope to the minority community despite the burning of those schools and the threat of more violence in Riverside," said Littleworth, recipient of Riverside Community College District's 2015 Distinguished Public Service Award. "We came together as one people to integrate our schools."

Desegregation of schools in the United States began in 1954 with the Supreme Court's decision in *Brown v. Board of Education*, which declared legal segregation in public education unconstitutional. The decision started a movement to remove racial barriers in schools and education. While some communities embraced the Court's decisions, many resisted.

In Riverside, parents petitioned to close two segregated Eastside schools — Lowell and Irving. The school board spent 30 days developing an integration plan for RUSD schools. While the plan didn't save Lowell, it did establish a foundation for the future.

"I would hope that the reader of my book would realize that firm decisive leadership and the dedication to do the right thing compelled integration in Riverside," Littleworth said. "It was not only my leadership or the school board's, but also the leadership of the teachers and administration, of the protest leaders and of the people of Riverside that made integration work. 'No Easy Way' tells the story of the victory of community."

Littleworth settled in Riverside in 1950 after graduating from Yale Law School. Despite getting an offer from a "prestigious" law firm in his hometown

of Los Angeles, Littleworth decided Riverside was a “good place to raise a family and that it provided a unique opportunity for public service.”

He parlayed his love for law and public service into a lifelong journey, becoming one of the country’s preeminent water law attorneys and a senior partner at Best, Best & Krieger LLP. His signature case in 40 years of legal practice was securing water rights for the city of Riverside, winning a six-year case that included 2,500 parties.

“Art is a man of exceptional integrity,” said Jack Clarke, a partner at BB&K. “He’s a scholar and a man with a deep, deep sense of right and wrong, and he has the ability to express that in a way that you might be surprised. That’s why I admire him.”

Through his public service, Littleworth also became an important voice for the community. He served as the first president of the Mission Inn Foundation, helping to restore the historic inn’s luster and reputation as a jewel of Riverside and the Inland Empire. In 1998, alongside Clarke, he served on the Mayor’s Use of Force Task Force examining circumstances surrounding the death of Tyisha Miller, a young black woman who was killed by Riverside police officers after she was found unresponsive in a locked car with the engine running and a gun in her lap.

Peggy Littleworth characterizes her husband’s legacy as one of firm leadership and gentle persuasion.

“Arthur’s legacy is an example of commitment to community and the willingness to take leadership in the most difficult situations,” she said. “His calm, thoughtful approach to problems and his calm, thoughtful follow through are the qualities of a true gentleman and a true leader.”

