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New guard at Duane Morris: young leaders with deep ties

*New LA, SF managing partners
Cyndie Chang and Stephen Sutro
are 36 and 45*

By Joshua Sebold
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Leadership in Duane Morris LLP's California offices got younger Thursday as the firm replaced long-term managing partners in its Los Angeles and San Francisco offices with fresh faces.

Stephen H. Sutro, 45, a white-collar litigator and fourth-generation Bay Area attorney, will take the helm of the San Francisco office, while Cyndie M. Chang, 36, a complex commercial litigation partner with a specialty in insurance coverage, will take over in Los Angeles.

Firm chairman John J. Soroko said the firm has made a conscious decision to staff its four main California offices with young leaders.

"Like a sports team, a law firm always has to look to get a little younger," he said.

The firm installed Karineh Khachatourian, now 45, as managing partner of its Palo Alto office when it opened in 2013 and named another, Edward M. Cramp, 42, as managing partner of its San Diego office in 2011.

Sutro is in a unique position, Soroko said,



CYNDIE M. CHANG
Duane Morris

STEPHEN H. SUTRO
Duane Morris

having spent the first four years of his career with Hancock Rothert & Bunshoft LLP, a 64-attorney San Francisco-based firm that merged with Duane Morris six years after Sutro moved to the larger firm, giving him a deep familiarity with attorneys on both sides of the combination.

Chang was selected because of her connections to the community and her networking prowess, in addition to her emergence as a strong litigator, Soroko said. Chang is outgoing president of the Southern California Chinese Lawyers Association, among the oldest and largest Asian-American bar groups in the country.

Sutro too has deep ties to his city. His great-grandfather was a founding partner of the firm that eventually became Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, and both his father and grandfather worked for Pillsbury.

His father, John A. Sutro Jr., was also a Marin County Superior Court judge for nearly two decades.

Sutro and Chang both said the firm is looking to expand their offices' practices in corporate, intellectual property, employment and real estate law.

"We'd like to be able to support the firm's clients in every respect here in San Francisco," Sutro said.

Sutro replaces Joseph M. Burton, a former assistant U.S. attorney who moved to Duane Morris to help launch its San Francisco office in October 1998.

"He's just been an incredible leader here

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and still intends to practice law," Sutro said of his predecessor.

Chang replaces Russell W. Roten, a commercial litigator with specializations in insurance and bankruptcy cases. He's led the office since its founding in 2006.

Chang previously served as pro bono coordinator for the firm's Los Angeles office and Sutro was on the professional standards committee, which governs partner advancement.