

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

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Keeps it fun, gets it done

Neutral Terry Green, scion of entertainers, knows litigants do not enjoy being in court.

By Shane Nelson

Special to the Daily Journal

Retired judge Terry A. Green comes from a long line of entertainers.

“My grandfather had a star on Hollywood Boulevard ... and my grandmother was a Vaudeville actress,” Green said. “My dad was an assistant director. He was a production manager, and then he was vice president of production at Universal for many, many years.”

Green said when he was a kid, conversations around the family dinner table at holiday time focused on one thing.

“All they talked about was showbiz,” he recalled with a chuckle. “But showbiz didn’t have that allure for me. I was not starstruck, and so I just kind of shunned the idea. I had no interest in going into show-business.”

A 1972 USC School of Law graduate, Green went to work for the Los Angeles County DA’s office, where he discovered his passion for performance.

“Looking back on it, maybe there was a lot more show business in me than I realized,” he said. “Seriously, I loved performing. I loved putting on cases. And to me, it was an art form.”

Appointed to the municipal court in 1992 and then elevated to Los Angeles County Superior Court in 1995, Green described trial work as both an attorney and a judge as the greatest jobs in the world.

“If I didn’t need the money to support myself and support my family, I would have done it for nothing,” he said. “I tell people that, and they think I’m a nut. Maybe I am. But I’d do it for nothing. In fact, some-



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times I’d pay you to let me do it. That’s how much I liked it.”

Green retired from the bench in the summer of 2023 and shortly afterward joined Signature Resolution, where he’s since resolved employment, commercial and real property disputes as a mediator and arbitrator.

“First and foremost, I think I can deliver a fair and just result, and that’s why they’re there: to reach a fair and just result,” Green said of his work as an arbitrator. “But you have to be able to see the case through the eyes of the people on both sides. That’s part of getting a just result. So you don’t miss anything, you don’t overlook anything,

you try to look at each case with fresh eyes.”

Before his mediations, Green likes to receive briefs from all the parties and to speak over the phone with counsel. On the day of mediation, he keeps parties separate but likes to begin with introductions and an overview.

“While the lawyers have been in mediation, the clients invariably have not, and it’s very important that we understand the confidentiality requirements,” Green said.

From there, he asks a few questions.

“I ask them, ‘What do you want? What are you looking for here? And at the end of the day, what is it

Terry A. Green

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you want to do?” Green explained.

He also tries to make it clear early on that an overwhelming number of cases eventually settle.

“The only question is: When did they settle?” Green said. “They can settle today, or they can settle tomorrow or at the courthouse steps. ... And so, I try to make it clear that now is the best time to settle. There’s no real reason to keep fighting.”

Green eventually moves into evaluations, where he said his more than three decades on the bench are especially valuable.

“And having been at Mosk [Court-house] for 18 years comes in handy because I’ve seen so many trials, where these factual scenarios actually go to trial,” Green said. “I can pretty much tell them what the odds are going to be. ... And I try to point out the uncertainty of going to trial. Trial is a lot of fun if you’re a lawyer. Trial is a lot of fun if you’re a judge. But trial is not fun if you’re a litigant. The last place I’d want to be is a litigant in a trial.”

Beverly Hills plaintiffs’ attorney Babak Shirdel recently used Green to settle a difficult sexual abuse case

and described him as a straight shooter.

“Mediators, in my experience, like to hear themselves talk, and we’ll sit there for hours and blah, blah, blah, and then a couple hours into mediation, we’ll finally get down to brass tacks,” Shirdel said. “But not Judge Green. ... He will see through the nonsense and really get to the heart of what’s going on.”

Shirdel was quick to note, however, that while Green didn’t waste time, he was respectful throughout.

“My client was at some points crying in mediation, and ... in terms of dealing with my client, he was very nice, very gentle,” Shirdel explained. “And dealing with me, he was very straightforward. ... But even when he was trying to beat me up, he was just so respectful. So, I felt he was very fair.”

San Diego defense attorney Lisa M. Magorien appeared before Green when he was on the bench and has since used him to mediate several single-plaintiff employment disputes.

“He has a really, really good understanding of employment law,” Magorien said. “And he’s been able to explain to my clients what the

risks are while also making them feel like they’ve been heard. ... Each case we’ve settled at the mediation for numbers my client has been happy with, and they’ve asked to use him again.”

Magorien noted that Green employs an appropriately balanced approach.

“Too much back patting is not helpful because then my client just gets very much like, ‘Yeah, why would we pay anything?’ And then we don’t resolve the case,” Magorien explained. “It’s a balance of making sure the client feels heard and understood but also using an appropriate tone and enlightening the client as to the risks he sees as a fresh set of eyes on it and motivating the client to settle. But still leaving the mediation in a way where they’re not offended. And I think Terry Green has done a really good job with that fine line.”

Los Angeles litigator Jessica C. Gregg also appeared before Green when he was on the bench and has since used him to settle business and employment disputes.

“One of the things I would say that separates him from some of

the other neutrals available right now is he understands the business side of litigation,” Gregg said. “And what I mean by that is the cost of the litigation in time and not just dollars.”

Gregg said she also really enjoyed working with Green.

“A mediation can be a challenging day, right? You’re fighting for your client in either direction. And he keeps it academic, and he keeps it fun,” Gregg explained. “Even when I may disagree with him or his view on things, he’s reasonable and listens. ... There are a few mediators out there I use that I don’t like spending my day with. But I actually enjoy working with Judge Green. It feels like a productive and collaborative day.”

Here are some attorneys who have used Green’s services: Lisa M. Magorien, Lagasse Branch Bell + Kinkead LLP; Jessica C. Gregg, Attwood Gregg LLP; Babak Shirdel, Slater Slater Schulman LLP; Sheldon E. Eisenberg, Sullivan & Triggs LLP; Laurence M. Berman, Berman Litigation Group.

news@dailyjournal.com