



HON. STEPHEN M. LACHS

JUDGE OF THE SUPERIOR COURT, RETIRED

Available as Trial Judge, Arbitrator, Mediator, Settlement Judge, Referee & Special Master. Experienced in Family Law, Contract, Tort, Construction, Real Property, Entertainment, Environmental, Probate, Insurance and other General Business areas.

JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE

Judge, Los Angeles Superior Court, 1979-1999
Supervising Judge, Mental Health Courts, 1980-1981
Supervising Judge, Family Law Courts, 1985-1986
Justice Pro Tem – California Supreme Court
Justice Pro Tem – California Court of Appeal
Commissioner – Los Angeles Superior Court, 1975-1979

Additional Activities and Qualifications

Of the twenty years Judge Lachs served on the Los Angeles Superior Court, ten of those were as a trial judge in Central Civil. He was among the first twenty-five judges selected to implement the fast-track program of individual calendaring when that program was instituted, and served on the committee which formulated the rules for fast-track courts. Several years later, he was selected to be the first trial judge to hear complex litigation in Central Civil West. He served there for two years and then returned to his fast-track court.

His experience includes handling major, complex cases involving insurance coverage issues, commercial litigation, employment litigation and medical malpractice. He was known for thoroughly reading the papers filed by attorneys and doing the research required to understand all aspects of the cases he handled. His reputation for scholarly research was enhanced by the fact that for nine years he chaired the prestigious BAJI committee, which writes the jury instructions used in all courts in California and other states. He has lectured for groups such as the CEB and the Litigation Section of the Los Angeles County Bar Association and has frequently taught other judges at Judicial Institutes.

While Judge Lachs understood and appreciated the trial process, he was always devoted to the possibility of settlement as a means of accomplishing the greatest good for many litigants. He handled hundreds of settlement conferences and relished the opportunity to talk with litigants and their attorneys, helping them achieve a successful settlement. He brought his “people” skills with him into the newer area of mediation, and successfully mediated several dozen cases. In his last several years in civil litigation, Judge Lachs found himself in the envious position of settling more cases than he tried, and having jury waivers in most of the cases that went to trial.

Judge Lachs has had considerable experience at the delicate task of overseeing cases involving public figures, including Peggy Lee v. The Walt Disney Company and several cases of former partners suing major law firms. He has also handled family law matters involving notables such as Tony Bennett, Rod Steiger and Billy Bob Thornton. His sensitivity to the issues involved in such cases seemed much appreciated by both the litigants and their attorneys.