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Los Angeles judge retires, starts neutral career at Signature

By Justin Kloczko
Daily Journal Staff Writer

After more than 40 years working in the public sector, retired Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Scott M. Gordon started as a neutral at Signature Resolution LLC on Monday.

During his 17 years on the bench as a commissioner and judge, which ended last Friday, Gordon rose to supervise the family law and criminal divisions. He said he was excited to get right back to work at his new job, having known the founders at Signature for some time.

“These are relationships that go back a long time. I have great respect for them as individuals,” said Gordon, who will handle mediations and arbitrations.

Gordon started as a Santa Monica beat cop working the night shift, became a deputy district attorney, then a judge. He was 20 when he became a police officer.

“I was not old enough to drink a beer,” said Gordon, recalling the grueling hours in which he was often eating breakfast when everyone else was eating dinner.

But he got to know the local legal community, testifying in court traffic matters.

“Judges would quiz me on torts and contracts after I got done testifying,” said Gordon.

One of those judges he formed a bond with was then-Santa Monica Municipal Court Judge Laurence Rubin, now a justice with the 2nd District Court of Appeal, who would go on to mentor Gordon through law school.



GORDON

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— Dennis Wasser of Wasser, Cooperman & Mandles

While prosecuting cases for Los Angeles County, Gordon worked on the O.J. Simpson case. Twenty years ago, he prosecuted the first cyber stalking case in the nation against a man who placed ads in a woman’s name, asking to be raped.

After eight years as a commissioner, Gordon was appointed a judge in 2010.

Dennis Wasser of Wasser, Cooperman & Mandles, who was involved in Los Angeles

Dodgers owner Frank McCourt’s divorce proceedings, recalled one scene in which Gordon marshaled a number of high-flying attorneys. Texas-based Stephen Sussman, who was brought on to represent McCourt, was at one point telling Gordon how to handle exhibits, according to Wasser.

Wasser recalled the judge telling Sussman, “Maybe that’s how you do it in Texas courts, but in this courtroom, we do things my way.”

“From that time there was a great deal of decorum. Attorneys knew he meant business,” said Wasser.

But that doesn’t mean Gordon is the classic example of a hardline judge. Wasser said Gordon is very amiable with attorneys and will do well as a neutral.

“He is subtle and smart enough to manipulate people to the right result,” said Wasser.

Stacy D. Phillips of Blank Rome LLP, who appeared before the judge on family law matters, said Gordon will help build a strong family law department at Signature.

“Judge Gordon has been a true gift to our court and our community and will continue to be the gift that keeps on giving when he is at Signature,” said Phillips in an email.

Gordon also has a background in handling international custody disputes and child abduction matters, having been appointed as one of the four judges in the country to serve on the International Network of Hague Convention Judges. For 30 years he served as an adjunct professor at Southwestern Law School.