

# VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

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## Rock Steady

*After four decades as a prosecutor and judge in family court, nothing fazes Scott Gordon.*

By Shane Nelson  
Special to the Daily Journal

Over four decades of public service, Scott M. Gordon has taken part in a number of extraordinary experiences, but working as a prosecutor on the O.J. Simpson murder trial may have been the most surreal.

“A late night talk show producer at the time once called me to see if I could get Chris [Darden] and Marcia [Clark] to be on their show, and I was like, ‘Really?’” he recalled with a laugh. “How they got my home number I’ll never know.”

Gordon, who joined Signature Resolution last August, spent 17 years as a judicial officer on the Los Angeles County Superior Court, which included time as the supervising judge for the family law and criminal divisions. He worked for 16 years as a Los Angeles County deputy district attorney and spent eight years as a Santa Monica police officer, working for a time as a detective on homicide cases.

Batman fans, however, will likely be most interested in the eight years Gordon worked as a Los Angeles County Court commissioner.

“Yes, I was Commissioner Gordon,” the Signature neutral said, referring to the iconic DC Comics character while laughing again.

“When I handled high-profile cases as a commissioner, the press just loved it,” he said, chuckling. “It’s low-hanging fruit, right? If I’m going to be a character in comics, Commissioner Gordon is not a bad one to be.”

Family law attorney Larry A. Ginsberg, who has used Gordon in a number of successful mediations over the past year, said there isn’t much the retired judge hasn’t seen and done during his extraordinary career, which includes making high-profile rulings in the Roman Polanski case.

“I don’t know that anything ever shocks him,” Ginsberg said. “There’s very little we can throw at him that rocks him off that concrete foundation he has.”

Gordon’s remarkable breadth of experience also helps him relate to individuals with challenging personalities who are often enduring one of the most difficult times of their lives, Ginsberg said.

“Family law is an area where the litigants are completely out of control of the process,”



Nicole Tyau / Daily Journal photo

Ginsberg said. “It’s invaluable that he will identify those difficult issues for people – who are used to having things a certain way and having a certain amount of control – and he will patiently walk them through what the process is.”

Gordon said 85% to 90% of the cases he’s handled in his year at Signature have been family law matters, and he described the area of practice as an “emotional form of the law,” noting he rarely puts disputing parties in the same room.

“I think people have to feel comfortable to be as candid and open as possible,” Gordon said. “So they need to have a safe environment. ... People are not going to be

### Scott M. Gordon

Signature Resolution  
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**Areas of specialty:**  
family law

open to come to agreements on important things in their lives if they’re not physically comfortable.”

Family law attorney Samantha F. Spector said Gordon’s enormously compassionate, perceptive approach was a critical component of the several successful mediations she’s used the neutral for in the past year.

“Judge Gordon is simply

unparalleled in the family law world,” she said. “He’s very empathetic and patient, and he makes everyone feel like they were listened to and that they were respected and that they were treated fairly.”

While Gordon said he appreciates mediation briefs and phone calls with attorneys before a session, he made it clear he’s flexible, and he’s been able to settle matters in which there wasn’t a great deal of pre-mediation preparation. For the work he does as a judge pro tem or arbitrator, however, the neutral likes to meet long beforehand with attorneys to make sure things go smoothly.

“We go over exactly what we’re going to do,” Gordon said. “We come up with a discovery plan, a timeline for pleadings and filings and then how we’re going to move forward. I think putting time in up front yields a better result. People feel they’ve

been heard, and it goes much more efficiently and quickly when we get into the actual arbitration or trial.”

Describing himself as a tech guy, Gordon said conducting dispute resolution on video platforms during the pandemic has been a comfortable transition for him. Serving recently as judge pro tem in a family law matter, the Signature neutral recently conducted a multi-week trial over Zoom.

“Each of the lawyers had either an associate or IT person run the exhibits,” Gordon said. “And it worked wonderfully.”

Family law attorney Anne C. Kiley appeared before Gordon while he was on the bench and has worked with him in the past year on a few mediations and one private trial.

“As a private judge, he’s no different than he was on the bench,” Kiley said. “He knows

procedure, he knows evidence. He doesn’t sit on decisions. ... That’s exactly what you want from a private judge: someone who’s just like they were on the bench and isn’t worried about making the hard call, and he’s not.”

Kiley, Spector and Ginsberg were all quick to mention Gordon has no trouble being direct and isn’t afraid to cut to the heart of a dispute. The neutral also isn’t afraid to suggest resolution may not be possible, according to Ginsberg.

“If he identifies that things are not going to resolve, he isn’t shy about saying, ‘From everything I’m hearing from all fronts, this is not going to work,’” Ginsberg said. “I really appreciate it when a judicial officer like Judge Gordon will identify potential issues or a potential problem that he, in his experience, thinks may be insurmountable to getting to a resolution and is honest about it.”

Gordon said after 42 years in public service, there haven’t been many surprises in his first year as a mediator. He was, however, quick to insist he’s thoroughly enjoying his new role, and there have been some interpersonal benefits to hanging up his robe.

“Working with the lawyers in pure mediation mode versus being on the bench, it’s a much more comfortable interactive posture, and that’s been really rewarding,” he explained. “I think the attorneys are kind of surprised that I can be informal.”

*Here are some attorneys who have used Gordon’s services: Samantha F. Spector, Spector Law PLC; Larry A. Ginsberg, Harris Ginsberg LLP; Anne C. Kiley, Elkins Kalt Weintraub Reuben Gartside LLP; Neal R. Hersh, Hersh Mannis LLP; Dennis Wasser, Wasser, Cooperman & Mandles PC.*