

VERDICTS & SETTLEMENTS

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There's No Need to Yell

Attorneys say neutral John Golper applies a kind, patient approach to dispute resolution.

By Shane Nelson

Special to the Daily Journal

“I was always the guy [who] had a whole group of associates working under me, and I wouldn't put up with anybody yelling at me for anything,” Golper said with a chuckle. “I've had lawyers that used to work for me [that] I'm now the mediator on their case [say], ‘Well, how come you're not yelling at me? When I used to work for you, and I didn't get something right, you'd yell at me.’”

A 1975 graduate of UCLA School of Law, Golper worked for nearly five decades as a labor and employment litigator, routinely representing clients on the management side of those disputes. Golper started work, however, as a fulltime neutral for ADR Services, Inc. in January of 2024, a decision sparked, in part, by time he spent volunteering for the Central District.

“I started doing a lot of mediations on the federal court panel, and I liked it,” Golper recalled. “And the lawyers on both sides of the fence seemed to appreciate my ability to use my prior advocacy experience as a lawyer to help them get their matter settled.”

Golper noted that while he's been yelled at on at least one occasion over the past year in his role as an ADR Services, Inc. mediator, that's not a tool he himself makes use of when working to resolve a case.

“Mediators have to develop a thick skin,” Golper said, chuckling again. “And I don't lecture lawyers. They don't want me lecturing them. They want me helping them resolve their case. So it's a very different mentality, and it's part of the reason I think I'm enjoying it. This is a whole different part of me.”



Justin L. Stewart / Special to the Daily Journal

Los Angeles labor and employment defense attorney Martha S. Doty has worked with Golper on two different occasions as a mediator, and she said he did an excellent job settling both disputes.

“He's very patient, extremely knowledgeable and able to cut through complex, interwoven relationships to get to a resolution,” Doty said. “He just has a very nice way with people.”

Golper noted that he likes to receive briefs from all the parties and to speak over the phone with counsel prior to his mediations.

“It's vitally important for the mediator to know the status of the case, and you can get a feel on that first phone call what these lawyers

are thinking,” Golper explained. “Is there a lot of tension between these lawyers? Do they like each other? Do they not like each other? Are they arch enemies? Have they tried cases against each other in the past? And that gives me a pretty good sense for down the road.”

On the day of his mediations, Golper said he likes to begin with introductions and ample time to for the parties to communicate their positions. Golper added that he invariably moves into a more evaluative approach, but precisely when he shifts into that gear varies a great deal with each case.

“It could be really early on, where I think somebody is just completely out of whack with reality on their

John B. Golper

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case,” he said. “But if they’re entrenched in their position, ... I’ve got to be very diplomatic in how I approach somebody, trying to get them off the ledge they’re on.”

Woodland Hills plaintiffs’ attorney Bradley C. Gage once tried a case against Golper and has since used him as a mediator in an employment dispute.

“As a trial lawyer, he was very professional,” Gage said. “And what I’m looking for in a mediator is someone who can analyze the issues and help to bring both sides together.”

Gage said Golper was tenacious as a mediator, but he also described the ADR Services, Inc. neutral as balanced.

“I would not call him plaintiffs

orientated. And while he has a defense background, I would not call him defense orientated necessarily either,” Gage said. “I think he is good at evaluating the case from both sides of the issue, and he can tell both plaintiffs’ counsel and defense counsel the strengths and weaknesses of their case. So they can make a more informed decision on the amount for settlement and whether to settle it or not.”

Doty noted, meanwhile, that one of the employment disputes Golper helped her to settle involved sexual harassment claims, and some of the attorneys and litigants involved in the complex litigation weren’t especially sophisticated in that area of law.

“That case really required a pa-

tient explanation to them,” Doty said. “It really required a lot of patience and educating them in order to get the case resolved, and John was the one who did that. He really labored to make clear ... what the law was and why [some of the parties] might have some liability.”

Huntington Beach plaintiffs’ attorney Maribel B. Ullrich has used Golper to resolve two different employment disputes, and she described him as a mediator who really cares.

“Both times he was just amazing,” Ullrich said. “And he was excellent with my clients. Most of my clients speak Spanish, so I have to translate. But he makes sure that they understand what’s going on. So I translate it to my clients and my clients ask questions, and he’s

very patient. There’s nothing that I don’t like about this mediator.”

Golper was quick to mention the terrific fulfillment he’s been enjoying in his work as a mediator over the past year.

“It’s been a really good choice,” he said. “And when I get a settlement that I know both sides are really happy with, you just can’t ask for anything better than that.”

Here are some attorneys who have used Golper’s services: Bradley C. Gage, Brad Gage Law APC, Martha S. Doty, Alston & Bird LLP; Maribel B. Ullrich, Law Offices of Maribel Ullrich Inc.; Martin I. Aarons, Aarons Ward; Edson K. McClellan, Rutan & Tucker LLP

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