



HON. DENNIS S. CHOATE

Judge, Orange County Superior Court
(Retired)



Case Manager: Megan Nomura
megan@adrservices.org | 949.863.9800

Sixteen and a half years as a trial lawyer with the Los Angeles District Attorney followed by nearly twenty one years as a trial judge on the Orange County Superior Court has earned Judge Choate the well deserved admiration and professional respect of the Southern California legal community. For eighteen years Judge Choate managed and presided over a broad spectrum of civil litigation. His average calendar was 485 cases per month.

Judge Choate presided over hundreds of civil trials during his two decades on the bench. He has served on the Court's executive committee for three terms. He also served three terms on the Superior Court Appellate Department including one year as its Presiding Judge. He was selected to be part of a pilot project which later became Direct Case Management where judges manage all aspects of their cases: writs and receivers, law and motion, settlement conferences, bench and jury trials. Judge Choate is widely regarded as an informed and skilled neutral who has quickly earned a reputation as an outstanding settlement negotiator.

Judge Choate is known for creating innovative solutions to complex cases. He volunteers as a settlement judge for the Orange County Superior Court Mediation program. Judge Choate brings well deserved credibility and dependability to the mediator's chair. His common sense and friendly, respectful approach to the litigant has earned him high marks from counsel on both sides of the table. Early and final resolution is his goal.

Judge Choate serves as a mediator, arbitrator, discovery referee, and private judge. He is also available as a confidential case and issue evaluator.

Judge Choate retired from the Orange County Superior Court in 2008. He immediately association exclusively with ADR Services, Inc. as the anchor judge for its Orange County office. Judge Choate's services are also available statewide.

AREAS OF EXPERTISE

- Personal Injury, including catastrophic injury
- Business and Commercial Disputes
- Real Estate Litigation
- Employment
- Medical/Legal/Professional Negligence
- Products Liability
- Elder Law
- Complex Discovery Disputes

EDUCATION

1968 University of California, Los Angeles, B.A.
1972 Loyola University School of Law, J.D.
2002 Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, Masters' Forum

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Judicial Experience

2008 – Present Full time mediator, ADR Services, Inc.
1989 – 2008 Orange County Superior Court Judge
1993 – 1994 Appellate Department (Presiding Judge in 1994)
1994 – 2008 Civil Litigation Panel
1992 – 1994 Personal Injury Panel
1989 – 1992 Orange County Superior Court Criminal and Open General Trial Court
1987 – 1989 Orange County Municipal Court, West Orange County District

Legal & Trial Experience

California State Bar No. 53296

1972 – 1987 Deputy District Attorney, Los Angeles County
As a Deputy District Attorney Judge Choate tried (solo) in excess of 108 felony jury trials.
There were also a high number of misdemeanor jury trials.
Chief assignments: Major Crimes Section, Organized Crime and Narcotics Division (specializing in search and seizure law and prison gangs), Hardcore Gang Division (street gang homicides)

1970 – 1972 Senior Clerk, Office of the District Attorney, Los Angeles County

MEMBERSHIPS

- State Bar of California
- Orange County Bar Association
- Orange County Bar Foundation Society of Fellows (Founding Fellow)
- Orange County Trial Lawyers Association
- Life Member U.S.A. Navy League
- International Academy of Trial Judges (President 2012 – 2013)
- Pepperdine Masters Mediation Program
- California Retired Judges Association
- Civil Law and Procedure Committee
- Grand Jury Selection Committee (Four Terms)
- Bench/Bar/Media Committee
- Life Member UCLA Alumni Association
- Friends of the Marlin (Founding Member, Commodore)

TEACHING, LECTURES AND PANELS

Presenter, lecturer, and seminar speaker on topics of civil trial practice, jury selection and mediation. He also has given many presentations on evidence, major narcotics, and prison gangs, and general observations regarding “funny trial mistakes I could have avoided.”

PERSONAL

Judge Dennis S. Choate is the son of the distinguished late Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Raymond Choate (1919 - 2005) who was the Trial Judge in the infamous “Manson Cases” (Shorty Shay and Gary Hinman).

As a high school student at Mira Costa High School, Judge Choate was a CIF champion middleweight wrestler. He was also undefeated in his division during his foreign exchange visit to Australia. After high school Judge Choate was captain of the AAU United States wrestling team to Japan where he went undefeated. While in high school he was a foreign exchange student with the American Field Service (AFS) and spent ten months in South Australia. Judge Choate later attended UCLA on a wrestling scholarship. He is a member of Phi Kappa Psi fraternity and was an officer in the Blue Key Honor Society while in college. In his leisure time Judge Choate enjoys sportfishing boating, and college sports. He is a supporter of catch and release fishing and is a Certified Observer for the International Game Fishing Association (IGFA). He is a co-founder of Friends of the Marlin, a fishing and charitable organization now in its 34th year. Judge Choate is a Life Member of United States Navy League and an active member of Sons of American Legion (SAL 390 Newport Beach, CA).

Judge Choate is a UCLA alumnus (UCLA’68), along with his wife of 46 years (UCLA’68), and his two sons (UCLA 2000 and 2003). His mother, father and a sister also graduated from UCLA.