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Alfred Chiantelli

Alfred Chiantelli of ADR Services uses charm and culinary secret weapons to settle cases.

By Amy Yarbrough

SAN FRANCISCO - Retired judge Alfred Chiantelli got his first taste of the law from Catholic school, more specifically from Sister Mary Veronica.

In student court in the seventh grade, Chiantelli represented a classmate who had been accused of trying to strike the nun. Chiantelli got the job because his "client" spoke Italian, and Chiantelli was the only other student who knew the language.

In the end, the aspiring attorney convinced his fellow students and administrators that his client didn't throw out his arms to hit Sister Mary Veronica but because he was frustrated at not being able to communicate.

Knowing what he knows now, Chiantelli said he "would have asked for a jury." But even without one, he saved the student from getting expelled - at least for the time being - and the experience helped plant the seed for what turned out to be a very successful legal career.

Chiantelli worked for 12 years as a San Francisco prosecutor, climbing the ranks to assistant chief district attorney, then spent more than 20 years as a San Francisco municipal and superior court judge. He joined ADR Services as a neutral in 2005.

Since then, he has become a popular neutral for ADR Services, and talking to those who use his services, it becomes readily apparent why.

Plaintiffs' attorney Thomas Brandi called Chiantelli, "one of the best."

"He works extremely hard in an effort to understand the people involved and the issues and never stops working to get a result for all the parties," Brandi said.

Even in mediations in which there seems to be no chance of resolution, attorney Robert Arns said Chiantelli manages to make parties "realize what the best decision should be for all parties to avoid the hazards of a trial."

Chiantelli also has a secret weapon - limoncello that he makes himself.

Arns recalled two mediations in which Chiantelli stepped out when negotiations grew stagnant and returned with glasses of the Italian lemon liqueur. The limoncello did the trick both times, Arns said. In one mediation, the clock had struck three, and it seemed like nothing would get resolved that day.

"I reminded him, 'What about the limoncello?'" Arns said. "We settled the case in two hours."

Raised in North Beach, a San Francisco Italian-American neighborhood, Chiantelli, 71, grew up with kids who aspired to be cowboys and police officers. Some turned out to be quite the opposite - gangsters.

Though he toyed with becoming a writer, lawyering was pretty much always at the top of Chiantelli's list of dream jobs. Then again, he had plenty of inspiration. As a kid, he lived within blocks of several local judges. Chiantelli's and the names of a number of other judges and justices who call - or called - San Francisco's North Beach, Russian Hill and Telegraph Hill areas home are now listed on a sign at Molinari Mana Park off of Union Street.



S. Todd Rogers / Daily Journal
Alfred Chiantelli

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Litigation

Fee Fight Spotlights Prominent Mediator

Plaintiffs' lawyers are accusing a former federal judge of leveraging his power as an arbitrator in one Wal-Mart settlement to pressure them into settling another Wal-Mart case he mediated.

Corporate

Claims Against Ernst & Young Revived

Broadcom Corp.'s auditor Ernst & Young should have probed deeper into the semiconductor company's fraudulent backdating scheme, a 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals panel held Thursday.

Alternative Dispute Resolution

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Alfred Chiantelli of ADR Services uses charm and culinary secret weapons to settle cases.

Tax

Schedule UTP: Is the Internal Revenue Service Playing Fair?

A new reporting requirement is viewed by many corporate taxpayers as unnecessary and intrusive. By **Ivan Morales** and **Michael Liu** of Baker & McKenzie.

Securities

Suit Against Allergan Shot Down

It's back to the drawing board for a shareholder derivative lawsuit filed against Allergan Inc. after Judge David O. Carter in U.S. District Court for the Central District of California dismissed the complaint with leave to amend.

Tax

Gains From Investments in Certain Small Businesses May Be Tax-Free

What investments are eligible for a zero percent capital gains tax? By **George Cabot** of Morgan Miller Blair.

Government

Justices Press For Judicial Funding

U.S. Supreme Court Justices Anthony M. Kennedy and Stephen G. Breyer testified before a House panel Thursday, answering questions about budgeting, recusals and Twitter.

Tax

Even Internal Revenue Code Section 1031 Exchanges Have Tax Traps

Section 1031 of the tax code lets you defer capital gains taxes when swapping investment assets. By **Robert W. Wood** of Wood & Porter.

Solo and Small Firms

Small Firm Caters to Labor

Seventy-five years after its founding, Beeson, Tayer & Bodine has successfully adapted to meet the changing face and needs of the labor movement while also maintaining many of its oldest clients.

Tax

Estate Tax Keeps Shifting

Coming off an estate tax-free year, attorneys are readjusting to new laws that are more favorable to high net worth individuals than in the recent past.

The park is named for the late state Court of Appeal Justice John B. Molinari and the late San Francisco Superior Court Judge Lawrence S. Mana.

Chiantelli's effectiveness as a mediator is probably not surprising to those who knew him as a judge.

Chiantelli, who had the challenging task of serving as San Francisco's first presiding judge after California's municipal and superior courts were unified in 1998, said he gained a reputation for being a successful settlement judge during his years on the bench. Other superior court judges would often send him tough-to-settle cases to see if he could resolve them.

He said he enjoyed the various roles he played with the court, although he took great interest in civil trials for all of the unique legal issues they presented.

"It's like reading a short story every day," he said.

Chiantelli works these days out of an office at ADR Services named after Lucca, Italy, where his family hails from. He said the keys to being a good mediator are listening to both sides, being fair and persistent and keeping people committed to the process.

"Settlements aren't events," he explained. "It's a process of keeping people at the table."

While being a likeable personality doesn't hurt either, that's certainly no guarantee that people will think you're a good arbitrator, Chiantelli said.

"I just happen to be lucky people like to go to dinner with me and like [the way I do] mediations."

The following is a list of attorneys who have used retired judge Chiantelli's services: Thomas J. Brandi, The Brandi Law Firm, San Francisco; Duane C. Miller, Miller, Axline & Sawyer, Sacramento; Robert S. Arns, The Arns Law Firm, San Francisco; Conrad A. Donner, San Francisco; Kevin K. Cholakian, Cholakian & Associates, South San Francisco; Kathryn A. Stebner, Stebner & Associates, San Francisco; Gennaro A. Filice III and Nicholas D. Kayhan, Filice Brown Eassa & McLeod LLP, Oakland; Michael Leon-Guerrero, San Francisco City Attorney's Office, John A. Noda, Kern, Noda, Devine & Segal, San Francisco; David V. Roth, Manning & Kass, Ellrod, Ramirez, Trester LLP, San Francisco; Christopher B. Dolan, The Dolan Law Firm, San Francisco; Sanford M. Cipinko, San Francisco; Ronald H. Rouda and Timothy G. Tietjen, Rouda, Feder, Tietjen & McGuinn, San Francisco

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Alternative Dispute Resolution

E-Discovery Ethical Considerations

Staying within the ethical bounds of e-mediation requires technical knowledge and moral restraint. By **A. Marco Turk** of California State University Dominguez Hills.

Perspective

Going on Strike: What It Means in Hollywood

A history of Hollywood unrest. By **Jonathan Handel** of TroyGould.

Employee Benefits

O.C. Deputies Pursue Fees From County

After four years of legal wrangling, Orange County deputy sheriffs have cemented their right to a generous pension that county officials had sued to revoke.

Intellectual Property

YouTube Strengthens Copyright Policy

Violators of YouTube's new copyright policies will have to attend its "copyright school."

Patent Reform Bill Moves Forward

The U.S. House Judiciary Committee approved a patent reform bill Thursday afternoon by a 32-3 margin that would change the rules for applications to a first-to-file system instead of the current system that favors the first inventor.

Family

Walker Says He Showed Prop 8 Video

Responding to criticism by Proposition 8's proponents, former Chief U.S. District Judge Vaughn R. Walker of San Francisco acknowledged Thursday that he did use video of the Prop. 8 trial in lectures on three different occasions this year.

Lesbian Lawyer Re-Files Health Suit

A 9th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals staff attorney has filed an amended complaint challenging her wife's exclusion from the health plan that covers her and the couple's son.

Tax

Online Sales Tax Collection Debated

Three controversial bills before the California Legislature that would force out-of-state Internet companies to collect use taxes hinges on one main legal question.

Government

Committee to Hear Court-Reform Bill

The powerful Assembly Rules Committee has granted the Judiciary Committee's request to hear the controversial Trial Courts Rights Act after initially bypassing that committee in favor of another one.

Tax

Reform Won't Endanger Tax Lawyers

As senators work to overhaul the tax code, experts say all but the most radical reform would pose no existential threat to the livelihood of tax lawyers.

Judicial Profile

John N. Blair

Superior Court Commissioner
San Diego County (San Diego)

Tax

Offshore Accounts in Asia Targeted

Federal officials are moving their scrutiny of offshore bank accounts east, attorneys say, evidenced by the Department of Justice's recent

move to force HSBC to provide the names of Indian-Americans storing money abroad.

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