



## HON. CHARLOTTE WALTER WOOLARD

*Judge, San Francisco Superior Court (Ret.)*

**Mediator | Arbitrator | Private Judge | Discovery Referee**



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Hon. Charlotte Walter Woolard joins ADR Service, Inc. with 22 years of judicial experience in multiple civil and family law departments. She held several positions in court leadership as Supervising Judge of the Unified Family Court and Presiding Judge of the Appellate Division. Prior to her appointment on the bench, Judge Woolard was a civil litigator at a major national law firm.

The cumulative experience from her diverse judicial and civil litigation background has made Judge Woolard one of the most successful judges in resolving disputes across many areas of law:

- Business & Commercial Contract
- Employment
- Family Law
- Government Tort
- Insurance
- Personal Injury
- Products Liability
- Real Estate

### **FAMILY LAW EXPERTISE**

Serving for nearly a decade as a Family Law judge, including two terms leading the eight family-related departments in San Francisco's Unified Family Court, Judge Woolard has handled almost every issue presented before family courts, including:

- Character, Value and Division of Property
- Child and Spousal Support
- Custody and Visitation
- Putative Spouse Status
- Relocation
- Parental Rights in Adoptions / Post-Adoption Agreements
- Validity and Enforceability of Pre- and Post-Marital Agreements

### **JUDICIAL EXPERIENCE**

**Judge of the San Francisco Superior Court, 1995 - 2015**

- Family Courts (9 years; Supervising Judge of the Unified Family Court, 2003 & 2013 - 2015)
- Law and Motion (2 years)
- Civil Trial Courts (4 years)
- Appellate Division (3 years; Presiding Judge 2003)

**Justice Pro Tempore, California Court of Appeal, October - December 2000**

- First Appellate District, Division Four
- Published Opinions: *Silva v. Union Pacific Railroad Company* 85 Cal.App.4th 1024  
*People v. Hardin* 85 Cal.App.4th 625

**Judge of the Municipal Court, San Francisco Judicial District, 1993 - 1995**

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER**

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**Civil Litigation Attorney, Wilson, Elser, Moskowitz, Edelman & Dicker, 1986 - 1993**

- Primary practice areas: personal injury, products liability, government tort and municipal liability, construction, professional malpractice and insurance coverage disputes

**Assistant District Attorney, City and County of San Francisco, 1980 - 1986**

**Research Attorney, San Francisco Superior Court, 1979 - 1980**

**PROFESSIONAL AWARDS & RECOGNITION**

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- Honored for "Outstanding Service and Commitment to the Families of San Francisco"  
Family Law Section of the Bar Association of San Francisco, 2014
- Recognition for "Extraordinary Efforts on Behalf of the Court and Families"  
San Francisco Juvenile Dependency Panel, 2013
- Service to Families Award  
Rally Family Visitation Services of Saint Francis Memorial Hospital, 2013
- Honored for "Commitment, Judiciousness and Unshakable Demeanor"  
Family Law Section of the Bar Association of San Francisco, 2004
- Award of Appreciation for Outstanding Service and President  
The Lawyers' Club of San Francisco, American Inn of Court, 2003

**EDUCATION & ADR TRAINING**

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Professional Skills Program – Mediator Boot Camp, Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution, 2015

Essentials of Mediation & Divorce Mediation, Northern California Mediation Center, 2014

Interviewing Children in Separation/Divorce, Northern California Mediation Center, 2014

Mediating the Litigated Case, Straus Institute for Dispute Resolution at Pepperdine, 2013

Mediation: The Art of Facilitating Settlement, CJER/ Straus Institute, 2008

J.D., Santa Clara University School of Law, 1979

B.A., San Jose State University, 1976

**PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS**

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Bar Association of San Francisco

Association of Business Trial Lawyers

Association of Family and Conciliation Courts.

California Women Lawyers

Kaiser Permanente Arbitration Panel

National Association of Women Judges

Queen's Bench of the Greater Bay Area

The Lawyers' Club of San Francisco, American Inn of Court, President, 2002-2003, 2019-2020

Overcoming Barriers, Advisory Council Member

California Judges Association, Vice-President, 2002-2003

**PROFESSIONAL TEACHING & EDUCATION**

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Judge Woolard has been a frequent panelist and presenter at numerous continuing education seminars in the areas of Family Law, Civil Practice and Procedure, and Settlement Strategies. Representative providers include:

- Bar Association of San Francisco
- National Business Institute
- The Rutter Group
- The Lawyers' Club of San Francisco, American Inn of Court
- The Recorder

**REPRESENTATIVE CASE SUMMARIES**

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**FAMILY LAW**

Regularly determined or settled matters involving the character, value and division of property.

Handled hundreds of child support and spousal support determinations and attorney fee requests. Variety of issues included self-employment and income tax write offs, cash wages, investment and rental income, stock options, depreciation, family gifts, loans, disability, vocational evaluations, and imputed income.

Handled multiple child custody and visitation matters presenting issues of high conflict breakup, parental alienation, and estrangement.

Resolved many child custody and visitation disputes involving parents' requests to relocate to southern California, out of state, and/or out of the country with children aged from newborn to teenagers.

Handled hundreds of matters negotiating, settling, and determining permanent spousal support.

Handled cases involving parties' legal date of separation, validity and enforceability of pre and post marital agreements, putative spouse status, alleged breach of fiduciary duties, and failure to disclose assets.

Handled matter in which the issue was whether evidence of an oral agreement permitted by *In re Marriage of Lucas* (1980) 27 Cal. 3rd 808 was precluded by Family Code section 2581 retroactive application.

Decided several actions requesting termination of parental rights in adoption proceedings brought by stepparents or prospective adoptive parents.

Settled dissolution of long term marriage involving disposition of real property, Moore/Marsden issues, reimbursements, and business division.

Settled dissolution involving the parties and minor child relocating out of state, custody and visitation, authority of parenting coordinator, vocational evaluation and employment, spousal support, and attorney's fees.

Settled self-represented parties' domestic partnership dissolution including issues of real and personal property division, retirement and financial accounts, reimbursements, partner support, and pet sharing.

## **REAL ESTATE**

Challenge to default judgment against owner of an apartment building alleged to be maintained as a public nuisance in violation of the Unreinforced Masonry Building Ordinance, public nuisance, violations of the State housing law and San Francisco Housing Code, noncompliance with an order of abatement, and unfair business practices.

Dispute involving successive unlawful detainer actions against subtenant with cross action for wrongful eviction, malicious prosecution and tenant harassment.

Breach of contract, declaratory relief and specific performance action regarding a rent controlled apartment and stipulated agreement to vacate the premises. Affirmative defenses included creation of a renewed tenancy, inadequate consideration, adequate remedy of damages, and violation of public policy as expressed in the San Francisco Residential Rent Stabilization & Arbitration Ordinance.

Unlawful detainer action involving the City and a recycling center that alleged affirmative defenses of discriminatory and retaliatory eviction. Request for protective order to prohibit the deposition of the lieutenant governor.

Handled commercial lease dispute alleging causes of action for declaratory relief and breach of contract concerning insurance coverage. Issues included lease interpretation, waiver and estoppel, damages, and determination of existence of prevailing party under the lease.

Handled dispute alleging nuisance and negligent infliction of emotional distress claims against condominium association and owners of the unit above for an alleged violation of the floor covering regulations resulting in interference of the quiet enjoyment of plaintiff's condominium.

Handled real estate transaction suit alleging causes of action for misrepresentation, breach of warranty, fraud, and declaratory relief.

Dispute between condominium owners resulting in causes of action for defamation, breach of fiduciary duty, nuisance, and indemnity and contribution.

Handled unlawful detainer action with counterclaim of wrongful eviction, malicious prosecution, and tenant harassment.

Settled pre-litigation landlord tenant case involving interpretation of the San Francisco Residential Rent Stabilization and Arbitration Ordinance, nonpayment of rent, and relocation buyout agreement.

## **GOVERNMENT TORT & MUNICIPAL LIABILITY**

Handled government tort action for negligence, negligent infliction of emotional distress, and violation of duties imposed by law arising from the murder of three individuals by a convicted gang member who allegedly remained in San Francisco due to the City's sanctuary law.

Handled multi-defendant wrongful death action arising from a train/bus collision with allegations of negligence in addition to government tort claims against the state and county for unsafe conditions.

Personal injury complaint arising from injuries that resulted from alleged negligence of a driver for failure to wait for a passenger to be seated before bringing his bus to an abrupt stop.

Personal injury action alleging negligence against a cable car operator for failure to brake resulting in pedestrian's lower leg amputation.

Personal injury and wrongful death action for alleged unsafe condition of county road resulting in ponding and loss of control of automobile.

Handled county and city cases in which multiple plaintiffs alleged negligent maintenance of river and creeks that resulted in catastrophic flooding.

Personal injury action for negligence which arose when a pedestrian was struck by a City automobile, allegedly resulting in knee injury, loss of earnings and medical expenses.

## **PERSONAL INJURY & PRODUCT LIABILITY**

Presided over numerous cases involving allegations of personal injury resulting from exposure to asbestos.

Handled matter alleging strict liability, negligence, and toxic tort liability against a manufacturer of polyurethane foam roofing materials.

Product liability action for failure to warn and negligent design against an automotive battery manufacturer involving a battery explosion in which the plaintiff lost the sight in one eye.

Product liability action for alleged design defect resulting in solo accident due to motorcycle instability and resulting brain injury.

Product liability wrongful death complaint for alleged design defect of motorcycle helmet that did not prevent catastrophic injuries from curb impact.

Handled wrongful death action in which the decedent was struck by a propelled halon tank during the removal of a pressurized fire suppression system. Defendants included the system manufacturer, the system installer, and the building owner.

Wrongful death product liability action for alleged design defect and failure to warn against golf cart manufacturer arising passenger's fall from the cart due to an abrupt turn.

Product liability action alleging design defect for a rollover bar affixed to a tractor that contacted and dislodged an overhead object striking the tractor operator, resulting in paraplegia.

Personal injury case against security guard company and large apartment complex for alleged negligence and failure to protect plaintiff from vicious assault by unknown third parties.

Personal injury action against party organizer and party supply rental company for alleged negligent installation of red carpet that resulted in plaintiff's trip and fall.

Subcontractor's employee's lawsuit for on the job broken leg injury alleging general contractor's acts and omissions affirmatively contributed to the accident.

Product liability action for design defect due to lack of a motorcycle crash bar in accident resulting in leg amputation. Handled dispute involving automobile accident with catastrophic brain injury.

Handled personal injury action against a security services company and security guards involving allegations of false arrest, false imprisonment and emotional distress.

Handled a product liability action for design defect and negligence against a beverage bottling company in which a consumer alleged injury to her esophagus after drinking from a can claimed to be contaminated with diesel fuel.

Handled a personal injury action arising from a motor vehicle accident. In addition to soft tissue injury, the plaintiff alleged that she suffered from post-traumatic stress disorder.

Product liability allegation for design defect and failure to warn regarding furniture saw accident resulting in thumb amputation.

Handled action brought under maritime Jones Act by seaman for back injury.

Lawsuit by passengers for negligence against a taxicab company and its driver when the driver lost control and the car struck a retaining wall. Alleged injuries included exacerbation of preexisting cervical condition.

Slip and fall action in which claimed injuries included a torn meniscus, rotator cuff damage, lower back injury with sciatica and bulging disc, deep vein thrombosis and a pulmonary embolism.

Settled slip and fall case in which injuries included a right radial neck fracture (broken arm) with significant claimed future medical specials and loss of earning capacity.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

Suit by commissioned employee for alleged failure to pay wages, to pay all wages upon termination, to pay overtime and to provide accurate earnings statements, for breach of contract, breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, plus various claims under the Labor Code Private Attorney General Act of 2004.

Claims of race or national origin discrimination and emotional distress by the City and its Chief of Police for imposing administrative suspensions on officers' participation in an asserted "inappropriate and unauthorized video" of police department activities.

Employee's lawsuit for sexual harassment, gender discrimination, creating a hostile work environment, intentional infliction of emotional distress, retaliation and failure to protect her from harassment related to a coworker's persistent lewd statements and actions.

Complaint brought by a maintenance worker at a low-income housing facility for: discrimination on the basis of national origin or race, perceived disability, medical condition and age; retaliation; and wrongful termination in violation of public policy.

Review of administrative decision that a contract which called for tree pruning and removal of diseased trees along state highways required contractor to pay its employees according to California's Prevailing Wage Law because the work performed was "maintenance work."

Employment termination complaint alleging breach of express contract, breach of the implied covenant of good faith and fair dealing, breach of implied contract, and defamation.

Handled case in which terminated employee alleged causes of action for disability discrimination, failure to provide reasonable accommodation, failure to engage in interactive process, failure to prevent disability discrimination, and violation of public policy.

Employment action by sales associate against retail store employer alleging causes of action for failure to pay overtime wages, failure to reimburse expenses, discrimination, harassment, and retaliation.

Handled appeal of a Labor Commission decision in a case involving unpaid wages, overtime and related penalties owed to discharged employee by business owner.

Settled case alleging discrimination based on pregnancy regarding issues of pay, job assignments and promotion.

Settled case alleging breach of an oral employment contract and various Labor Code violations.

## **BUSINESS**

Action against successful bidder by unsuccessful bidder alleging interference with existing contractual relationship and interference with prospective economic advantage arising from award of contract by City and County department.

Breach of contract action for alleged faulty home repair alleging violation of the Consumers Legal Remedies Act and Business and Professions Code sections 17200 and 17500.

Action to foreclose on a mechanics lien, with cross complaint for breach of contract and negligent construction. Issue arose regarding enforceability of settlement agreement reached in mediation.

## **PROFESSIONAL LIABILITY & FEES**

Medical malpractice against a neurosurgeon who performed a cervical laminectomy for negligence resulting in alleged spinal cord damage, free-floating bone chips and numbness.

Felon's lawsuit against his lawyers for alleged legal malpractice in connection with the attorneys' representation of him in a criminal appeal in the Ninth Circuit.

Handled breach of contract and attorney fee dispute resulting in an award of more than \$300,000. Cross complaint alleged causes of action for legal malpractice, breach of fiduciary duty, intentional infliction of emotional distress, and breach of contract.

## **ATTORNEY FEES**

Decided attorney fee award pursuant to special motion to strike a defamation lawsuit with allegation that attorney fees were barred by the alter ego doctrine.

## **INSURANCE**

Automobile accident resulting in catastrophic injuries resulting in coverage dispute involving policy limits and whether the triggering event provided inclusion within the scope of subsequent policy years.

Handled multimillion dollar reinsurance dispute alleging causes of action for declaratory relief and breach of contract rebutted by a statute of limitation affirmative defense.