

Michael Moorhead

Mediator Michael Moorhead's firm slogan says it all: "Participate in the solution — not the problem."

Moorhead says the problem is the high cost of litigation, and he believes alternative dispute resolution is the answer. He offers his services through his Los Angeles firm, Moorhead Mediations, and is available through Judicate West.

The plaintiffs'-attorney-turned-mediator tells parties that mediations are impersonal and should be approached like a business transaction.

"They have to do their best to get rid of their emotions," Moorhead says.

Moorhead charges \$450 an hour, or \$4,500 a day, and handles catastrophic personal injury and employment cases and business disputes. His settlements have ranged from \$250,000 to \$15 million. The higher figures usually result from such emotionally charged cases as babies who suffered brain damage at birth and horrific personal injuries.

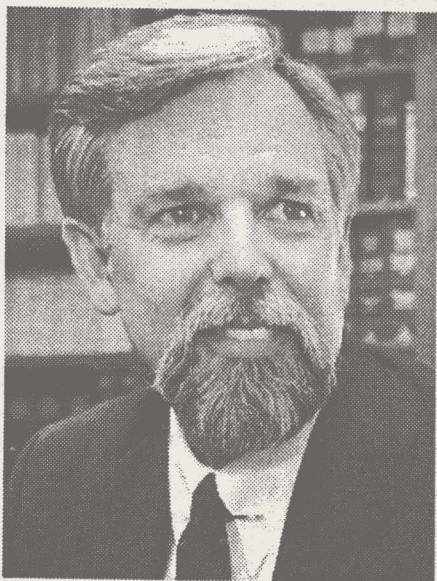
One such case involved a 3-year-old boy who was burned over 94 percent of his body by an explosion of an allegedly faulty water heater. The boy survived, and his case settled for \$4.8 million, Moorhead says.

Randy Even of Randolph Even & Associates in Woodland Hills has used Moorhead in 15 medical malpractice and elder abuse cases in the last three years.

"He's a very friendly guy and has the credibility of 'been there, done that,'" Even says.

Moorhead settles nine of 10 cases. He says part of his high success rate stems from persistence, even after a resolution isn't reached the first time around.

"I'm always surprised at how surprised the parties are that I would follow up by phone," he says.



The 54-year-old mediator handles 50 cases a month and conducts his sessions in his old law offices in Wilmington.

Moorhead graduated from Loyola Law School in 1975 and then worked in the Los Angeles law firm of Magana, Cathcart, McCarthy & Pierry. During his 16 years there, Moorhead handled large general negligence cases.

He joined the Los Angeles Superior Court's volunteer mediation panel in 1992.

In 1995, Moorhead helped found Partners Forum, an arbitration and mediation service, and he struck out on his own two years later. He gave up arbitration a year ago because he found "dictating a resolution" unappealing.

"I get more reward out of getting a case settled and getting the parties to be happy with the settlement," Moorhead says.

— Joan Osterwalder