

## William Sheffield

Retired Orange County Superior Court Judge William Sheffield offers a helping hand not only to feuding parties but also to a fledgling legal system in India.

The neutral at Judicate West has been taking his skills to the Far East for nearly a decade. The Indian government and Pepperdine University invited him to help train Indian judges and attorneys in mediation.

He still does mediation consulting work but mainly visits the former British colony twice a year to help out 800 orphans, many mentally or physically disabled, in Madras.

"To see how much wealth we have here compared to them, it makes you want to share," Sheffield says.

The arbitrator and mediator has handled 3,000 cases in personal injury, insurance, employment and business disputes.

Sheffield, who is based in Century City and charges \$495 an hour, says that in mediation he first gets to know the parties to establish a relationship and then figures out whether the real problem is money or hard feelings.

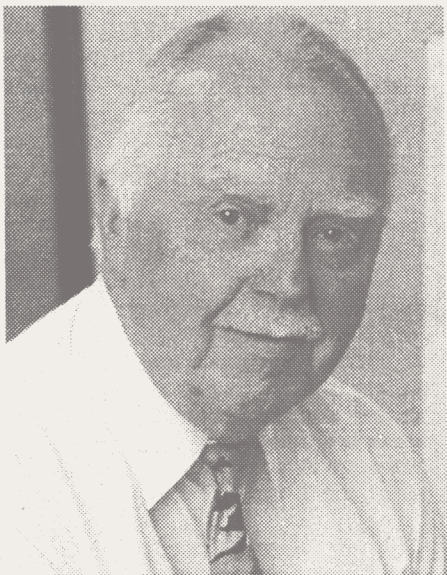
"What I have learned that works the best for me over the years is to rely on my instincts," Sheffield says. "They usually result in a settlement."

Employment attorney Cynthia Stratton at Cordileone & Associates in San Diego says she generally prefers mediators who aren't judges, but Sheffield is an exception.

Stratton, who has used Sheffield several times, says: "I chose him again because of his strength — the way he strongly pushes the key issues of a case."

Sheffield, 63, graduated from Boalt Hall in 1971 and became a sole practitioner in Orange County, handling complex civil matters and business, patent infringement and real property cases.

In 1983, Sheffield was appointed to the



Orange County Superior Court. A year later, he briefly served as an associate justice on the 4th District Court of Appeal.

Sheffield resigned from the bench to pursue a master's degree in divinity at Yale University, graduating in 1987.

Ultimately, he became general counsel for The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Hong Kong.

In 1990, he returned to the United States and was asked by Alternative Resolution Centers to try alternative dispute resolution. He joined Judicate West three years later.

In 2000, Sheffield settled an age- and gender-discrimination lawsuit against a large defense contractor for \$1.5 million.

In a few very rare cases, however, Sheffield says he tells the parties that the best resolution is just to walk away with no money — and to be happy.

— Joan Osterwalder