

Association of Family



and Conciliation Courts

Drown Award Recipient: George Ferrick, MFT

Prior to his retirement in 2012, George's career in child custody mediation and the California Courts spanned 32 years, in three settings. Most recently during his last 10 years, he was with the Judicial Council's Center for Families, Children & the Courts [CFCC], as supervisor of its Family Dispute Resolution team. He and colleagues provided supportive services and training for over 400 mediators throughout California's 58 counties. Previous to that, in terms of direct services, George conducted more than 8,000 mediations, first at the Los Angeles Superior Court, and then at the San Mateo Superior Court. During his last 8 years in Los Angeles, in addition to his mediation caseload, he served as coordinator of district mediators, and then coordinator of the intern program. Mediating with families, learning and growing with colleagues, and training and being inspired by interns were highlights of George's time in Los Angeles. Moving to northern California, and manager of San Mateo Family Court Services, George was introduced to the recommending model of mediation, approached it with an open mind, and wrote of his experience and views in "The Ecology of Recommending Mediation." With rare experience in both settings, George jokingly referred to himself as exhibiting a "Multiple Mediation Personality Disorder." However, this dual or hybrid experience served him well in his position at the Judicial Council where the mission was to serve the whole group of mediators from throughout the state, half of whom practice in each modality.

Throughout his career, George's mediation interests found expression both in professional presentations and in writing. At AFCC and Judicial Council sponsored conferences and trainings, George joined with colleagues to present workshops such as "Ten Most Common Mediation Problems," "Is Transformative Mediation Applicable to Court-Based Custody Mediation?" and "Taking the Me out of Mediation." George's written contributions include "Refuseniks of Divorce," and "Three Crucial Questions," about mandatory mediation, and its applicability to domestic violence cases. George was fortunate to have directors, Hugh Mclsaac, who first hired George in 1980, and David Kuroda, both supportive of professional development. Beyond required continuing education, George's curiosity and interest in acquiring skills and approaches adaptable to mediation led him to a residential seminar with Virginia Satir, training in Transformative Mediation from Joseph Folger and Robert Baruch Bush, and Ericksonian and Solution Focused Brief Therapy workshops. AFCC played a major role, with George and some colleagues consistently participating in AFCC conferences, both state and national. For several years, George also served on the AFCC-CA Chapter board, amazed at the degree of expertise and dedication.

In his concluding setting [CFCC], supported by the progressive leadership of Diane Nunn and Charlene Depner, George and then AFCC-CA Chapter President, Judge Jerilyn Borack, collaborated to co-sponsor joint training for AFCC members and court mediators, with Mary Lund and Angus Strachan as presenters. And a unique highlight of George's time at the CFCC was interviewing and bringing together many of the AFCC pioneers and leaders in the mediation movement for the 2006 Family Dispute Resolution Institute celebrating the 25th anniversary of mandatory child custody mediation in the California Courts. This epitomized what George was introduced to and valued: diverse individuals and professionals - judiciary, attorneys, mental health professionals, and others - working closely together, with moments of fun and joy, united in their joint love and concern for families and children. 