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Court of Appeal Presiding Justice David G. Sills to Retire June 2, 2011

Veteran Orange County Jurist Leaving Bench after 25 Years

Santa Ana—Presiding Justice David G. Sills of the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Three, today announced his retirement after 25 years of service in the judiciary.

Presiding Justice Sills, who had served four separate terms as mayor of Irvine in the 1970's and 1980's, was appointed to the trial bench in 1985 by then Governor George Deukmejian. Later, in 1990, Deukmejian appointed Sills as presiding justice of the Court of Appeal headquartered in Orange County.

“Justice Sills will be greatly missed,” said William F. Rylaarsdam, the court’s acting presiding justice. “He had a way of bringing out the best in each justice.”

Presiding Justice Sills was instrumental in the construction of the new appellate courthouse in Santa Ana at the intersection of Ross Street and Santa Ana Boulevard, working collaboratively with Orange County legislators for almost a decade to gain authorization and funding for the building after the court outgrew its old quarters in a historic residential area of Santa Ana.

He also took a “hands on” approach during the construction of the new building, visiting and inspecting the site often. Several of his practical suggestions—such as the building’s two elevators to facilitate the transfer of bulky case files upstairs—were incorporated into the final building. The building won an Award of Merit in the government/public category of California Construction’s Best of 2009.

During his 20-plus years as presiding justice, Presiding Justice Sills gained statewide recognition for his opinions and contributions to various

areas of the law. In the early 1990's he was among the first jurists in the state to confront the legal issues inherent in surrogacy. He is also noted for his particular contributions to family law, election law, and land use law. In his time at the court, he has authored more than 2,400 majority opinions, almost 400 of which were certified for publication in the official case reports for use as precedent.

A native of Peoria, Illinois, Sills first came to Orange County in the 1950's while a Boy Scout for a "jamboree," then later returned in 1962 while on active duty for the Marine Corps in Camp Pendleton, where he eventually attained the rank of Captain. While there, he led his own armored company. After concluding active duty, he went into the private practice of law, eventually setting up his own office on Dove Street in Newport Beach.

While Sills has experienced some health problems this past year, he said he is "on the mend." His health was not a significant factor in his decision to retire. "I have worked or been in school steadily since 1952," he said, "and there are still important non-judicial activities I'd like to do." Sills is noted among his friends and neighbors as a superb woodworker, owning many precision tools usually only used by professionals.

"I feel uniquely honored to have had the pleasure of serving with such a fine group of people at our court here," he said, "including one the greatest groups of clerks, research attorneys and fellow justices in the state."

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