



NEWS RELEASE

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Court of Appeal Presiding Justice David G. Sills Dies after a Lengthy Illness

Orange County Jurist Served on Bench for 25 Years; Plans for Memorial Service Pending

JUDICIAL COUNCIL OF
CALIFORNIA
ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE
OF THE COURTS
Public Information Office
455 Golden Gate Avenue
San Francisco, CA 94102-3688
www.courtinfo.ca.gov

415-865-7740

Lynn Holton
Public Information Officer

Santa Ana—Presiding Justice David G. Sills, who retired just three months ago from the Court of Appeal, Fourth Appellate District, Division Three, died yesterday evening after a lengthy illness. He was 73 years of age.

The veteran jurist, who served more than 25 years on the state trial and appellate courts, had served four separate terms as mayor of Irvine in the 1970s and 1980s before Governor George Deukmejian appointed him to the Superior Court of Orange County in 1985. Five years later, the Governor elevated Sills as Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeal.

“It is with great sadness that the judicial branch marks the passing of an extraordinary and accomplished person,” stated Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye. “Presiding Justice Sills led a remarkable life. He was an acclaimed jurist, a courageous veteran, a respected mayor and an exemplary branch leader. I send my thoughts and prayers to his family.”

During his 20-plus years as presiding justice, Sills gained statewide recognition for his opinions and contributions to various areas of the law. In the early 1990s 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 October 2010 he was awarded the inaugural David G. Sills Award for Appellate Excellence by the Orange County Bar Association.

During his tenure on the court, he authored more than 2,400 majority opinions, almost 400 of which were certified for publication in the official case reports for use as precedent.

Presiding Justice Rylaarsdam states that Justice Sills will be missed not only by his court but by the entire court staff. He was an outstanding leader who permitted everyone to work to his or her own strengths.

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 that the building have 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.

A native of Peoria, Illinois, Sills first came to Orange County in the 1950s for a Boy Scout “jamboree,” then later returned in 1962 while on active duty in the Marine Corps at 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 private law practice, eventually setting up his own office on Dove Street in Newport Beach.

At the time he retired in late May 2011, Justice Sills praised the court which he had served for so long. He stated, “I feel uniquely honored to have had the pleasure of serving with such a fine group of people at our court here, including one of the greatest groups of clerks, research attorneys, and fellow justices in the state.”

Justice Sills is survived by his wife, Susan, his brother Dan and numerous nieces and nephews.

Plans for a memorial service are pending.

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