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For Patrick Kelly, mediating cases will be a final act in a career filled with class acts

By Nicole Tyau

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Patrick M. Kelly finds a lot of similarities between trial lawyers and rock stars.

“When you work on the stage and hit your first note, from that point forward you can’t take it back,” Kelly said. “Well, that’s like being a jury trial lawyer. When you’re giving the closing statement or presenting evidence or asking questions in trial, you can’t take it back.”

The talented musician, who’s played with the Beach Boys and has spent more than 40 years as an attorney, is now leaving trial advocacy and moving to ADR Services, Inc., a final act he says he always imagined at the end of his legal career.

“I had always planned that at the end of my career I would devote myself to that, to trying to further the ends of dispute,” Kelly said. “I just thought ADR Services, Inc. best suited what I needed to try and accomplish the goal of fostering the cause of alternative dispute resolution.”

Kelly has been a litigator at Wilson Elser Moskowitz Edelman & Dicker since 1980, serving as Los Angeles Regional Manager, Western Region Manager and Director of Litigation, among other titles. David S. Eisen, who took over as the Los Angeles office’s Regional Managing Partner, said the grace with which Kelly handed over the reins was indicative of his policy of always treating people with respect.

“Lawyers don’t treat each other with respect professionally the way they did decades ago,” Eisen said. “Pat has always ... insisted that people in the office have that very high on their priority list when litigating cases.”

Eisen said Kelly has seen everything in his expansive career and can leverage that knowledge to “tag the settlement value of a case from a hundred miles away.”

“Anybody who is interested in an objective assessment of what a case is worth and what the case would settle for, he would be somebody you would definitely want to go to,” Eisen said.

Ronald F. Brot, Senior Partner at Brot & Gross LLP and President of the Los Angeles County Bar Association, said Kelly’s dedication to



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volunteer work sets him apart as a member of the legal community. Kelly served in various positions at both the California State Bar and the Los Angeles County Bar associations, including terms as President at each.

“Pat sets himself apart by having dedicated himself to leaving our community, our county and our state better than he found it,” Brot said. “He exemplifies volunteerism at its best. He’s demonstrated a remarkable concern for the legal profession, for those we serve and for the administration of justice.”

Kelly said he thinks of alternative dispute resolution as a cost-efficient way for people to get the best outcome, and he said it was one of the core issues he fought for while President of the Los Angeles County Bar.

“Because it’s so integrally tied to access to justice — which is a very important thing to me, making sure everyone in the community has access to equal justice — alternative dispute resolution is a very important cog in that wheel,” Kelly said. “One thing I learned as a litigator is if it’s necessary to try a case, you need to do that and you need to do well, but it’s

better for everyone if you can resolve the case.”

Kelly will remain a voting member on the California Judicial Council until his term ends in 2021.

“He has a terrible, terrible disease; it’s called being unable to say no,” said Brian S. Kabateck, Founding and Managing Partner of Kabateck LLP, who noted Kelly’s constant volunteerism goes hand in hand with his roots in California’s legal community. “I’ve never heard in this entire town a single person say a bad word about Pat Kelly.”

Kelly hopes to have more time for his music now that he doesn’t have the demands of a law firm, but he said regardless, he’ll carry his experience in music through to his ADR career as he did his law firm career.

“First impressions really do count,” Kelly said. “Whether it’s a mediation or in trial or a business meeting or meeting a client, the impression that you create from the very outset is going to determine in large part the entire relationship into the future.”

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