

# Neutral Loves Variety, Especially of Practices

By Anne Marie Ruff  
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Charles Pereyra-Suarez loves a good mix — a mix of ethnicities, places, jobs, languages, names and, especially, a good mix of practices.

"You never know when some experience in your life is going to be important," Pereyra-Suarez said, "but everything I've done has been useful."

His experiences range from crusading for fair housing to prosecuting government contractor fraud, defending health insurers, investigating police misconduct and advocating positions for access for those with disabilities and school desegregation.

## Profile

"I think my life would be much more dull if I couldn't mix all these experiences," Pereyra-Suarez said. "One of the nice things about a law degree is the opportunity to have variety in your practice."

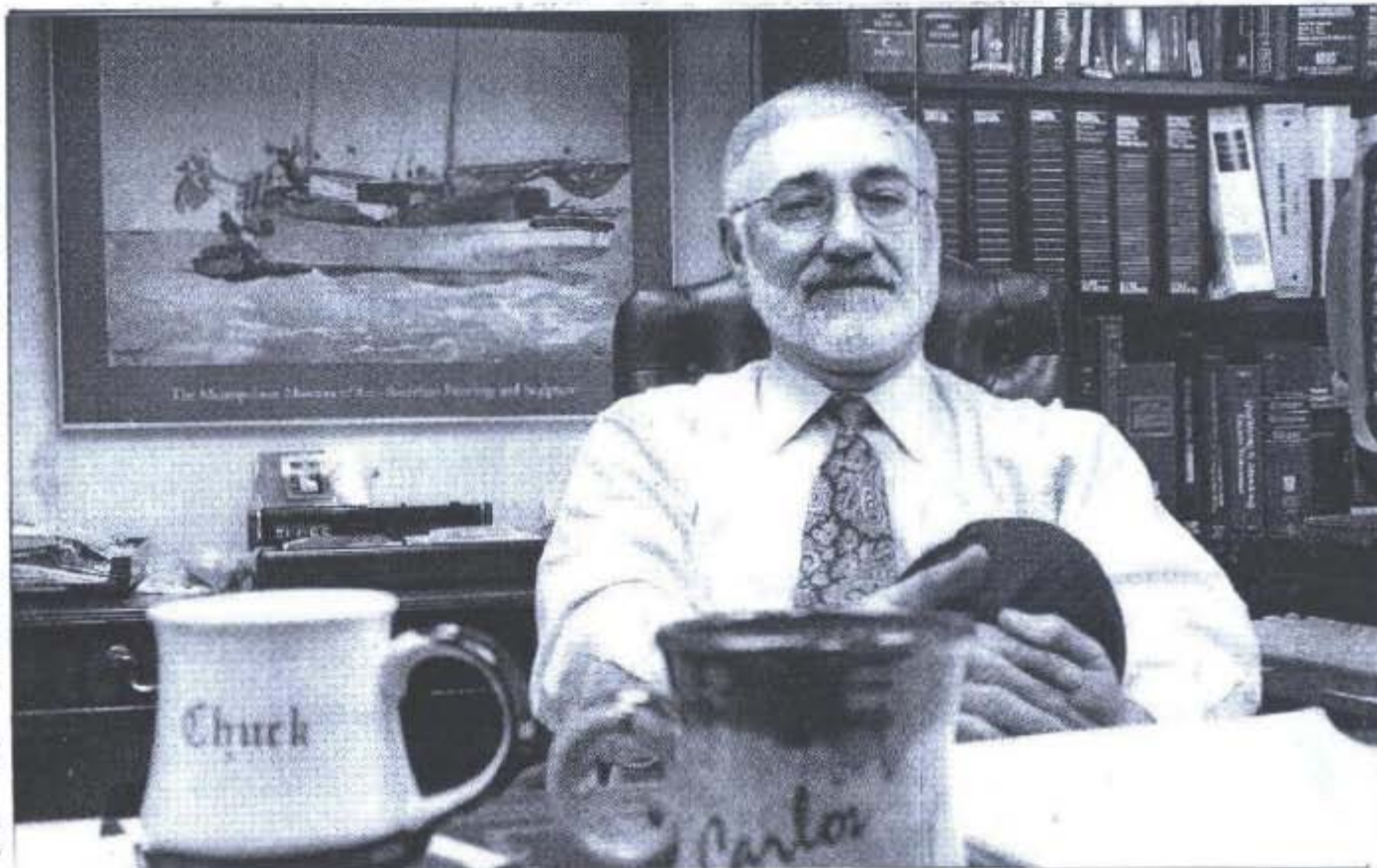
Russell Clampitt of Jacks and Maybaum said he was very impressed with Pereyra-Suarez's range of experience.

"As a mediator," Clampitt said, "it's got to help to have such a wide range of things that you have worked on."

Clampitt, who was at the Williams Law Group in Los Angeles when he used Pereyra-Suarez as a mediator, said such an eclectic mix is no surprise given Pereyra-Suarez's background.

Pereyra-Suarez, 58, was born Carlos Alberto Pereyra Suarez Enriquez Sarano in Uruguay. He traces his lineage through Catholic Spaniards and Portuguese on one side and Sephardic Jews from France and Italy on the other. His ancestors at various times lived in Turkey, Chile, France, Spain, Italy and Brazil. He spent time in Cuba, Mexico, Columbia, Chile, Peru and Brazil before coming to the U.S.

His father, a Seventh Day Adventist minister, bootstrapped himself up from a



ANNE MARIE RUFF / Daily Journal

Neutral Charles Pereyra-Suarez said he enjoys the criminal part of his practice and complex litigation: "They are fun cases because there are real people saying, 'He defrauded me,' 'No, he defrauded me.' It's real life. It's not abstract."

small Uruguayan village near Brazil to university studies in Chile and Chicago and a master's degree from Stanford University. His mother earned her Ph.D. in linguistics and romance languages at Stanford.

Pereyra-Suarez said his parents always had friends from other countries.

"I learned at an early age to interact with other cultures," he said. "I consider myself multicultural."

He is fluent in Spanish and English and proficient in French and Portuguese.

The immigration service wasn't as

interested in Pereyra-Suarez's multiculturalism. They shortened his name to Charles Pereyra-Suarez so it would fit on the immigration forms when, at 15, he became a U.S. citizen. He insists on being called Chuck.

"My role models were missionaries in public-service jobs," he said. "My early intention was to be a minister. At that time in the Seventh Day Adventist subculture, it was not looked on favorably to be a lawyer. But I was a maverick."

Pereyra-Suarez's public-service ethic is apparent in much of the work he has

done. After he received an exemption from military service as a conscientious objector during the Vietnam War, he chose to fulfill his alternative service by spending two years working for the San Fernando Valley Neighborhood Legal Services. He later worked for the Western Center on Law and Poverty, the Civil Rights Division of the U.S. Justice Department and the criminal division of the U.S. attorney's office in Los Angeles.

Suarez-Pereyra also has significant experience in private practice. He was an

See Page 2 — ECLECTIC

# Eclectic Neutral Likes Variety, Especially a Mix of Practices

Continued from Page 1

associate with Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher from 1982 to 1984, a partner at McKenna & Cuneo from 1986 to 1995 and a partner at Davis Wright Tremaine from 1995 to 1998.

Since 1998, he has maintained his own practice. In the past few years, he has provided mediation and arbitration services through the Los Angeles County Superior Court ADR panel, the American Arbitration Association and the Alternative Resolution Centers. In the past year, he also has provided his services as a neutral through the construction panel of the National Arbitration Forum in Minneapolis.

Suarez-Pereyra said he tries not to get too far from civil rights work and has kept his hand in pro bono work.

"He still does free mediation cases," Ciampitt said, "and I admire that."

Marcus A. Mancini of Mancini and Associates in Sherman Oaks worked with Pereyra-Suarez on a pro bono case.

"Even after the number of pro bono hours were used, he continued to call the parties to get a settlement," Mancini said. "That was three or four years ago, and I haven't forgotten him. I never forget the really good or the really bad mediators I work with."

Mancini counts Pereyra-Suarez among the former group.

Pereyra-Suarez estimates that more than half of his work is now in mediation and arbitration.

But, he said, "I enjoy litigation. I think I'm different from a lot of mediators who say they are so glad to be away from litigation."

That courtroom experience translates well into his neutral work, said James A. Vickman of Vickman and Associates in Beverly Hills.

"He has a really good grasp of the practicalities of the case; i.e. what would happen if it goes to trial," Vickman said. "He's savvy and sophisticated if he needs to be, but he told us our weaknesses without being rude."

Pereyra-Suarez believes he is "user-friendly" to counsel.

"I try to make them look good," he said.

"Chuck is the just exactly the kind of lawyer who should be a mediator," said Mark S. Adams, a Brentwood sole practitioner. "He is smart, sophisticated and has a good heart. That's a rare combination."

Adams used Pereyra-Suarez on a multi-party slumlord case. Since Pereyra-Suarez spoke Spanish, he could speak directly with some of the tenants, which none of the lawyers could do.

"Not many mediators can not only speak several languages but speak with people who may have no understanding of the legal system," Adams said. "And he had enough professional credibility that the banks who were the defendants had confidence in him."

Pereyra-Suarez said he enjoys the criminal part of his practice and complex litigation. He has worked on a lot of fraud,

**Name:** Charles Pereyra-Suarez

**Affiliations:** American Arbitration Association and Alternative Resolution Centers

**Location:** Los Angeles

**Age:** 58

**Areas of specialty:** complex litigation, health insurance fraud, government contracts, fair housing, whistle-blower lawsuits, real estate, environment and employment, business litigation

**Hourly rate:** \$480 for two-party cases; \$660 for three-or-more-party cases

health care and government contracting cases.

"They are fun cases," he said, "because there are real people saying, 'He defrauded me.' 'No, he defrauded me.' It's real life. It's not abstract."

When Pereyra-Suarez arbitrates, he said, he puts a lot of emphasis on fact-finding and discovery. He often will ask questions when lawyers are finished presenting their cases if he thinks critical points have been left out.

"I'm not one of those mediators who pushes parties to settle in the dark," Pereyra-Suarez said. "I may encourage parties to get one or two more key depositions."

Pereyra-Suarez said his settlement rate is about 90 percent on the cases where he is chosen and paid by the parties. Mediations ordered by the Superior Court have a slightly lower settlement rate.

Mancini said Pereyra-Suarez has a "wonderful calm, soothing personality, which works well with both plaintiffs' and defendants' attorneys."

Mancini's case did settle.

"[Pereyra-Suarez] made sure everyone was unhappy — which was a good settlement," Mancini said.

---

*Here are some of the lawyers who*

*have used Pereyra-Suarez's services:* Mark S. Adams, sole practitioner, Brentwood; Justin M. Goldstein, O'Melveny & Myers, Los Angeles; Suzanne M. Hankins, Severon & Werson, Irvine; Yakub Hazzard, Alschuler, Grossman, Stein & Kahan, Santa Monica; Marcus A. Mancini, Mancini & Associates, Sherman Oaks; Mike Martinez, Lewis, Brisbois, Bisgaard & Smith, Los Angeles; Carrie S. McLain, Helton Law Group, Long Beach; William L. Smith, Trutanich-Michel, Long Beach; James A. Vickman, Vickman & Associates, Beverly Hills; Daniel M. Petrocelli, O'Melveny & Myers, Century City; Stephen M. Fenster, Schwartz & Fenster, Beverly Hills; Bruce A. Armstrong, Lynberg & Watkins, Los Angeles.