



## BenchMarks: Raymond Youngquist

Superior Court Judge,  
County of San Bernardino

by Ed Butler

Ever stimulated by the variety of criminal law, Judge Raymond C. Youngquist enjoys applying his long experience in this practice/judging area to help settle cases and move caseload efficiently.

As supervising judge of the Chino District Superior Court, he describes it as "a very fast paced court" and says that's to his liking.

Approaching his fifteenth anniversary as a judge of the county, Judge Youngquist was a prosecutor in Los Angeles County before spending about 20 years in private criminal defense practice. He feels having advocated on both sides is good for his perspective.

Born in Santa Monica, he grew up in the Beverly Wood district of West Los Angeles, The son of an investigating executive for an oil insurance association, he attended Catholic schools with entertainment figures including Bobby Blake, Dean Stockwell, Marlene Bauer and Ronald Talsky. As a student at Loyola and St. Monica high schools, he lettered in football, basketball, cross country and baseball. His hobby of collecting stamps, begun at age eight, continues to this day.

Following in the footsteps of an older brother whom he idolized, Judge Youngquist joined the U.S. Air Force on his 17th birthday, in time for the Korean War. While still 17 he became the youngest non-commissioned officer in the history of the branch, completing his enlistment as staff sergeant in special criminal investigations in Europe. He says he especially enjoyed England, among the venues where he worked in Europe.

The military investigative work kindled his interest in the law, and upon mustering out he was employed as a Los Angeles County deputy sheriff.

His duties there included patrol and guarding prisoners at a county hospital.

While working in law enforcement, he earned his associate of arts degree at Antelope Valley College and his bachelor of science degree at then-Los Angeles State College.

While earning his jurisdoctor degree at the University of Southern California, he became an investigator for the Los Angeles County district attorney, laying the groundwork for future prosecution in that office.

Judge Youngquist says the law attracted him as a career due to "the ability to spar intellectually. There is some sport to it . . . within a civilized framework."

He prosecuted several homicides in the course of five years as deputy DA. Uniquely he also won the death penalty for the perpetrator of torture, although that penalty did not hold up on appeal.

After prosecution it was time to enter into a private criminal defense partnership at Pomona, with partners that included Judge Barry L. Plotkin, who presides in the Rancho Cucamonga court.

Judge Youngquist indicates there was no difficulty switching from prosecution to defense, as "you take an oath to defend your client." Also, he admires the English method that requires criminal practitioners to work on both sides alternately, as it supports a settlement-minded perspective.

After six years or so in partnership, Judge Youngquist struck out on his own as a criminal defense sole practitioner in Pomona.

A state certified specialist in criminal law, he was one of the first teachers of those seeking such certification at Woodbury College.

Enjoying teaching, he taught criminal law also at Orange Coast College, East Los Angeles College, Citrus College, and the University of La Verne College of Law.

With all this experience under his belt, he was appointed by Gov. Deukmejian in

late 1989 to the Chino Municipal Court, to a newly created position. He presided there largely over a variety of criminal matters until he was elevated in early 1995 by Gov. Wilson to Superior Court, where he succeeded retiring Judge Carl E. Davis.

Judge Youngquist returned to the Chino bench in 1999 after stints at Juvenile Court and criminal fast track and three years at Fontana on felony criminal adjudications.

Clearly a man who savors the role of judge, he says he likes the opportunity of "giving back to the profession and the community" and interchange with attorneys. He feels his long background in the criminal practice and judging area helps in "separating the chaff from the wheat" in resolving cases.

Judge Youngquist finds the Chino district to be a stimulating, fast growing area. Part of the challenge is keeping cases moving in a county with a relatively high caseload per judge.

He says challenges that have faced Chino District include personnel turnover and rotation of staffing that creates some discontinuity. Budget challenges include having to do without a judicial secretary and cutbacks to security. Money was found recently, however, for redecorating the courthouse.

While the grade of crimes at Chino is not generally as severe as Fontana, challenges at Chino include the responsibility of hearing alleged criminality occurring within the confines of several state prisons in the region.

The judge rates Chino as a lawyer friendly court where the community is very respectful of the court. He says consolidation of courts was a godsend for getting the work done.

Asked for advice in general for attorneys, Judge Youngquist reminds them to call ahead if they're running late, with an estimated time of arrival. Also, he strongly encourages civility in the profession, on the part of both attorneys and judges. "We all need a belt check" once in a while, he says.

He expresses delight at presiding in the criminal area. "It seems to be where the action is, where the greatest problems of society are to solve . . . It seems like life is pretty much centered around people's transgressions."

Similarly, the law more broadly is "really about life, every facet of it."

His love of the field has rubbed off on his adult daughter and son, both of whom are law school graduates. The daughter works as a nurse, the same as her mother Alice, the judge's wife of 48 years, and the son is a 13-year police officer, having followed in his father's footsteps in that area.

One of Judge Youngquist's avocational passions is chess. His son adopted this interest to the point of becoming a U.S. master in the game. The judge says chess has been described as "life compressed," and is a valuable encouragement of trying new strategies.

One of the judge's strategies in the past was owning 13 race horses, a field in which he enjoyed good fortune.

A man who walks at least two miles a day, remaining fit as his 70th birthday approaches, Judge Youngquist has no interest in retirement. A month of vacation is all he can tolerate, he says.

*Ed Butler is Manager of the Rancho Cucamonga Branch of the San Bernardino County Law Library.*

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