

# Sacramento News & Review

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## Citizen vendetta

Three Sacramento-area men beat the legal system. Maybe you can, too.

By R.V. Scheide

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**Nothing can be more unnerving** to the first-time litigant than walking into the courtroom and discovering your attorney, the opposing counsel and the judge are chummy because they all belong to the same country club. As they jovially discuss their latest round of golf together, you're wondering how much of your attorney's fee has been squandered on [bingo, bango, bongo](#).

That's a popular golf gambling game generally played by folks with more [disposable income](#) than you or me, an economic class that by and large includes most attorneys and judges. There is at least a faint whiff of elitism in every courtroom. We are instructed to leave the legal machinery to the well-paid experts, who despite their intertwined relationships are allegedly still capable of rendering sound, objective judgments.

Those who deign to question the system's integrity best be prepared to pull back a bloody stump. Got a problem with a judge? Just try and find a local attorney willing to go up against a magistrate he or she might have to appear before in the future. You won't. And don't waste your time bending the ear of your friendly local news reporter. To most of us, you're just another "disgruntled litigant."

But every once in a while, a case comes over the transom that piques my interest, a miscarriage of justice so egregious the injured party has gone to great lengths documenting the case, collecting evidence and studying the applicable case law. They'll drop a smoking gun on my desk and say, "There. Now what are *you* going to do about it?" If the evidence is solid, I do the only thing I can do about it. I write the story.

Three times in the past year, I've been fortunate enough to work with private citizens who've been righteously screwed by the court system and decided to fight back, often at great personal expense. Remarkably, all three cases have proved successful, at least to some degree, demonstrating that private citizens can prevail, if they have the time, willingness and financial wherewithal to fight back.

Last year, former state worker Ulf Carlsson approached me with an [incredible tale](#). The judge in his divorce trial, Peter J. "[Chainsaw](#)" McBrien, unilaterally ended the proceeding and walked out of the courtroom before Carlsson had presented all of his evidence. Carlsson lost the case, his 20-year career with the state and eventually spent nearly \$1 million in legal fees.



Got a beef with the legal system?  
Have you done your homework?  
Then give the writer a call or send an email.

But Carlsson never stopped fighting, and it paid off. This week, the state's 3rd District Appellate Court officially [reversed the decision](#) and certified the opinion for publication. That means it sets a precedent. The next time a judge walks off a case like McBrien did, it can automatically be declared a mistrial. The rumor circulating in the local legal community is that McBrien may soon step down from the bench. In the meantime, Carlsson intends to recoup his financial losses via aggressive litigation.

Last week [in these pages](#), I wrote about Thomas Worden, a Citrus Heights man whose friend and business partner, Linda Bloom, has spent 10 nightmarish years in court attempting to settle her father's estate. Worden did a little digging into Bloom's case and discovered that Sacramento County may not be following the letter of the law when it comes to electing judges. He contested the election process in court; the case is still pending because so far four judges have recused themselves from hearing it.

Worden questions the on-again, off-again sense of objectivity attorneys and judges claim to possess. If no judge is capable of rendering a fair decision in Worden's contestation of last June's primary election, how is it that those very same judges have no difficulty endorsing local attorneys for judicial seats, even when those attorneys have ongoing business before the judge granting the endorsement?

To Worden, such activity seems to fly in the face of the [California Code of Judicial Ethics](#), which states, "A judge shall respect and comply with the law and shall act at all times in a manner that promotes public confidence in the integrity and impartiality of the judiciary."

**Like Worden, Folsom resident David Palmer, a.k.a. the [Judicial Watchdog](#), is a retired military officer with an Internet connection and plenty of time on his hands. Palmer, originally from Toledo, Ohio, developed a hard-on for judges and lawyers nearly 20 years ago, when a couple of unscrupulous attorneys ripped off his wife's insurance money after she'd been seriously injured in a car accident.**

**Palmer cut through the Ohio judiciary like a scythe before focusing his efforts on illegal campaign expenditures and the misuse of public funds by members of the Texas Legislature, for which he was recently featured in a front-page story in the Houston Chronicle. He's already digging up dirt on the California Legislature, and expects to be announcing some significant misuses of public money soon. He calls his one-man wrecking crew The Committee to Expose Dishonest and Incompetent Judges, Attorneys and Public Officials.**

**Unfortunately, he has way too much work on his hands.**

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