Get to Know
Gary Selvin, Esq.



After more than four decades practicing law, Gary Selvin has built a career at the center of some of the most complex issues in civil litigation and insurance coverage. Over 42 years, he has tried high-exposure insurance coverage and bad faith cases, catastrophic injury and professional liability matters, and argued approximately 50 appeals in courts across California and beyond.
But what stands out most about Selvin's career is not simply the scope of the cases he has handled—it's his reputation for **resolving them**. Long before formally stepping into the role of neutral, insurers and counsel frequently relied on him to help bridge difficult negotiations and guide disputes toward resolution.

Now, as a neutral with ADR Services, Inc., Selvin brings that same strategic mindset, creativity, and steady temperament to mediation. In this conversation, he reflects on the experiences that shaped his approach to dispute resolution and the strategies he uses to help parties find common ground—even in cases that initially appear "unsettleable."

Q: Tell us about your civil litigation background.

Selvin: I've spent more than 42 years counseling insurers and policyholders on insurance coverage issues and litigating high-exposure insurance coverage and bad faith cases across California and numerous other states. Over that time, I've also tried numerous serious bodily injury and professional liability cases and handled roughly 50 appeals.

My practice has always been heavily tied to insurance issues. Insurance coverage touches nearly every major civil dispute—from catastrophic injury cases to habitability disputes, construction defect matters, professional liability claims, and even sexual abuse disputes. Understanding how those coverage issues interact with the underlying case is often the key to resolving it.

"Insurance coverage is often the hidden engine driving the resolution strategy. If you understand the coverage dynamics, you're much closer to resolving the case."

Q: What types of cases are you best suited to mediating?

Selvin: Cases with strong insurance coverage components are particularly well suited to my experience—coverage disputes, bad faith cases, catastrophic injury matters, habitability cases, and professional liability disputes.

Coverage issues can arise in almost any case. In catastrophic injury or wrongful death cases, insurance determines the available resources for

Areas of Expertise:

- Insurance Coverage
- Insurance Bad Faith
- Habitability
- Personal Injury
- Construction
- Professional Liability

settlement. In habitability or construction disputes, the challenge often becomes allocating responsibility among multiple insurers with different policies and coverage positions. Sometimes everyone can roughly agree on the value of the case. The real question becomes: how do we fund the settlement?

"In many complex cases, everyone can predict roughly what the case is worth. The real challenge is figuring out how multiple parties and insurers are going to fund the settlement."

Q: How do you approach Multi-Party and Multi-Carrier disputes so common in complex insurance matters?

Selvin: Preparation is critical. When several carriers or defendants are involved, I try to identify the allocation and coverage issues before the mediation even begins.

Often the biggest obstacle isn't the dispute between the plaintiff and defendants—it's the disagreements among the defendants themselves about who is responsible for paying what. If you don't address those issues early, you can end up running three separate mediations simultaneously.

In some cases, I'll stagger participation so the defendants can work through funding and allocation issues before bringing in the plaintiff. That avoids unnecessary frustration and allows the negotiation to move forward more efficiently.

"In multi-party cases, the hardest negotiation is often between the defendants themselves. Sorting out the coverage and allocation issues early, sometimes even before the plaintiff joins the session, can make the rest of the mediation far more productive."

Q: How would you describe your style as a mediator?

Selvin: Measured, persistent and personable. I believe mediators need to help control the process while still giving parties the complete opportunity to be heard.

I'm also comfortable being evaluative when appropriate. But evaluation should come only after you've taken the time to understand the case and the parties' perspectives. Some disputes require guidance about risk and case value; others simply require someone who can help the parties move toward a reasonable resolution.

"A mediator should guide the process, but only after truly understanding the case and the parties' goals and positions."

Q: How do you balance empathy with forward progress in negotiation?

Selvin: The first thing you have to do is listen. So many of the cases I mediate involve significant financial risk, emotional stakes, or deeply personal harm. In such highly charged cases—whether it's catastrophic injury, abuse claims, or severe habitability disputes—people need an opportunity to explain what happened and why it matters to them.

That doesn't mean letting discussions go on indefinitely, but it does mean acknowledging the human side of the dispute. Once people feel heard, it becomes much easier to move into productive negotiations.

"Before you can solve the dispute, people need to feel that someone has truly listened to their story."

Q: What role does preparation play in your mediation process?

Selvin: I strongly believe in pre-mediation conversations with counsel. Even a short call can uncover issues that might otherwise derail the mediation.

For example, there may be unresolved medical causation issues, coverage disputes, or allocation questions between insurers. Identifying those issues beforehand allows everyone to come to mediation ready to address them.

Q: What happens when a case doesn't settle on the mediation day?

Selvin: I'm a big believer in the telephone. Many cases settle after the mediation session once parties have had time to reassess their positions.

Sometimes that means additional discussions by phone or Zoom. Sometimes it involves further information exchange or targeted discovery. And in the right circumstances, a mediator's proposal may help bridge the final gap—but that's a tool I reserve for when it's truly appropriate.

Q: What motivates you most about this work?

Selvin: I enjoy collaborating with everyone involved to solve problems. There's real satisfaction in helping parties resolve disputes that initially seemed impossible to settle.

"The most satisfying part of this work is bringing people together to solve problems that once seemed impossible."

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