Building Rapport
Mediator Jeane Struck makes a point of developing relationships with both sides.

By Chase DiFeliciantonio
Daily Journal Staff Writer

SAN FRANCISCO — Early in her career as an insurance defense lawyer, Jeane Struck found she could be a zealous advocate for her clients while remaining on good terms with opposing counsel.

Now a mediator at JAMS specializing in insurance and liability cases, Struck said she still sees many of her old colleagues and opponents and those relationships help her settle cases.

“I run into a lot of the same people,” Struck said. “I want the attorneys to have a certain level of confidence in my skills whether it turns out we have mutual friends or we know the same judge.”

Struck said she handled a wide range of insurance cases from medical malpractice to automotive, architectural and beyond and her range of experience allows her to provide perspective to feuding parties.

“As an insurance defense attorney, one of my most important jobs was really analyzing both sides of the case for my insurance carrier client,” Struck said. “I had to look at the whole case, show them where the problems were, where the liabilities were.”

Struck said she asks that attorneys turn in their briefs five days before the start of a mediation and she favors premediation calls.

“If I feel like I’ve got a really good rapport with a plaintiff, I can hold her hand and say, ‘This is what’s happening, and this is not a reflection on you,’” Struck said.

Often what a plaintiff was really looking for was a chance to be heard, Struck said. “Sometimes it’s appropriate then for the insurance company to come in and say, ‘We’re so sorry; we believe you.’”

“Because she’s done so much of it, she has a good sense of how cases are going to turn out,” said Dawn Hassell at the Hassell Law Group, who used Struck as a mediator while representing a plaintiff in an uninsured motorist claim. “She comes in immediately with a lot of credibility. The insurance companies take her very seriously because they know they have risks if they don’t settle.”

While mediating a case where a plaintiff had lost a finger in a go-cart accident, Struck managed expectations to satisfy both sides in an emotional setting, according to Robert Cartwright of The Cartwright Law Firm Inc., who represented the plaintiff.

“Jeane has a very pleasant personality,” Cartwright said. “She handled it really well with my plaintiff, who needed to hear things from the mediator that perhaps I couldn’t tell her.”

“She’s always put my clients at ease and is easy to talk to,” said David Spini of Scruggs, Spini & Fulton. “Once the mediator gets the trust of your client, it’s a whole lot easier to get the case settled.”

Struck lives in the Russian Hill neighborhood of San Francisco and said she enjoys traveling with her husband. They make olive oil in Healdsburg under the name Westside Road Olive Oil.

Here are some attorneys who have used Struck’s services:

- David Spini, Scruggs, Spini & Fulton;
- Robert Cartwright, Cartwright Law Firm Inc.;
- James D’Ambrosio, Stark & D’Ambrosio LLP;
- Robert G. Williamson Jr., Hart King;
- Jacqueline Ravenscroft, Tobener Ravenscroft LLP.