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PERSPECTIVE

## Veteran LA litigators launch concierge service boutique

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As deputy federal defenders in Los Angeles in the 1990s, Guy C. Iversen and Michael J. Proctor teamed up to defend eight cases and kept the prosecutors from getting convictions in any of them.

Now the duo plans to bring their winning ways to a litigation boutique they started with offices in Los Angeles and Santa Barbara.

Proctor said their approach is to take the desired outcome for their clients and work backward from there, considering, “How would we defend this case at trial? What do we need to do to get there?”

“I think that philosophy translates whether you’re at the public defender’s office or in private practice,” he said.

Iversen brings an academic mentality to the practice. He was a professor at Loyola Law School from 2006 to May of this year. He was a deputy federal defender in Los Angeles for 27 years before leaving in 2016 as chief of training.

Proctor, who spent five years in the federal defender’s office, is no stranger to high-end litigation boutiques. He has practiced at Kecker, Van Nest & Peters LLP, Caldwell Leslie & Proctor PC, Boies Schiller Flexner LLP and, since 2018, Durie Tangri, where he was a partner.

Not many law firms start by anticipating that they’ll turn away clients. But Iversen and Proctor say their business model is to devote a maximum amount of time to a few carefully selected cases.



Michael J. Proctor, left, and Guy C. Iversen met in the 1990s as deputy federal defenders. Now they’re launching a law firm devoted to offering their considerable skills to selected clients. | Courtesy of Iversen Proctor

“When I sat down with Guy, he and I thought about what we love about practicing law and what we want to emphasize and de-emphasize,” Proctor said. “The idea is to be selective in our engagements so that we can really get deep with those people who want to hire us.”

Proctor said he never aspired to work in law firms that leverage large teams on as many cases as possible. He said he enjoys working with clients when he knows their cases through and through. The pair plan to take a few civil cases but will concentrate on white collar criminal defense.

“With our experience, we’re probably going to be doing a lot of stuff in the federal criminal realm as that’s our area of most competence,” Proctor noted.

The first case they will take on together is representing the plaintiffs and cross defendants in *Trellis Research Inc. v. Thaler*, a business dispute between two founders of a startup. The case is scheduled for trial on Nov. 28 in Los Angeles County Superior Court. The lawsuit accuses the defendant of interfering with investor relations with the malicious intent to bankrupt Trellis, a state trial court research database.

“It’s a case where another firm did all of the discovery and on the eve of trial, the client wanted a different lawyer to try the case,” Proctor explained. “We’re going to roll up our sleeves and go through all of the exhibits so that we can understand the theories of the case.”

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The lawyers said they often talked about practicing law together but only seriously explored the idea over the past few months.

“We had several meetings where we talked about our goals and they were fully in alignment. We just said, ‘Let’s do this,’” Proctor said.

Attorneys who have known Iversen and Proctor for years predicted the two would build a potent litigation boutique.

“Guy and Mike are excellent trial lawyers and creative legal strategists. I have no doubt their partnership will be a great success,” said Jeffrey H. Rutherford, a partner at Kendall Brill & Kelly LLP.

“Michael and Guy are elite trial lawyers. They could have taken their pick of big law platforms with teams of associates to do their work for them,” said John L. Littrell, a partner at Bienert Katzman Littrell Williams LLP. “This firm is going to fill a vital niche for clients looking for concierge-level service by the best in the business.”

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