

Celebrating the Life of Chief Bankruptcy Judge Theodor C. Albert, Jr.

Surrounded by his family and closest friends, Chief Bankruptcy Judge Theodor Charles Albert, Jr., Central District of California, died on May 5, 2025, from complications of esophageal cancer. He will be long remembered for his keen intellect, kindness, inclusiveness, passion for the law and profound commitment to public service.

Judge Albert was born in 1953 at the Fort Sill Army base in Oklahoma. He spent his childhood in Massachusetts before moving with his family to California. The family settled down in Walnut, a city in Los Angeles County, where Judge Albert graduated from J.A. Rowland High School before receiving his Bachelor of Arts Degree in History from Stanford University in 1975, and his Juris Doctorate Degree from the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law in 1978.

As noted in a recent [Insolvency Law Committee \(ILC\) Judicial Profile](#), Judge Albert's first job after law school was with a small mid-Wilshire firm. But he soon moved to Orange County to work at Corbett, Steelman & Davidson. Early in his career, a major client sought representation in a bankruptcy proceeding and Judge Albert was assigned to handle the client's needs. He learned that he enjoyed the bankruptcy practice where no two cases are alike and where legal issues are drawn from different disciplines. The experience led Judge Albert to specialize in insolvency law. His early years in practice coincided with the adoption of the Bankruptcy Reform Act of 1978, which went into effect in October 1979.

In 1983, Judge Albert relocated his growing practice to Buchalter, Nemer, Fields & Younger, where he eventually headed the insolvency practice at the firm's Newport Beach office. A few years later, he was appointed as the special examiner of a music store in Costa Mesa where he identified and documented a fraud racket. Harry L. Gastley, assistant U.S. trustee with the Office of the United States Trustee, was impressed with the report and suggested that he apply for a position as a Chapter 7 trustee. Judge Albert applied and was selected for the panel.

In addition to his time as a bankruptcy trustee and examiner, Judge Albert also served on the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, Central District of California's panel of trained mediators. Judge Albert was a frequent lecturer and author on numerous bankruptcy topics and was an adjunct faculty member of the University of California at Irvine Extension Program, teaching a course on trustee practice. He was a founding director and President of the Orange County Bankruptcy Forum.

In 1995, Judge Albert co-founded Albert, Weiland & Golden, a boutique bankruptcy firm where he practiced until his appointment to the bench. Judge Albert was a Master and past treasurer of the Peter M. Elliott Inn of Court. In 2000, Judge Albert was awarded the *Peter M. Elliott Award* for maintaining the highest standard of ethics, scholarship and service.

On June 1, 2005, Judge Albert was appointed by the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit as a U.S. Bankruptcy Judge for the Central District of California. Judge Albert spent one year in Los Angeles, before being transferred to the Santa Ana

courthouse. He was re-appointed to a second 14-year term effective June 1, 2019. Over the years, Judge Albert contributed greatly to the Central District community, and, rather than retire, he chose to step up and serve the Court as Chief Judge, to lead the Court out of the pandemic years.

Judge Albert was named Chief Bankruptcy Judge for the Central District of California Bankruptcy Court on January 1, 2022, for a four-year term. He sat on many important committees, including the Rules Committee and Executive Committee. He led robust discussions amongst his colleagues and always kept the rule of law and service to the American people at the forefront of his work. During his time on the bench, Judge Albert also taught insolvency related courses at Chapman University's Fowler School of Law for 14 years.

Upon Judge Albert's appointment as Chief Bankruptcy Judge, his former law partner attorney Michael Weiland shared that Judge Albert was "intelligent, a gifted writer, witty, open minded, fair, patient, humble and loyal." Weiland praised Chief Judge Albert as a highly respected jurist and noted the myriad contributions that he has made to the attorneys and colleagues that he mentored over the years. He said the Chief Judge's "deep love of history forms the bedrock of his devotion to the law." Among other things, Chief Judge Albert had a deep interest in Roman law, as evidenced by his having published a well-researched treatise on the early Roman origins of bankruptcy law, and in the American Civil War, as evidenced by his enthusiastic participation, dressed in the period correct uniform of a Union Army private, in numerous events including a full-scale three-day reenactment of the Battle of Gettysburg, replete with batteries of cannon, held on the 135 Year Anniversary of the Battle.

Notable cases during Chief Judge Albert's tenure as bankruptcy judge include: *In re Trigem America Corporation*, 8:05-bk-13972-TA; *In re StarRibs North, LP, et al*, 8:08-bk-17182-TA; *In re North Valley Mall, LLC*, 8:09-bk-19346-TA; *In re Rafik Youssef Kamell*, 8:10-bk-15501; *In re Point Center Financial, Inc.*, 8:13-bk-11495-TA; *In re Anna's Linens, Inc.*, 8:15-bk-13008; *In re Bridgemark Corporation*, 8:20-bk-10143-TA; and *In re Five Rivers Land Company*, 8:23-bk-11167-TA.

Chief Judge Albert was buried in a private ceremony. There will be a celebration of his life on June 8, 2025, from 2:00-4:30 p.m., at The Richland (137 E. Maple Avenue, Orange, CA 92866). He is survived by his wife, Deborah Gaskell Albert, and his sons Brendan Albert, Brian Albert, Sean Van Braden, and Casey Braden.

Contributions in memory of Chief Judge Albert can be sent to the Stanford Cancer Institute, and to the City of Hope which has established a dedicated donation page in tribute to Judge Albert.

City of Hope Online Donations: <https://ourhope.cityofhope.org/TheodorCAlbert>. Donations may also be mailed to the following address: City of Hope, Attn: Annual Giving, 1500 E. Duarte Road, Duarte, CA 91010. Please add "Hon. Theodor C. Albert" to the memo line of the check.

Stanford Cancer Institute Online Donations: <https://give.stanford.edu/med/cancer/discovery?olc=42250>. Donations can also be mailed to the following address along with the donation form: Stanford Medical Center Development, 485 Broadway, 4th Floor, Redwood City, CA 94063, Fax: 650.723.0020