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## Harris tapping all-stars to train DAs

By Pam Smith  
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All the courtrooms are stages, and all the lawyers merely players.

Retired San Francisco Superior Court Judge Alfred Chiantelli urged San Francisco prosecutors at a training session Friday to tap their inner thespian when producing any piece of damning evidence, even if it's just a bureaucratic slip of paper.

### In Camera

Don't just read the contents. Announce them, holding the sheet of paper with one hand at the top of the page and one at the bottom — “like the town crier.”

“That's the way to read an official document,” Chiantelli finished emphatically, prompting a wave of laughter from the audience of about 60 or so prosecutors.

Tapping into a cadre of legal luminaries — many of whom backed Kamala Harris during her election — the rookie DA is bringing in an all-star cast of litigators and judges to teach trial skills to prosecutors. Among the big names are Cristina Arguedas of Emeryville's Arguedas, Cassman & Headley and John Keker of Keker & Van Nest.

Though the city's budget squeeze may tie Harris' hands when it comes to delivering on some parts of last year's campaign platform, the pro bono help she's getting has helped her follow through on promises to boost the office's training and leverage resources in the community.

Spearheaded by Morrison & Foerster senior counsel James Brosnahan Jr. and Assistant DA Jerry Coleman, the monthly “anatomy of a trial” seminars address topics from *voir dire* and arguing law, to hearsay and dealing with child witnesses. The two-hour panel discussions typically showcase a defense lawyer, a judge and a prosecutor, Coleman said.

In addition to line prosecutors in San



JASON DOY

**'LIKE THE TOWN CRIER':** Retired San Francisco Superior Court Judge Alfred Chiantelli, right, demonstrates how to read documentary evidence with elan. Chiantelli participated in a Friday training seminar with Ropers, Majeski, Kohn & Bentley partner James Lassart, left.

Francisco and nearby counties who specialize in one area or another, the roster includes state and federal jurists as well as some of the Bay Area's most prominent attorneys.

So far, San Francisco Superior Court Judge Anne Bouliane and Justice Timothy Reardon of the First District Court of Appeal have appeared, among others. And the schedule for the rest of the year is no less impressive.

Judge Charles Breyer of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of California is on the list, as are First District Justice Laurence Kay, retired First District Justice Daniel “Mike” Hanlon, San Francisco Superior Court Judge James Warren and retired San Francisco Superior Court Judges David Garcia and William Cahill.

On Friday, three former San Francisco prosecutors — Chiantelli; Ropers, Majes-

ki, Kohn & Bentley partner James Lassart; and San Mateo County prosecutor Alfred Giannini — returned to the DA's office to share their wisdom on direct examination.

The seasoned lawyers offered tips on how to read a judge's mind and prepare witnesses. And they warned their students to never, ever rely solely on police or experts to sum up the evidence.

Giannini used the chorus of the Rolling Stones' “You Can't Always Get What You Want” to drive home a point about putting a witness through the paces of their story three times. “That process of repetition will cement the veracity,” he said.

He also advised the prosecutors to review any video or audio tape in its entirety — even if “the guy is sitting there for an hour and a half scratching himself.”

And, Lassart warned, “If you put in a piece of clothing, you go through the pock-

# IN CAMERA

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JASON DOIY

**TEACHER'S PETS:** Assistant DA William Murphy and Criminal Division head Paul Cummins listen to advice on managing trials.

ets.”

Chiantelli related a story from his days as a young prosecutor when he relied on an expert's description of a gun rather than looking down the barrel himself before trial.

The expert got it mixed up, he said. “I introduced it in court and got really embarrassed.”

Despite the sometimes formal classroom atmosphere — prosecutors in a Hall of Justice hearing room Friday

raised hands to pose questions and scribbled notes on legal pads balanced on their knees — the class had its share of wisecracks and banter.

After Coleman disputed a point Chiantelli made during an opening discussion on a recent U.S. Supreme Court opinion, Chiantelli's comeback — “If there's a district attorney and a judge, you rely on a judge” — was rewarded with a mix of laughter and boos.

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