

also fairly high, roughly 70 percent for most issues. A lesser amount—about 50 percent—of disputes over job duties were resolved in conference. The survey found the conferences were initially requested by injured workers in 78 percent of the cases, by insurers in 18 percent of cases and the rest by voc rehab counselors.

Lawyer files claim for Ron Goldman's death benefits

A lawyer who is not connected with the Goldman family has filed a workers' comp death benefit claim in the matter of slain restaurant waiter Ronald Goldman, who was murdered along with Nicole Brown Simpson in 1994 outside her Brentwood home.

Attorney Nick O'Malley filed the \$95,000 claim for death benefits, citing an obscure principle that allows citizens to file legal actions on the state's behalf. He could get 15 percent of any sum the state recovers. The rest would go to a special state fund for injured workers.

O'Malley's claim for the comp benefits asserts that Goldman was working in his capacity as an employee of the Mezzaluna Restaurant when he was slain, since he had gone to Nicole Brown Simpson's house to return a pair of sunglasses she had left at the restaurant. Mezzaluna owner Karim Souki said Goldman was acting on his own.

Goldman's father, Fred Goldman, was outraged at news of O'Malley's legal maneuver, which he said was an opportunity for the lawyer to make money for himself. At the time the February 13 claim was filed, O'Malley had been suspended for a month by the State Bar Association for, among other things, filing a complaint using a fellow attorney's name without permission, according to the *San Francisco Examiner*.

\$1.7 million judgment awarded against defunct brokerage, principals

A Placer County Superior Court judge awarded nine workers' compensation insurers \$1.7 million in damages after the carriers sued Finney & Brown, a Rocklin-based brokerage that was forced out of business in 1995. The start of open rate competition hit the brokerage hard, since a major portion of its book of business was in workers' comp, resulting in sharply reduced commissions as premiums plummeted amid cutthroat rate competition. It was alleged that Finney & Brown converted premium trust funds in a futile attempt to stay afloat financially.

Plaintiffs in the action against Finney & Brown include Cypress Insurance, Citation Insurance Company, Zenith Insurance Company, Kemper Insurance Company, C.E. Heath Compensation, FAI Insurance Counseling, Golden Eagle Insurance Company, Industrial Indemnity Insurance Company and Sequoia Insurance Company. Brian H. Krikorian of the Sherman Oaks firm of Nemecek & Cole, which represented the insurers, told *Smart's* his clients have also intervened in a bankruptcy filing by James E. Brown, a Finney & Brown principal, in an attempt to recover the premium trust funds.