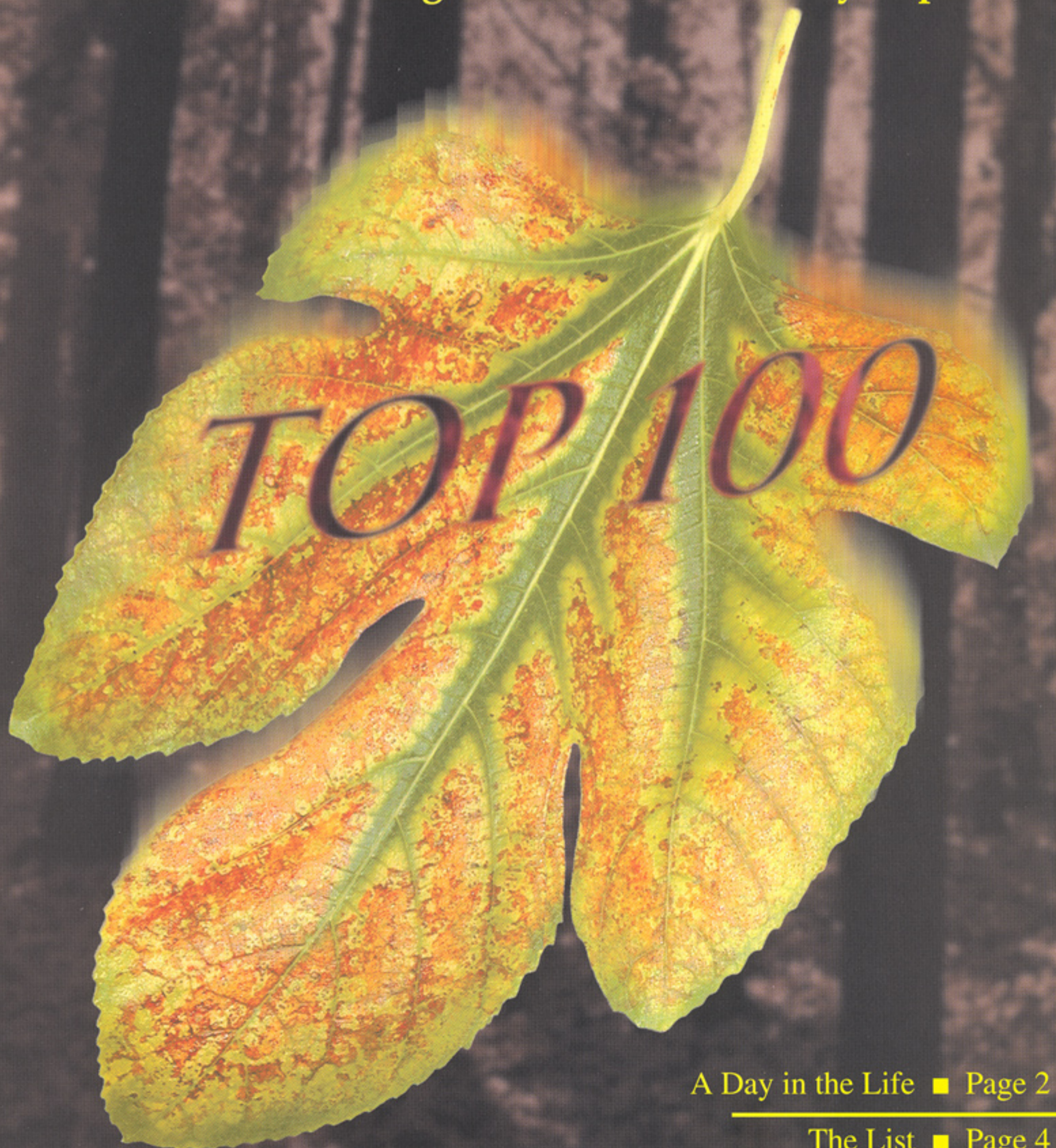


EXTRA

Trials, transactions and the
insider's guide to the
practice of law.

Supplement to the Los Angeles Daily Journal
and San Francisco Daily Journal

Our sixth annual list of the state's most influential lawyers
reflects a time of change and the immutability of power.



A Day in the Life ■ Page 2

The List ■ Page 4

Tom Girardi strides out the south side of Girardi & Keese's Wilshire Boulevard offices and climbs into the back seat of the town car that whisks him around Southern California. It's 8:32 a.m.

"So this is your second day on the job?" he jokes to José, who's been in charge of his road show for 28 years.

Girardi's work hours are too precious to waste. He gets 60 phone calls a day; it's best to use the back seat as an office.

"The trick," he says, "is to respond, in some way, to every call."

José heads to the Central Civil West branch of Los Angeles Superior Court, a few blocks away.

Girardi likes to get to court early, and he arrives 20 minutes in front of a 9 a.m. status conference on the Rezulin lawsuits. Drug giant Pfizer developed Rezulin to help diabetics, but it turned out to cause serious liver damage in many patients, Girardi explains. The drug is off the market and in courts around the country. Girardi's team has 4,000 clients.

Girardi arrives first in the courtroom but is soon joined by Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Carl West, who is presiding over the cases.

"It's hard to imagine how lucky we are," Girardi says.

"It can always get worse, so I'm happy," West agrees.

Fifteen minutes later, a dozen attorneys clog the room. Girardi and the defense team, headed by Kaye Scholer partner Robert Barnes, iron out a new schedule to finish expert reports. West gives both sides a couple of extra weeks, and life really seems grand.

Girardi gets his second cup of coffee at the little store at the base of the courthouse before heading back to José, engine running. A homeless man spots Girardi and calls out to him.

"How the hell are ya?" Girardi yells back, handing the man a \$10 bill.

Girardi doesn't put a lid on his coffee, though he fills to the brim. He doesn't spill either. He looks out the window, thinking about his clients with livers blown straight to hell.

"We have people on waiting lists for liver transplants," he says, then changes gears.

"Let's head up to Chatsworth, José."



We are on our way back from Chatsworth, where we traveled to be present for the 10:30 jury break in the case of

Johan Karlsson.

The venerable Girardi is a confident man, but he clearly is nervous about Chatsworth and the 12 jurors who are deciding the case.

Karlsson, a paralyzed 12-year-old, was injured in a highway accident seven years ago. The Karlssons blame Johan's paralysis on a faulty seat belt in the family minivan, a 1996 Ford Windstar. The defendant, Ford Motor Co., disagrees.

It's a compelling case. But Chatsworth is a conservative area. Girardi says that many millions will be needed to care for Johan in the decades to come. He wants the jury to pull through.

They've been deliberating for more than a week. Painful.

Wherever he goes, Girardi is peppered with "What's happening in Chatsworth?"

At the courthouse, we've gone to the second floor and met with Girardi & Keese partner David Lira and sole practitioner Marvin Kay, a co-counsel. Agneta Karlsson, Johan's mother, also is there. Girardi hugs and kisses her.

"This is one bitchin' lady," Girardi says.

Girardi and Lira wonder whether several juror questions indicate a leaning to be tight with Ford's purse strings.

Girardi cautions Agneta Karlsson that damages could come in low.

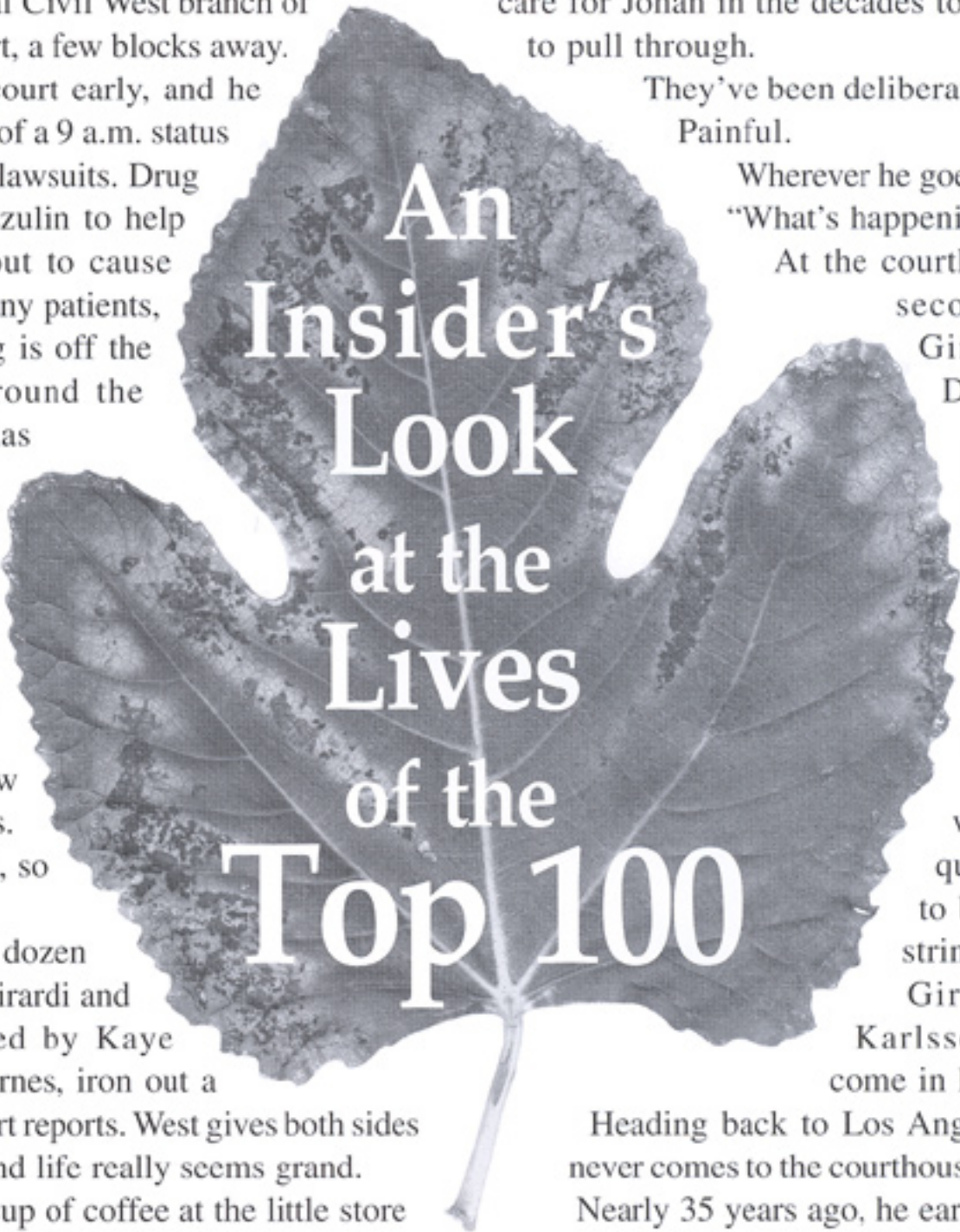
Heading back to Los Angeles, Girardi adds that he never comes to the courthouse for verdicts. Superstition. Nearly 35 years ago, he earned a \$1.4 million medical malpractice verdict, then one of the largest of its kind. He wasn't there when the verdict came down, and he hasn't heard one since. (Six days after our trip to Chatsworth, the jury awards Johan \$45 million. Girardi isn't in court.)

Heading south on the 101 freeway, Girardi needs to call state Senator John Burton and razz him about the recall. He reaches Burton on his cell.

"Things are going great, eh?" Girardi says to Burton with a bellowing laugh.

Burton's low, angry voice resonates through Girardi's phone. Girardi takes life in stride, but several phone conversations make clear that he is uneasy about the election of Schwarzenegger.

"Most of the budget is statutory," Girardi says after he hangs



An Insider's Look at the Lives of the Top 100

up. "And now [Schwarzenegger] wants to repeal the car tax hike?"

He is particularly worried about the courts, which already suffer from a lack of funding.

His influence is felt well beyond California, however. Girardi's also a top adviser to Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards, a senator from North Carolina, working on both fundraising and strategic issues. They talk at least once a day. Before entering politics, Edwards was a bigtime plaintiffs' lawyer, which is how he and Girardi became good friends.

"He really could be the last man standing [in the primary]," Girardi suggests.

We get back to the unassuming headquarters of Girardi's multimillion-dollar enterprise by 11:15 a.m., when Los Angeles-area attorney David Affeld, with whom Girardi is handling a whistle-blower case against TRW Inc., steps in. A former employee claims that TRW fired her because she criticized the missile-defense system TRW was developing for the Pentagon.

Girardi tells Affeld not to worry too much about what the defense is saying it might pay to settle the case. Girardi briefly criticizes the "Star Wars" defense system, the fallacy of which would be fun to expose in court.

"These are great challenges," Girardi says.

"You give a great pep talk," Affeld responds.



At 2:45 p.m., Girardi has finished a top-secret lunch and gets Sam Chapman, chief of staff to Sen. Barbara Boxer, D-Calif., on the phone. They talk about the nomination of Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Carolyn Kuhl to the federal appellate bench, which Democrats have strongly opposed. Girardi says that he represents "many others" in advocating that Kuhl detractors vote against her if they must, but abandon the idea of a filibuster. That measure is too extreme for such a nominee.

"We could do a lot worse," Girardi says to Chapman. "She's conservative. But she's honest."

Chapman pledges to pass the message on to Boxer, adding that she values Girardi's opinion highly.

"You're a wonderful human being," Girardi says before hanging up and calling JAMS arbitrator Charles Bakaly.

Girardi represents one of the litigants in a partnership dispute, and he wants Bakaly to mediate it. Girardi has handled about 20 partnership battles in his career. He's learned how important it is to tone down the aggression and try to settle these things peacefully, "to save people from themselves."

"I've gotten better at that," Girardi says. "Lawyers left to their own devices will blow this town up."

Arlene Friedman, one of his regular private investigators, walks in with a friendly smile and big glasses, looking more like a librarian than an investigator. Girardi has predicted this.

"Underneath this façade, she's a real alligator," Girardi says.

They turn serious to get to the matter at hand: molestation cases arising from the Masonic home for youth in Covina. Friedman and Girardi discuss how it appears that management at the home failed to take action against alleged abusers of the children, even after complaints.

"Just like the Holy Roman Catholic Church," Girardi, who is Catholic, laments.

Friedman walks out with a hug and kiss, and in walks author and appellate lawyer Alan Wilkerson. Wilkerson, an affable and boisterous man, wants to write a book with Girardi's career and the big cases he's handled.

"I don't want this to be some book about how bitchin' I am," Girardi says. "It's got to be something about how some person was great, how the jurors were great, or how some judge was great."

Wilkerson suggests maybe Girardi's voice would run through the entire book, but the focus would be on brave individuals who turned up at different points of his career.

"The heroes I knew," Girardi thinks aloud. "Judges with courage, clients with courage."

"I'm not modest," Girardi says, with a laugh, "I just don't want a bunch of shit."

Wilkerson exits and Girardi dials up Attorney General Bill Lockyer, a good friend. The two have a humorous conversation about the recall election and pledge to get together soon. With Schwarzenegger taking over, it seems the powers that be among Democratic circles have a lot to talk about.

"OK, sweetheart," Girardi calls out to Lockyer before hanging up.



At the start of each day, Girardi reviews a typed list of tasks to complete. If he gets 65 percent done, he says, then it's a good day. By the time 4:40 p.m. rolls around, he's not quite there yet.

"Well, let's get a beer," he says anyway.

Girardi's relaxant this afternoon is red wine, which he sips in the bar room of the Pacific Dining Car, just a few blocks from his office and west of downtown.

This is not happy hour for Girardi, who will work the phones and review cases for a few more hours at least. But he seems at peace. He talks with ease about a dozen different topics, from Rezulin to the recall, from the Kobe Bryant case to the trip he's planning to Cuba for the International Academy of Trial Lawyers. He talks the longest and with the widest smile about his wife, Erika, who, for some reason, doesn't mind going to all these lawyer events and always makes sure her husband wears the right suit.

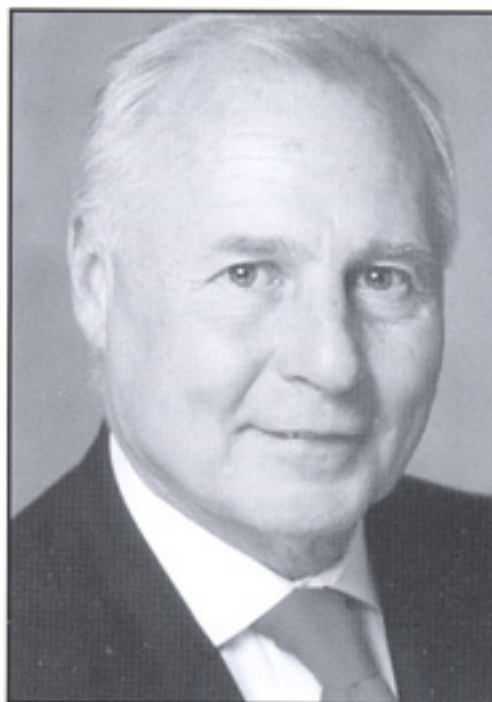
Girardi enjoys a second glass of wine and repeats something he has said throughout the day when he's had a moment to himself: "It really is a wonderful life."

TOP 100

Thomas V. Girardi

Partner, Girardi & Keese,

Los Angeles — As if he needed more notches on his belt, Girardi represented consumers in a \$1.7 billion settlement with El Paso Corp. for manipulating natural gas prices. And, typical of his never-ending crusade to lift the unfortunate, he netted a \$35 million settlement for a brain-damaged girl injured at a Vons supermarket and \$45 million for a child paralyzed by a defective seat belt in a Ford minivan.



—*“The best plaintiffs’ trial lawyer in America, no ifs, ands or buts about it.”*