

Girardi honored by his peers

Attorney named to lead elite group

By Kevin Smith

STAFF WRITER

PASADENA — Attorney Tom Girardi enjoys his work — especially when he's fighting for a worthy cause or putting corporate wrongdoers in their place.

The 64-year-old Pasadena resident was recently rewarded for his dedication to the legal profession when he was elected president of the **International Academy of Trial Lawyers**.

The organization includes 500 of the nation's top attorneys and supports such tenets as the preservation of the jury system and an honest selection of unbiased judges.

Inclusion into the Academy — the world's most prestigious organization of trial lawyers — is not taken lightly.

"You have to pass muster on ethics and integrity," said Girardi, who was the



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lead attorney in winning \$333 million in 1998 against **Pacific Gas and Electric**, which contaminated the drinking water in Hinkley.

The case was later immortalized in the movie "Erin Brockovich."

Girardi, who has won more than 100 verdicts and arbitration awards of at least \$1 million each, joined the Academy in 1978 as its youngest member. Being elected president, he said, is a thrill.

"There may be a finer honor that trial lawyers can get ... but I can't come up with one," he said. "When you have all of these lawyers from across the country who have handled these incredible cases saying 'You're our president,' that's pretty good stuff."

Academy member Walter Lack, a Los Angeles-area attorney, said Girardi's credentials as a person and lawyer are impeccable.

"He's the finest human being I know and one of the three best trial lawyers in the country," he said. "He's often quoted as saying he's a sucker for a sad story."

Girardi said his work is what keeps him vital.

"I can hardly wait to get to work in the morning," he said. "The excitement of the next day is phenomenal to me. I love having the opportunity to look at very serious cases of corporate America putting its thumb on the scale. That's what's so fun about it."