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## Briefcase

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Michael A. O'Flaherty of Torrance and A. Tod Hindin of Encino and are the recipients of the Trial Attorney of the Year Award for 1987.

The award is given by Verdictum Juris, a magazine reporting civil jury verdicts in Southern California.

The winner of the award for outstanding defense attorney was O'Flaherty, a member of the O'Flaherty, Prestholt and Bennington law firm, which maintains offices in Los Angeles and Newport Beach.

In 1987, O'Flaherty successfully defended his client in all five cases he tried. The cases ranged in type from medical malpractice to products liability and automobile accidents. He has been practicing law in the Los Angeles area since 1973 and is currently a member of the Southern California Defense Counsel. His wife, Tina, is his office manager and they have three children.

After completing law school at the University of Southern California, O'Flaherty joined

the law firm of Dryden, Harrington and Swartz, first as an associate and later as a partner. He stayed with the firm until 1983, until he left to start his own firm.

On May 1, his firm will change its name, to O'Flaherty, Belgum and Presthold.

For O'Flaherty, the major advantage to being a defense lawyer is being able to do the job right. "You can afford to get high-quality expert testimony," he said.

But a good defense lawyer must work to overcome a jury's national sympathy for a plaintiff, O'Flaherty said. "You have to constantly be looking for ways to impress the jury with your preparation," he said.

Another essential ingredient is the ability to think on your feet, he said. O'Flaherty describes his courtroom style as aggressive. He paces the courtroom as he works. "You can't go by a script. You can't function that way and expect to be any good," he said.

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