

# Daily Journal

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## 20 TO WATCH UNDER 40

### Sleepless in Somewhere

For more than a week during the first half of January, the message on Paul J. Loh's voice mail at Willenken Wilson Loh & Lieb in Los Angeles said the attorney was out of the country.

The logical assumption during the post-holiday rush: He was cashing in on a little accrued vacation. No chance. He was in Taiwan, working on an antitrust case.

"A vacation?" the 39-year-old repeated, after laughing aloud. "I haven't had one of those in years."

Colleagues say his diligence pays off. In late November, Loh extinguished the spark of a would-be class action brought against client Pacific Gas & Electric by plaintiff powerhouse William S. Lerach. The complaint said that Pacific Gas — similar to claims against other companies around the country — exceeded the scope of its utility-pole easements by renting out space on the poles for new technologies, such as fiber optics and cable TV wires.

At the pleading stage, Loh contested the jurisdiction of the San Francisco Superior Court to hear the case. His demurrer was granted without leave to amend. Loh said he believes Lerach will appeal.

At Willenken Wilson, a minority-owned litigation boutique where white-collar criminal defense and commercial litigation are a main focus, colleagues say Loh works at all hours of the day, coordinating strategies for cases and offering his help — even by e-mail at 2 a.m. — to the other nine attorneys in the firm he helped found.

"I don't know when he sleeps, to be honest," said associate William Delgado. "There's never been a time when I've asked for his help and he's refused. He's always ready to jump in, and if that means going without sleep, that's what it means."

Sitting at a conference table in his firm's



**Paul J. Loh, 39**  
*Willenken Wilson  
Loh & Lieb*  
**Position:** Partner  
**Law school:**  
Harvard Law  
School  
**Recent big case:**  
Won a demurrer  
quashing a class  
complaint against  
Pacific Gas &  
Electric.

Photo: Gerard Burkhardt

Wilshire Boulevard offices downtown, Loh deflects praise. Dressed in a blue button-down shirt, Wrangler jeans and Mizuno sneakers, the attorney attributed his success to the achievements of the firm and his colleagues.

"It's the whole firm," he said. "We're still in the process of trying to build our name. I think reputation is earned one case at a time, maybe one motion at a time, and definitely one client at a time."

Since Loh helped found the firm in 2002, he has seen it grow from four attorneys to 10, but perhaps a more significant sign of growth is its clientele, which includes several Fortune 500 companies. The firm represents Shell Oil, Hilton Hotels, Starbucks, FedEx, Starwood Hotels, ING, Nestle, Taco Bell and Hitachi, among others.

Manatt, Phelps & Phillips attorney David Elson faced off against Loh on a breach-of-contract case. The case settled confidentially.

"He always kept his eye on the ball, on what was really important from his client's and my

client's perspective," Elson said.

Loh's fellow name partner, Jason H. Wilson, said Loh's modesty and hard work impress him.

"He has a tendency to view everything as a team accomplishment and a tendency to minimize his own contributions, which are always substantial," he said. "His philosophy and the firm's is that the best way to do well is to do the work on your desk."

Loh was born in Taiwan but immigrated to the U.S. with his parents and two older brothers when he was 8. He grew up in Torrance before attending the University of California, Berkeley, and Harvard Law School.

Before he helped found Willenken Wilson, he had stints in Los Angeles at the district attorney's office, the entertainment-driven firm of Tarlow & Berk, and the public defender's office. Loh has two daughters with his wife of six years, criminal defense attorney Madeline Chang.

— Rebecca Beyer