

Shreveport native makes his mark on California courts

■ Lawyer's first case out of school culminated in \$5B settlement.

By J.L. Scott
The Times

Legal triumphs over corporate giants are nothing special in America today. But when a Shreveport native straight out of law school is part of one of the largest pharmaceutical legal settlements in history, hometown people celebrate.

Mark Blane, who is a California

attorney in the firm of Hiden, Rott & Oertle, got the opportunity to test his legal skills three months after a December 1998 graduation from Thomas Jefferson School of Law in California.

He took part in one of the largest pharmaceutical court settlements in U.S. history, a national \$5 billion court case against American Home Products — maker of the diet drug Fen-Phen.

With one big case to his credit, Blane, 30, is setting his sights on others.

As head of the firm's drug litigation team, he is preparing for a case

against Johnson & Johnson Corp., maker of Propulsid, an acid reflux medication that allegedly causes liver problems. He is getting ready for a separate case involving the Type II diabetes drug Rezulin.

"He was always a hard worker," said his dad, Homer Blane, 60, of Shreveport. Mark Blane graduated from Captain Shreve High School and went on to get two degrees from LSU-Shreveport — one in psychology and one in criminal justice, his dad said.

Blane worked his way through college and law school — while at LSUS, he was a waiter at Outback

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Steakhouse. During law school, he worked for the district attorney's office translating Spanish.

Blane was one of two lead attorneys from his law firm on the diet drug case. The other attorney was a fellow recent graduate, Chad McGuire.

"We really became involved in the case after we graduated because we

learned Chad's aunt developed a heart problem as a result of taking Fen-Phen for about two years," Blane said. "The fact that Chad's aunt was affected by the drug fueled our passion to provide the best representation we could."

The California class-action lawsuit was settled in December.

Blane continues to work in San Diego. He is pursuing a master's degree in business at San Diego State University, while juggling 75 new Fen-Phen cases that came after the settlement.

David Hiden, founding partner of Hiden, Rott & Oertle, said what



Blane



McGuire

Blane and McGuire accomplished in the Fen-Phen settlement at their ages and experience. "He demonstrated phenomenal litigation skills off the bat. Normally a case of this size wouldn't be turned over to an associate. But Mark and Chad both showed litigation skills of someone with at least 10 years of experience."