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TOP VERDICTS OF 2024

Meyer et al. v. Monsanto Co.

The case had been pending for years, but the trial was over on the third day. The plaintiff was a California-licensed pesticide applicator who developed non-Hodgkin's lymphoma and sued, along with his wife, blaming Monsanto Co.'s Roundup weedkiller for his disease.

But after hearing the defense's opening statement and watching video testimony from two witnesses, plaintiff Michael Meyer and his wife Bobbie abruptly told their lawyers to ask for a dismissal with prejudice.

"I could have fallen over with a feather," said co-lead defense lawyer Manuel F. Cachán of Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom. "I've never had that happen in court. It was crazy." *Meyer et al. v. Monsanto Co*. SCV-269068 (Sonoma Co. Super. Ct., filed Aug. 16, 2021).

Co-lead Jennifer L. Saulino of Sidley Austin said the Meyer couple had been present in the courtroom during two weeks of pre-trial litigation over how to present the science behind the defense. "Then, Manuel's opening focused on what the jury would learn about the science."

It was the seventh trial in California over product liability claims against Roundup. At least three of them — with lawyers other than the Cachán and Saulino team helming the defense — resulted in big awards against Monsanto.

Neither Cachán nor Saulino could say for certain what caused the Meyers to move for dismissal, though Cachán also used his opening statement to point out that he would present inconsistencies between Michael Meyer's answers in his deposition and in his interrogatories.

Still, both lawyers were surprised that the trial ended so abruptly. "Whatever you may think of Roundup — and we believe the science supports its safety — you still feel sad for folks going through a terrible disease," Cachán said. "It's a little delicate."

MANUEL F. CACHÁN

JENNIFER L. SAULINO

Plaintiff lawyer Brian A. Glasser of Bailey & Glasser said, "Jennifer and Manuel are excellent lawyers, and I would have enjoyed the opportunity to go the distance together. They obviously did a very good job in the case."

Cachán and Saulino work for different firms, but they team up to do Roundup defense together in court. The unusual partnership has turned out well. They have won three trials for Monsanto and obtained dismissals in a handful of other cases, they said.

"We met to discuss strategy while we were doing separate Roundup trials at the same time," Saulino said. "Now, we do trials together and split the work evenly." Added Cachán: "Sometimes one of us does the open and the other does the close, or the other way around."

"By this point, we even finish each other's sentences," Saulino said.

CASE DETAILS

CASE NAME	Meyer et al. v. Monsanto Co.
TYPE OF CASE	Product liability
COURT	Sonoma County Superior Court
JUDGE(S)	Christopher M. Honigsberg
DEFENSE LAWYERS	Skadden, Arps, Slate, Meagher & Flom: Manuel F. Cachán, Kristin M. Cobb, Alyssa Musante, Harry P. Koulos and Or-el Vaknin; Sidley Austin: Jennifer L. Saulino, Michelle A. Ramirez, Jaime R. Simon, Elizabeth Noel Ertle and Tyler G. VanderMolen
PLAINTIFF LAWYERS	Bailey & Glasser, Brian A. Glasser; Rueb Stoller Daniel, Gregory D. Rueb, Behram V. Parekh; Wool Trial Law, David J. Wool