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Jenner attorney who enjoyed pro bono dies at 43

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Brad Yusim was a legit life-saver.

As an associate at Jenner & Block in the early 2010s Yusim, along with now-former firm partner Jeffrey A. Kopyy, took on Texas death-row inmate Jimmie Urbano Lucero's case pro bono.

"We spent a lot of time together working on that case," Kopyy recalled. "We're down in the heart of Texas, not a very sympathetic place to be defending a murderer on death row."

In the beginning, Lucero did not trust the attorneys. But Yusim persisted.

"Brad was really skilled with the charisma that he had. He got Jimmie to open up and trust us a little bit more," Kopyy said.

Then Yusim and Kopyy got to work interviewing people involved in Lucero's case and found that during the penalty phase of his trial in Texas, important evidence such as the client's cognitive function and the lack of hours worked on the case by Lucero's defense attorney — less than 40 hours over several years, according to Kopyy — required a habeas corpus petition.

"Brad put that together and laid out the evidence," Kopyy said. "Brad took the lead. In the end, the Texas Court of Criminal Appeals, with the consent of the prosecutors, agreed to take him off of death row. They granted the petition of habeas corpus and Jimmie agreed to it.

"Brad literally saved his life," Kopyy said. "Jimmie didn't trust us and didn't talk to us until Brad started talking to him. Brad went down there and spent a lot of his time with him. It took away from opportunities Brad had to work on other cases with paying clients. But, it's because he believed in this guy getting a fair shake that he was able to communicate for him and present the evidence in a persuasive, compelling way that it literally ended up saving (Lucero's) life."

Yusim, 43, died Dec. 11 from glioblastoma, an aggressive form of brain cancer.

Yusim graduated from the University of Texas with an electrical engineering degree and earned his J.D. from University of Illinois College of Law in 2002.

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Yusim joined Jenner & Block as an associate in 2002 and became a partner in 2010. He focused his career on complex civil litigation with cases that ranged from business fraud, tortious interference with business expectancy, partnership and contract disputes, patent infringement and trade secret cases as well as Fifth Amendment regulatory takings.

Jason Rosenberg, the managing director with the diver-



Bradley M. Yusim

sified investment management platform firm of Sterling Partners, met Yusim when they were 6 years old and he saw first-hand how much practicing law meant to his life-long friend.

"He was more like a brother to me than a friend," Rosenberg said. "He loved advocating for his clients. He specifically relished his pro

bono work where he got to help disadvantaged folks and those aggrieved by the system. He was so passionate about that and he chose Jenner & Block because they encourage pro bono work."

Jenner & Block partner David Bradford worked with Yusim on four cases that went to trial — among dozens of other cases that didn't go to trial — and believes he was one of the best legal brief writers at the firm.

"He was on a terrific trajectory, he just kept getting better every year," Bradford said. "He was a great lawyer. He always focused on the critical issues and had great judgment about picking out what was important to the case.

"When Brad wrote briefs somehow the first two paragraphs would win the argument right there," he said. "You would read those first couple of paragraphs and you'd say 'I get it.' He wrote clearly and thoughtfully."

Bradford noted that there was an "outpouring" of support and emotion from numerous clients they'd helped together.

"He was just terrific in a courtroom," he said. "He was able to get people to acknowledge things that they might not want to acknowledge because of his examination skills and the straight-forward way he approached things."

Kopyy, now legal counsel for General Motors, remembers a true friend and colleague that went the extra mile for all his clients.

"Brad was more patient. He just had a way of connecting with people. He was able to connect with Jimmie Lucero," Kopyy said. "He just had a charisma about himself professionally and outside of work where people were drawn to him, felt comfortable and trusted him.

"There was nothing fake about Brad. He was a genuine, authentic person. He was a great friend."

A memorial service has been held.