

# Michael Maggio

Brad Dwin

One would be hard-pressed to find the logical connection between a Russian millionaire, a Guatemalan housekeeper, a Bolivian scholar, a feminist writer and Elian Gonzalez.

Of course, if one knew Michael Maggio then the answer would be obvious.

As one of the nation's foremost immigration and human rights attorneys, Maggio represented these individuals, and scores like them, over the course of his 30-year legal career.

A founding partner of Maggio & Kattar in Washington, D.C., a frequent lecturer on immigration law and an adjunct professor at several law schools including WCL, Maggio left a legacy of passion and commitment to human rights and championing the causes of those less fortunate before losing his own battle with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma in February.

His casework and reputation for controversy were legendary and he certainly did not go about his work quietly. In fact, Maggio once referred to the Washington office of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as similar to "Dante's rings of hell." He even opened the first day of the semester once by telling his students that lesson number one in immigration law was "never get into bed with the INS."

In addition to being one of the legal advisers to Elian Gonzalez's father during the high-profile drama that unfolded in 2001, Maggio was involved in several cases that rewrote the laws governing human rights. Most notably, the groundbreaking case of *Filariga v. Pena*, which established new parameters for the United States' courts to penalize non-citizens for crimes committed in other countries.

Maggio was often at the forefront of politically charged issues. He was extremely active in his opposition to the United

States' policies in South America and Central America in the 1970s and 1980s. In fact, he took on the cases of several individuals from those countries who sought asylum. He even represented Iranians who opposed American policies in the Middle East.

But despite his reputation for fighting for the "little guy" and his involvement in sometimes unpopular political scenarios, Maggio was an educator at heart. And his presence is still felt not only at the firm he founded with his wife, Candace, in 1978, but also at WCL.

"Michael was a dynamic teacher, who was engaging and not afraid to make controversial statements. He shaped understanding of immigration issues and gave them passion," recalls Jim Alexander, managing partner of Maggio & Kattar.

And not only does Alexander know that from working at Maggio & Kattar for 14 years, but he also took Maggio's course at WCL while he was a student. Managing partner John Nahajzer also took Maggio's course.

Even though the WCL family and the legal community has lost one of its true warriors, Michael Maggio's dedication to education will live on in the form of the Michael Maggio Student Award in Immigration Law. The award will be given annually to a student who shows commitment to immigration law through pro bono work, WCL clinic work, articles published about immigration law and internships/externships. The fund will be supported by Maggio & Kattar and matched by the school.

"This award truly memorializes a man who was dedicated to teaching. He loved this institution, so Dean Grossman reached out to Michael's colleagues in order to make this happen in Michael's honor. And it is certainly a fitting tribute. Students liked his teaching style, his passion and his enthusiasm. Quite simply, Michael Maggio

inspired them," notes Trishana Bowden, associate dean for Development and Alumni Relations.

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