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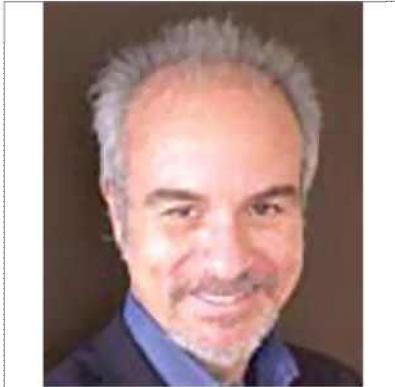
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Posted on Tue, Feb. 12, 2008

Michael Maggio, immigration lawyer

By JOHN F. MORRISON
 Philadelphia Daily News
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SAVE AND SHARE



PETER "JAMIE" MAGGIO discovered in Washington, D.C., what impact his uncle, Michael A. Maggio, had on oppressed people longing to live in the freedom of America.

They took a cab one day to get to court, and when they arrived at their destination, the driver refused to take payment.

"He excitedly told Michael that he was the reason that the driver and his family were able to live and work in America as citizens," Jamie said. "That is when I began to comprehend his impact on humanity."

Michael Maggio, a native Philadelphian who became a highly regarded immigration lawyer, often representing people from around the world who came to the United States for asylum, died Sunday after a 10-month battle against non-Hodgkins lymphoma. He was 60 and lived in Washington.

Among the cases he handled was that of Elian Gonzalez, the 5-year-old boy caught in a struggle between his relatives in Florida and his father in Cuba that created international headlines in 2000.

In that case, Michael and his team of lawyers represented the boy's father, Juan Miguel, and succeeded in seeing to it that Elian returned to Cuba.

"The rights of a poor father trump the perceived rights of wealthier distant relatives," he said at the time.

Justice and human rights were the keystones of Michael Maggio's legal philosophy. And he didn't let political considerations interfere with his pursuit of those goals.

He came from a prominent Philadelphia family. His grandfather, Michael Maggio, founded M. Maggio Co., Inc., the Philadelphia cheese company, which was taken over by Michael's late father, Peter J. Maggio, after the elder Maggio's death.

Michael was a nephew of Angelo Bruno, the "gentle don" who headed the Philadelphia Mafia before his murder in 1980.

Michael was born in Philadelphia and grew up in East Falls. His mother was Michelina Maggio. He attended Chestnut Hill Academy and later the Hun School in Princeton. After attending Georgetown, he graduated from Temple in 1971. He lived in Berkeley, Calif., for a time, then graduated from the Antioch School of Law in 1978.

While teaching an immigration law class at Antioch, he fell in love with a student, Candace Kattar. They were married in 1982. They traveled extensively and maintained homes in Washington, Miami Beach and Culpeper, Va., where they had a farm.

Michael was the co-founder and chairman of Maggio & Kattar, which began as a one-room office on Columbia Road, in Washington, in 1978. It expanded rapidly, moved to DuPont Circle and now employs 30 immigration professionals who represent individual foreign nationalists, Fortune 500 companies, nonprofits and universities and other institutions worldwide.

"He was a brilliant legal mind who not only interpreted the law without peer, but he also recognized that justice could only be served by changing it," said Jose Pertierra, friend, colleague and tennis partner.

The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, the American Immigration Lawyers Association and the National Immigration Project of the National Lawyers Guild honored Michael on Oct. 26, 2004, "for his courageous and visionary work in defending immigrant rights and, in so doing, strengthening the constitutional rights of all U.S. residents and citizens."

Besides his wife and mother, he leaves a brother, Peter.

Services: Funeral Mass 11 a.m. Thursday at St. Bridget's Church, 3667 Midvale Ave. Friends may call at 9:30 a.m. A memorial service will be held Saturday, March 8, at Johnny's Half Shell, 400 N. Capitol St. NW, Washington, D.C. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Identity, 414 E. Diamond Ave., Gaithersburg, Md. 20877. *

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