

April News: DREAM, Trial and Case Highlights, AFD Vanessa Pai-Thompson Receives Award, and Remembrance of Former FPD Investigator Lydia Serafin

Drug Reentry Alternative Model (DREAM) Court

In April we had two clients graduate from DREAM. Both graduates previously suffered from opiate addiction: one after being introduced to prescription opiates following surgery, and the other after nearly 25 years of general drug and alcohol abuse. Both overcame their opiate addictions, succeeded in treatment, and gained employment. Both now live in stable home environments. Congrats to these two new graduates!

Case News

Split Verdict in Jury Trial

Seattle AFDs Vanessa Pai-Thompson and Dennis Carroll achieved a split verdict in a jury trial in which their client was charged in one count with conspiracy to violate the Act to Prevent Pollution by Ships (APPS) and the Clean Water Act, and a separate substantive count of violating APPS. The client was, for a brief time, the captain of a commercial fishing vessel. He was accused of pumping an oil/water mixture from his bilge while at sea. The jury returned a verdict of not guilty on the conspiracy count, but found the client guilty on the substantive APPS count. The defense team consisted of paralegals Patricia Stordeur, Suzie Strait, and Barbara Hughes, investigator Chelsea Whittler, and AFD Vicki Lai, as well as most of the Seattle office.

Illegal Re-entry Case Dismissed

Seattle AFDs Sara Brin, Jesse Cantor, and Greg Murphy were successful in getting a 1326 case dismissed. The client was charged with 1326 illegal re-entry. The underlying deportation order found the client to have been deportable because of an aggravated felony (a felony drug conviction from 2001). But it turned out that the client never had been convicted of an aggravated felony in the first place. The criminal history printout from discovery showed a 2001 felony conviction for drugs, but the judgment and sentence revealed that the 2001 felony was actually reduced to a misdemeanor. The sad thing about this case is that the client had previously been convicted twice of 1326 for illegal re-entry with an aggravated felony in the Southern District of Texas, where he received 15 months on one and 18 months on the other—meaning that he served close to three years in prison for a wrongful conviction. Paralegal Emily Ziel and Senior Legal Assistant Alma Coria assisted on this case.

Staff News

AFD Vanessa Pai-Thompson received LACA's '40 Under 40 Rising Star Award'

At its annual spring dinner on April 6, the Law Alumni of Color Association (LACA) at New York University School of Law recognized AFD Vanessa Pai-Thompson as a '40 Under 40 Rising Star.' This year's dinner marked the 40th anniversary of the alumni association, which serves as an umbrella organization for all NYU Law alumni of color (<http://www.law.nyu.edu/alumni/alumniassociations/laca>). In a letter to Pai-Thompson regarding the recognition, LACA Executive Board President Rafiq Kalam Id-Din II described: *"As part of the dinner program, we honored our founders and inaugural leadership team for their vision, courage, and leadership. We also acknowledged our special group of 40 Under 40 Rising Stars, of which you are one. You represent the future of this illustrious alumni association—as you help to right the wrongs in our society, defend the vulnerable, become a champion for social justice, and emerge as a leader in your chosen area of practice."*

Former FPD Investigator Lydia Serafin's Passing

Lydia Serafin passed away at the age of 74 on March 29, 2018, in Las Cruces, New Mexico, where she had moved after retiring from the Federal Public Defender. Lydia worked for the Seattle FPD from 1989 to 2001. Before we snagged her from the former ACA public defender office in King County, Washington, she had a deep and varied career as an investigator. She started out with the DA's Office in Denver, Colorado in 1974, before moving to the Colorado FPD Office in 1979. While working at the FPD Lydia earned her bachelor's degree in criminal justice. Then, consistent with her adventuresome spirit, Lydia moved to Minnesota in 1982 and worked for the Hennepin County Attorney's Office as a victim/witness assistant helping folks get necessary social services and being a liaison between witnesses, prosecutors, and law enforcement. She then came to Seattle in 1982, working for the Office of Public Defense as a screener and interpreter, and in 1985 became a felony unit investigator at ACA.

When she applied for the investigator position with our office, she received rave reviews from ACA lawyer Mark Prothero, who spoke of her diligence, creativity, and excellent interview skills. While at the FPD she worked cases with all of the lawyers. One of the AFDs wrote an extensive complimentary memo to Tom Hillier about Lydia's work on two cases, describing her as "an invaluable ally" who was dedicated and demonstrated initiative and follow-through on two specific cases, and more generally on all of her work. She was described as an excellent witness when called to testify.

Lydia moved to Las Cruces, New Mexico, to be closer to her family. Former FPD paralegal Ginnie Wilkerson stayed in regular contact with Lydia, and she and former AFD Carol Koller both have happy memories of visiting her at her beautiful home in Las

Cruces. Even in retirement Lydia remained an active ally for the defense. A CJA lawyer in Albuquerque, who became Lydia's friend after an introduction by Carol, spent a week at Lydia's home in Las Cruces while trying a case there. She describes turning Lydia's den into a temporary office, the floor covered with documents. Lydia provided her not only lodging, nourishment, solace, and a workspace, but also helped serve subpoenas and organize documents. Says the attorney, "The AUSA had support services from the entire Las Cruces branch of his office. I had Lydia."

Lydia suffered from a number of health problems but remained active and engaged in crafting, making jewelry, and listening to music. She relished the role of being the beloved aunt and great aunt to a large and loving family.

She was survived by a sister and five brothers, all from El Paso, Texas. Lydia was born in Socorro, Texas. A memorial service was held in El Paso, Texas on April 7, 2018. *See* <https://www.legacy.com/obituaries/elpasotimes/obituary.aspx?n=lydia-r-serafin&pid=188639292&fhid=7167>.