

In Memoriam: Keith Queensen

Keith Queensen, head of the legal writing and appellate department at YJBV, passed away this February. Keith was an invaluable member of the firm and is dearly missed both personally and professionally by his colleagues. In his time at YJBV he hired and mentored attorneys, such as Chris Moreland, Paula Jossart and John Magnuson, who today make the YJBV research department one of the strongest, brightest and most vigorous in the county.

Keith earned his law degree from the University of Minnesota Law School and came to YJBV in 1991. He treated everyone with the same respect and thoughtfulness he had for the law, and lawyers on both sides of an argument regarded him as a tough advocate for his clients and as a gentleman. He was a writer, an adviser, a master of appellate argument, and a researcher who excelled at finding the perfect legal point. His acute legal mind and articulate analysis were instrumental in securing numerous case victories, and the briefs he wrote were artful and detailed, while making compelling arguments on behalf of those who needed a voice and a champion for their cause.

In a 2003 amicus brief filed with the U.S. Supreme Court, Keith helped successfully to fight off an attempt by the railroad industry to undermine the FELA by shifting some of their own liability to third parties. Keith argued that this judicial change in the FELA would essentially eliminate some basic rights and safety protections, leaving workers at the mercy of corporate interests. In a decision that will influence FELA law for years to come, the Court overwhelmingly agreed with Keith's position. The brief and Court decision are a testament to the great skill Keith brought to his work and his unwavering commitment to protecting the rights of injured railroad workers and their families.

Keith's spirit of fighting for the downtrodden lives on in precedents set throughout the country. His articulate words survive in his briefs and motions. His patience and respect continue in those who were honored to work with him. He will be dearly missed and the thoughts of everyone at YJBV are with Miriam, Julianne and Ronny, the family that meant so much to him. 