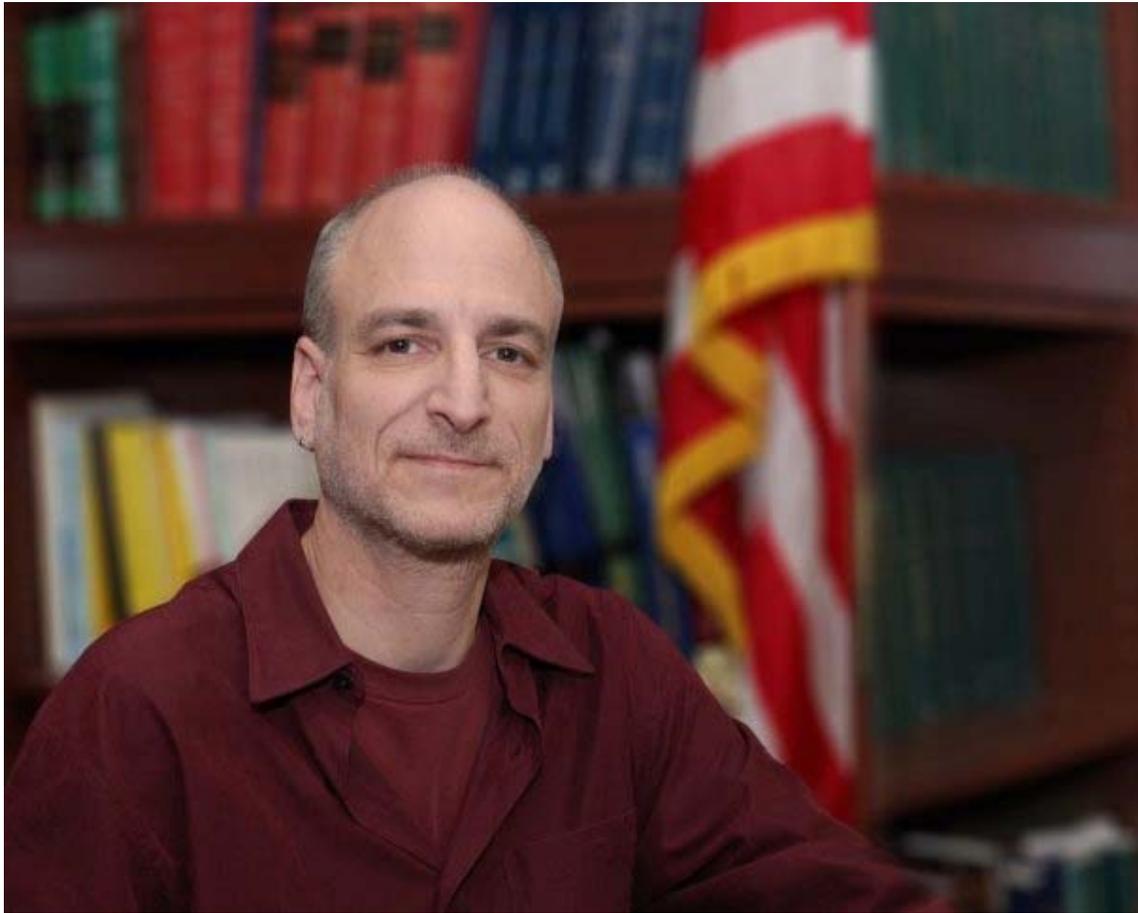


Matthew Baxter, former Philadelphia Chapter Chair, Remembered Fondly

By William Stock, Joe Hohenstein, and Judi Bernstein-Baker



On September 15, 2011, Philadelphia AILA member Matthew Baxter passed away from complications of liver disease. He would have turned 54 later this month.

We remember Matthew as one of the treasures of the Philadelphia chapter. Matthew was one of those members who makes this association possible. He was always willing to teach his fellow members, whether at a CLE put on by AILA, on a phone call, or in the hallway outside immigration court. His mentoring emails kept coming even from his hospital bed. He served ably as Chapter Chair, making sure the organization was serving all the members in the Philadelphia area with education, advocacy and practice support. His year as Chapter Chair coincided with AILA's annual conference in Philadelphia, but he handled the local arrangements with his usual selfless efforts. In the years since, he shouldered the thankless tasks of liaison with USCIS and EOIR, tirelessly – but never disrespectfully – letting them know the problems within their organization, but also offering solutions rather than just complaining.

Matthew cared deeply about his clients and doing the best job possible for them. He was an excellent lawyer, and brought several years' experience in commercial litigation to the immigration practice he founded in Philadelphia in the early '90s. His cases were meticulously prepared and elegantly argued. Whether a bond application before an IJ, an Outstanding Researcher immigrant petition, or a petition for review in the Third Circuit, his work gave his clients their best chance for success. He was never satisfied with a flip answer to questions of case strategy or legal interpretation, and would make sure every point of proof necessary under the regulations was presented in every case. He loved the law and he understood how to use it as a tool for justice.

Matthew was generous with his time not only to AILA, but also as a volunteer for the Philadelphia Bar Association's Volunteers for the Indigent Program and the Philadelphia chapter of the Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society, on whose board he served for over 15 years. Matthew's caring for his clients extended beyond their legal representation. For example, he represented an ill homeless Ukrainian man, for whom he secured deferred action. He then worked with HIAS to contact numerous organizations to find housing for him. Through his volunteerism, he was able to multiply his generosity a thousand fold.

More than anything, we remember Matthew's love of life, and of good food shared with good friends. He was one of those people whose deep respect and care for other people was evident even to those who only met him briefly or knew him socially. He was the consummate gentleman, speaking just as respectfully and listening just as carefully to the conversation of our teenaged daughters at family picnics as he did to his fellow lawyers at an AILA meeting and to his clients in his office. To those of us who knew him well, he was the kind of friend with whom you could share your joys or sorrows, or just spend time, and feel better when you left than before you'd arrived.

We will miss you, Matthew, and honor your memory by trying to take a little more time to treasure the others around us and share with them in the way you shared with us.