

# Sandra Jaggard, state lawyer who worked most Miami death-penalty cases, dies at 51

Known for her encyclopedic command of the law, Florida senior assistant attorney general Sandra Jaggard helped keep some of Miami's most notorious killers on Death Row.

Jaggard was a unique person with a unique job.

A one-time engineer who worked on the Space Station, Jaggard forged a niche as the prosecutorial authority on capital litigation in South Florida, writing complex briefs, making concise arguments before judges and earning the trust of people whose loved ones had been murdered, sometimes decades before.

Jaggard died unexpectedly Tuesday of a suspected heart attack. She was 51.

Her death stunned colleagues at Miami's criminal courthouse, where Jaggard was a fixture not only in arguing appeals but helping prosecutors.

"I always marveled at her legal talents. Sandy was the go-to person if you needed a case on point or wanted a sounding board to explore legal arguments," said Associate Deputy Attorney General Carolyn Snurkowski, a colleague of more than two decades.

"She was a brilliant lawyer," said Miami-Dade Assistant State Attorney Penny Brill, the head of her office's legal bureau who worked alongside her on appeals. "It's such a loss to both offices. She meant so much to us."

Jaggard was born May 2, 1965, in Woodbury, New Jersey. Along with her family, she moved to Huntsville, Alabama, and later attended Vanderbilt University, earning a degree in biomedical engineering in the early 1980s.

Her father, a physician, died at age 52, also of a heart attack.

After college, Jaggard worked at Boeing, focused on the life-support module for the Space Station, according to her family and friends.

Jaggard later moved to South Florida, where she enrolled at the University of Miami's law school. She graduated in 1994 and was soon hired at the Florida Attorney General's Office.

It was here that she built her reputation working in the complex field of capital litigation, working to keep intact convictions and death sentences. She could recite minute details from transcripts of a decades-old trial, every sort of criminal-court rule and arcane and complex case law.

"She had a phenomenal memory," said Miami-Dade prosecutor Fleur Lobree, her best friend and longtime roommate. "She was really an intellectual person. She liked the intellectual challenges of the most significant cases."

Jaggard wrote the briefs and did oral arguments in the notorious 1994 [torture murders of Frank Griga and Krisztina Furton](#), committed by a crew of Miami bodybuilders.

The convictions and death sentences for the killers, Daniel Lugo and Adrian Noel Doorbal remain intact. Her work remains the authority on racketeering murder cases, said Miami-Dade prosecutor Gail Levine, who tried the case and worked often with Jaggard.

"She really felt the pain of Frank and Krisztina," Levine said. "She had a passion for what she did. She understood the difference between good and

evil."

Jaggard spearheaded the appeals virtually every major death-penalty case in Miami-Dade, including [Thomas Knight](#), who murdered a husband-and-wife and a prison guard; [Manuel Pardo](#), the ex-Sweetwater cop who became a serial killer, and [Marshall Lee Gore](#), a serial rapist and killer. Each man was executed in recent years.

"Sandra Jaggard was a tenacious and passionate lawyer who spent her career protecting victims and Florida's citizens from the most violent criminals," Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi said. "She will be greatly missed."

Before she died, Jaggard was handling 27 capital cases. For the scope of her work, she was honored for "outstanding appellate advocacy" by the Association of Government Attorneys in Capital Litigation in 2010.

In court, Jaggard had a tough exterior with a wry sense of humor, her colleagues remembered — but she never failed to mentor young lawyers.

"Her heart of gold was always just below the surface," Snurkowski said. "She prided herself as being tough but in fact was a very warm and caring person."

Outside of court, Jaggard loved cooking and baking, marking every holiday season by passing out fudge and other treats to fellow lawyers. She also loved to travel. Despite an often-punishing work schedule, Jaggard rarely missed a holiday gathering with her siblings and eight nieces and nephews.

"She was a pretty doting aunt, exceptionally so," said her brother, John Jaggard.

Jaggard is survived by her siblings: Susan Jaggard-Ottemiller, Cindy Jaggard-Everett, Clarence Jaggard Jr. and John Jaggard. Services are pending.