

2006 40 under forty

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40 Illinois Attorneys Under Forty to Watch

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Jim Navarre Age 38

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Law School:

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Area of Practice:

Personal Injury and Medical Negligence

All attorneys tackle their share of difficult cases. Few, though, present the kind of challenges Jim Navarre faced in the case of *In re: Brown*.

The young attorney, then working in the Juvenile Justice Bureau of the State's Attorney's office, represented a client who not only didn't want his help, but actually resisted his efforts to provide her with legal representation.

Navarre, now a personal injury attorney with the Chicago law firm of Cogan & McNabola, was representing the interests of an unborn child whose mother was a Jehovah's Witness. The mother, who was 8 months pregnant faced a medical emer-

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gency and needed blood transfusions for her survival and that of her unborn child. The mother's religious beliefs, though, caused her to refuse all medical treatment.

This wasn't the only difficulty. Navarre also had to convince the Juvenile Court of its own jurisdiction, based on a child that was not yet born. He also needed, to convince the court that the medical interests of this unborn child outweighed the mother's right to refuse medical treatment which conflicted with her religious beliefs. Navarre had to negotiate all these issues while under the glare of the media, which had latched onto the high-profile case.

The result Navarre persuaded the court to order the medical treatment that ensured the mother's safety and protected her unborn child who is alive today because of the ruling.

The case is just one example of Navarre's deft legal skills, say his peers.

In another high profile case, Jim Navarre represented a public defender who was being sued for professional negligence by a former client. The public defender's former client was convicted of sexual assault and subsequently exonerated by DNA evidence. At trial, Jim's cross examination of the plaintiff and plaintiff's main expert resulted in a verdict in favor of his client. This case represents the first and last time that a public defender will be sued for negligence.

"Jim is a 'real' lawyer and an unbelievable trial attorney," said Robert Muriel, with the Chicago law firm of Muriel Renner, LLC. "He is understated and does not seek any attention to himself. He has simply excelled at every stage of his career through excellence and hard work."

Navarre again showed his abilities while handling in a period of four weeks two double-jury cases.

Most attorneys never get the opportunity to try a single double-jury case in their careers. Navarre, though, faced the challenge of handling two in one month. Navarre's fellow attorneys credit him with handling both cases with skill.

"He deftly handled the preparation of and presentation of what amounted to four separate juries with relative ease," said Michael Nolan of Chicago's The Law Office of Michael J. Nolan, P.C. "He put on several expert witnesses, cross-examined the defendants and gave skilled and impassioned closing arguments. He did a truly outstanding job."

Those nominating him say that they long knew that Navarre was destined for a stellar legal career. At the State's Attorney's Office, for instance, Navarre became one of a small number of attorneys in the appeals group who earned promotion to supervisor status. He eventually became the first chair at the criminal courts building at 26th Street and California Avenue. He became a partner at Chicago firm Hinshaw & Culbertson and made a quick impact at his current firm, Cogan & McNabola. Shortly after arriving here, he helped secure a million-dollar settlement against a well-regarded defense firm thanks to his skillful cross-examination of the defendant doctor and defendant's experts.

Navarre has also earned a reputation as someone who willingly helps his fellow lawyers.

"He is the type of person who is very approachable and will spend hours helping you solve your problem even if he has his own emergencies to deal with," Muriel said.

Jim Navarre