



BARTKO WINS TOP DEFENSE VERDICT

Honors and Awards

21, February 2024

By: Bartko Law

San Francisco, CA — The [Bartko](#) trial team from the In Re Francesca Naify case received a Daily Journal award as one of California's top five defense verdicts in 2023, and the top trust and estate case verdict. [Ben Riley](#), [Rob Bunzel](#), and [Sony Barari](#) tried the case over five weeks, with 93 hours of testimony. The case involved deceased United Artists theater tycoon Robert Naify and claims by his step-daughter that Naify did not provide his deceased wife with her full share of his \$2.3 billion in assets. The trial presented cutting-edge principals of probate and community property law, and a total damages claim of \$680 million.

The Bartko team established that most of Naify's wealth was separate property and that the petitioner's claims were barred by the statute of limitations and estoppel. San Francisco Superior Court Presiding Judge Anne-Christine Massullo issued her decision in February 2023, rejecting all of petitioner's claims and entering judgment for Bartko's clients, the successor trustees of Naify's trust. The Court's Judgment including the Statement of Decision may be found [HERE](#).

The article cites Riley's cross-examination of the petitioner, leading the trial judge to conclude she "was not a credible witness." The award also credits Riley's cross-examination of the petitioner's damages expert, resulting in findings by the court that the expert had included "several erroneous or unsupported items" and had double-counted at least \$2.3 million. Mr. Riley has now tried 30 cases to verdict with 17 months in trial.

The Daily Journal also recognizes the outstanding work by Sony Barari unearthing thousands of critical documents — some dating back 70 years. Barari's presented the voluminous documents through visual charts and summaries, synthesized "into digestible nuggets," establishing that nearly all Naify's assets were separate property.

Read the full [Daily Journal Top Verdicts article \(PDF\)](#).

About Bartko LLP

Bartko, established more than 45 years ago, is a boutique law firm specializing in national and international complex litigation and investigations, as well as real estate and franchising transactions. It is a 45+ lawyer firm dedicated to strategic cutting-edge representation of clients in California, nationally, and internationally. Bartko's practice areas include representing both plaintiffs and defendants in complex business, intellectual property, antitrust and competition claims, trade secret litigation, anticounterfeiting, trust and estate litigation, complex employment litigation, employment/labor strategic advice and collective bargaining, real estate litigation, and commercial real estate leasing, among others. Contact: [Ben Riley](mailto:briley@bartkolaw.com) | briley@bartkolaw.com | 415.291.4507

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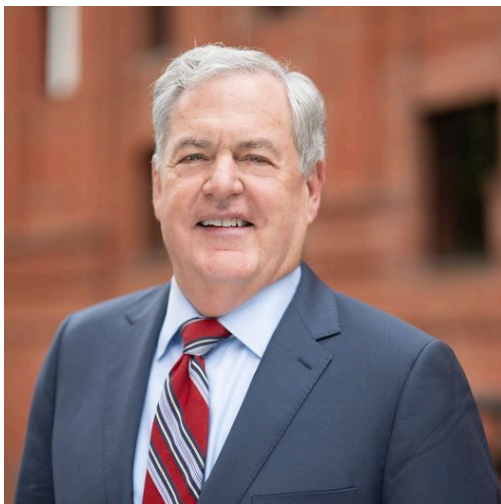
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