

The Buddy System

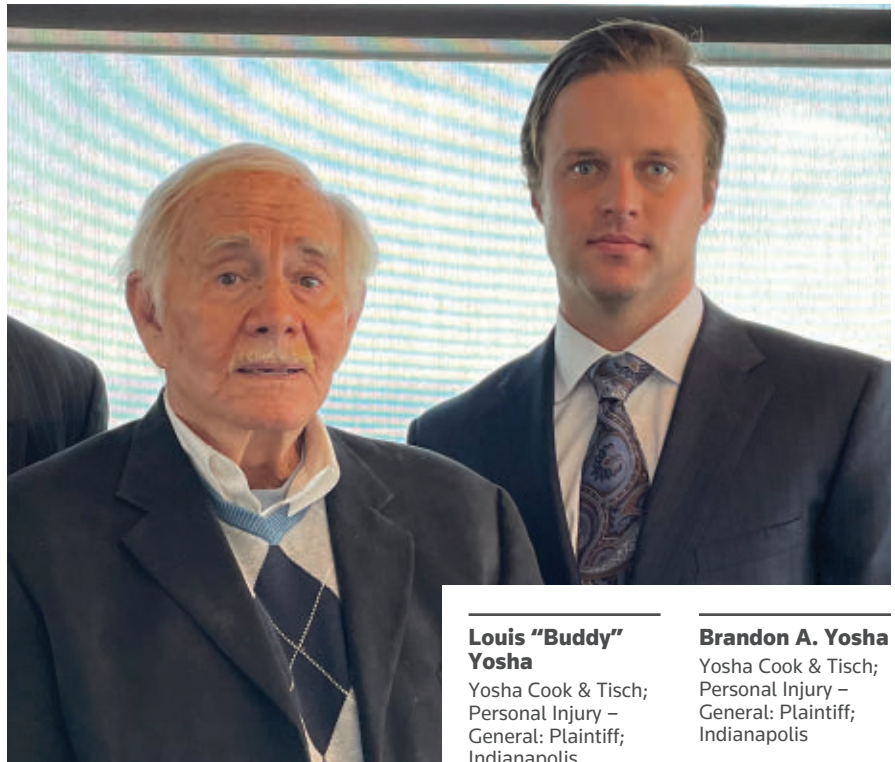
Buddy Yosha passes along six decades of legal experience to son Brandon BY AMY WHITE

The father-and-son duo of Louis “Buddy” Yosha and Brandon Yosha could make for a heck of a half-hour sitcom. As Buddy sits down for an interview at Brandon’s home, he grumbles, with a hint of smile, “Now I’m going to have to drive home in the cold after this because we couldn’t do this at my house.” When Brandon rolls his eyes as if to say “*This guy, am I right?*” you can almost hear the laugh track.

The dexterity with which these two trade stories and histories is a hallmark of not only their deep family bond, but also their legal partnership. They anchor at personal injury boutique Yosha Cook & Tisch in Indianapolis.

At 85, Buddy has six decades of law under his belt. He recalls the sound of a shattered lamp as it hit the floor after being the unintended target of 3-year-old Brandon’s football—a hint at what was to come for his son, who was the nation’s No. 7-ranked collegiate prospect running back before his NFL dreams were sidelined by an ACL tear in 2014. “That injury ultimately sent him to law school,” Buddy says.

Brandon, admitted to the bar in 2020, zeroes in on a moment a few years after the infamous broken lamp. “I fully expected football to be my life,” he says. “But there was a moment, when I was 14, that I



Louis “Buddy” Yosha

Yosha Cook & Tisch; Personal Injury – General; Plaintiff; Indianapolis

Brandon A. Yosha

Yosha Cook & Tisch; Personal Injury – General; Plaintiff; Indianapolis

particularly remember because it was the first time I heard my dad argue in front of a jury. The command he had, the stillness of the courtroom—you could have heard a pin drop. That made me interested in law.”

This past year, Brandon experienced that feeling again—but this time, he was at the table with his father. The two represented a woman who was injured after a car ran a red light and collided with hers.

“Jessica had life-altering injuries,” Brandon says. “She comes into our office and says, ‘My mom had a case with Buddy—’” “Twenty years ago,” Buddy interjects.

“Yes,” Brandon says. “She says, ‘He did an amazing job for her 20 years ago, and we just don’t think we’re getting treated fairly from the insurance company. Could you take a look?’”

At the jury trial, Brandon delivered the opening statement and closing argument; Buddy handled the rebuttal.

“I’ve only tried three cases in the last 20 years, but [overall] I’ve tried more than any lawyer in the history of the state: nearly 100 injury cases,” Buddy says. “Brandon gave the best opening argument of anybody you’d want to see, and he did it without a single note. I couldn’t do that.”

The jury returned a favorable result for their client—from an \$188,000 original offer to \$2.2 million in total damages. “They could sense not only our connection

to and love for our client, but our passion for effectuating justice, too,” Brandon says.

Brandon has been on the winning side of bigger verdicts—just five weeks removed from law school, he and fellow Yosha Cook & Tisch lawyers notched \$20.3 million in damages against Indianapolis Power and Light—but this one was special.

“It was an experience I will cherish for the rest of my life,” he says. “After delivering my hour-long opening, I returned to my seat, and I watched as my dad took out a big red Sharpie and wrote a big ‘A+’ on a notebook.”

“Brandon has moved quick out of the gate, quicker than me, and I moved fast,” says Buddy.

IN 1963, BUDDY RECEIVED what he calls “the best deal any kid ever got” when legendary Indianapolis real estate developer and then-lawyer Sidney Eskenazi invited him into his firm. “He said, ‘I’m gonna make you a millionaire before you’re 35.’ This was when a Cadillac was under \$5,000. The irony is he made me a millionaire before I was 30, but I lost it before I was 35. But that’s beside the point.”

The price of Cadillacs isn’t the only thing that’s changed over the years.

He compares the early days of his practice to the Wild West. “Ask any trial lawyer in the ‘60s or ‘70s,” he says. “And



105,296: The number of lawyers we selected nationwide in 2022.

then Vice President Dan Quayle, in the mid-'80s, gave a speech and says trial lawyers are ruining the country. As a result, we had tort reform, and practicing our kind of law nationwide became very difficult. That's one of the biggest things I've seen change over my career."

That, and lawyer advertising, which started in 1978. "You get these guys on TV," Buddy says, "and they say how much they'll get for your case and the truth is it's unusual for most of these guys to have ever been in a courtroom, other than the day they were sworn in."

"When Buddy started off, all of your cases came by word of mouth, and today it's much different, especially for a small operation like ours," Brandon says. "One thing that's been surprising and challenging for me is understanding where to get cases, because SEO and online marketing and digital marketing is so important. These huge lawyer billboards really changed the landscape of law."

But what happens in the courtroom is another story. "What Buddy and Nick Rowley, my other mentor, have always taught me is the bigger they are, the harder they fall, especially when you have a human story on your side," Brandon says. "Their biggest lesson is to find the human story. Connect with it, because jurors feel that connection."

As Buddy begins to slowly wind down at the firm and lets Brandon take center stage, he reflects on 20 years of being named to the Indiana Super Lawyers list. "I'll be a spectator now, and what a show," he says. "I'll be watching [Brandon] grow. His passion, and his composure, is really effective."

Brandon plans to operate the firm the way his father did. "You take the call and tell the story," he says. "I don't care who it is—a relative, friend of a relative, your barber—who was involved in a minor crash and the liabilities are kind of murky, and they're calling you for help? You answer.



The Yosha family, a couple decades before Brandon joined the family business.

That's what Buddy would do. We will never be a settlement mill that takes on as many cases as we can and doesn't truly serve clients. They settle for pennies on the dollar, then it's on to the next one. We answer the phone. We take the little guy. If I'm still practicing at 85, I'm going to be doing it exactly like Buddy." **SL**

SUMMATION

Mining the Info From Our 2023 List

Years in Practice

Out of 1,307 attorneys listed:



Top Law Schools

- INDIANA UNIVERSITY – ROBERT H. MCKINNEY** 642 LAWYERS
- INDIANA UNIVERSITY – MAURER** 257 LAWYERS
- VALPARAISO UNIVERSITY** 118 LAWYERS
- UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME** 30 LAWYERS
- THOMAS M. COOLEY** 14 LAWYERS

Oldest Listee



Youngest Listee



THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY ISSUE

When the first Indiana Super Lawyers list was published, the state's governor was Joe Kernan; its U.S. senators were Richard Lugar and Evan Bayh.