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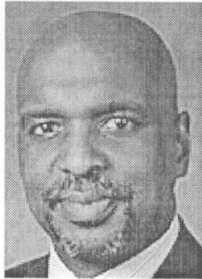
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Lawyer Keven Davis was a mentor to young artists

Keven Davis made it look so easy. One moment, the prominent attorney would be in his Seattle office negotiating a multimillion-dollar contract...

By Sonia Krishnan

Seattle Times staff reporter



Keven Davis made it look so easy.

One moment, the prominent attorney would be in his Seattle office negotiating a multimillion-dollar contract for an athlete. The next, he'd be on the court coaching his son's basketball team.

In between, the former Mount Baker resident managed to serve on a slew of community boards and devote himself to shepherding talented young artists through the legal morass of the entertainment industry.

But it was his job as a father that he took most seriously.

"He could be in the biggest negotiation of his life, but he would always take our call," said his son, Kahlil Davis, 30, of New York City. "He was never *not* there."

Mr. Davis, who represented clients from Sir Mix-A-Lot to Serena and Venus Williams, died Dec. 23 from brain cancer. He was 53.

A lawyer to the bone, "he was meeting with clients, sending emails and trying to close a deal until he couldn't anymore," said Faith Childs-Davis, his former wife.

Mr. Davis was born Oct. 7, 1958, in Sacramento, Calif., the son of a Brazilian-born housekeeper and an African-American military man. The Davises were one of the few black families in their neighborhood, said his older brother, Skip Davis.

Mr. Davis was the second of five children and as a boy, he earned the nickname "Smiley."

During Little League games, "every time he came to bat, whether he struck out or not, he'd be smiling," Skip Davis said.

That charm did not go unnoticed by Childs-Davis, who met Mr. Davis in 1978 when she was a 19-year-old student at Loyola Marymount University in Los Angeles.

Mr. Davis was 20. "He was the most popular guy on campus," she said.

He was whip-smart — yet approachable. Mr. Davis could talk to the president of the university as easily as the custodian, she said.

He also was driven to seek justice and fairness, which underscored his later work as a mentor for young artists, she said. The two fell in love and married in 1980.

Mr. Davis received his law degree from the University of California, Berkeley, and became the father of two sons.

The family moved to Seattle where Mr. Davis started practicing contract law for the firm Garvey, Schubert, Adams and Barer.

In 1999, Mr. Davis received a scare. He had been diagnosed with a brain tumor and needed surgery.

The tumor turned out to be benign, Childs-Davis said. The chances of it returning seemed slim to none, she said.

After the operation, Mr. Davis seemed more determined than ever to take advantage of life.

He established a sports and entertainment law practice in New York and, in 2001, moved his family to Manhattan.

His career seemed on fire. Mr. Davis earned recognition in 2003 from Sports Illustrated as one of its 101 Most Influential Minorities in Sports.

The magazine mentioned how, in 2000, he negotiated Venus Williams' \$40 million Reebok deal, "the biggest endorsement contract ever for a female athlete."

He also attended celebrity bashes, among those, P. Diddy's star-studded "White Party" in the Hamptons, said his longtime friend, Paul Toliver, of Seattle.

"It was part of his work. But we were all kind of envious of him," Toliver said, laughing.

Mr. Davis went to the hospital last year for more tests, which detected another tumor called glioblastoma multiforme.

This time, the doctors said it was only a matter of time.

Childs-Davis and their two sons cared for Mr. Davis as he grew weaker. He entered hospice last fall.

"He felt like there was a lot of unfinished business he had to take care of," she said.

Just before Christmas, with his family around him, Mr. Davis died.

Besides his former wife, son and brother, Mr. Davis is survived by his mother, Benedicta Davis, of Sacramento; siblings Kent Davis and Carol Davis, of Sacramento; son Noah Davis, of Los Angeles; and his grandson, Moses Davis, of Los Angeles.

A memorial service will be held in Sacramento on Jan. 14.

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