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Chicago attorney Paul Duffy dies

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Chicago attorney Paul Duffy, 55, died Monday from heart and alcohol-related conditions at a Chicago hospital.

According to a Cook County Medical Examiner spokesperson, the specific causes of death were atherosclerotic cardiovascular disease and chronic ethanolism.

Duffy had partnered with attorneys John Steele and Paul Hansmeier at Prenda Law, a Chicago firm that dissolved in 2013 after a federal judge in California hammered the trio for deceiving the court in a copyright infringement case.

U.S. District Judge Otis Wright of the Central District of California ordered their referral to the criminal investigation unit of the Internal Revenue Service, the U.S. Attorney in Central California and their respective state and federal bars where they practiced. Wright said the lawyers engaged in "brazen misconduct" with their attempts at "outmaneuvering" the legal system.

During his time with Prenda Law, Duffy was sanctioned elsewhere for creating shell companies in order to file copyright infringement and computer hacking suits to exploit court subpoena powers and extort settlements, according to court orders.

Most recently, Duffy was sanctioned by U.S. District Judge David Herndon on June 5 in *Lightspeed v. Anthony Smith* for engaging in "unreasonable, willful obstruction of discovery in bad faith."

The *Lightspeed* case was originally brought in St. Clair County and later removed to federal court by AT&T.

The firm brought other computer hacking suits in St. Clair County. Among them was a suit against Comcast seeking the identities of approximately 300 subscribers for plaintiff Guava LLC so that it could potentially sue those subscribers for illegally downloading pornographic content.

St. Clair County Circuit Judge Andrew Gleeson had allowed the case to go proceed until the Fifth District ordered the court to dismiss Guava's pre-suit discovery action.

Prenda also sued defendant Christopher Hubbard on behalf of LW Systems over the same type of allegations as in *Guava v. Comcast*, seeking identities of potential defendants. The suit was dismissed, but "John Does" sought sanctions against LW Systems claiming they were harassed and intimidated by the litigation.