

PAT SALVI '71: A MIGHTY GOOD COUNSELOR BY KATHERINE O'BRIEN '83



"My kids love to argue," people often tell Pat Salvi, Class of 1971. "They'd make great lawyers." But Salvi disagrees. "Just being argumentative does not make a good lawyer. A litigator must be competitive, someone who can withstand the anxiety of the adversarial system," he says. "He or she must hate to lose but can't be afraid to lose. You must be prepared for enormous stress as well as enormous exhilaration."

Salvi, a 1978 graduate of the Notre Dame School of Law, is one of the best known and well-respected personal injury lawyers in Illinois. In 1993, he served as President of the Illinois Trial Lawyers Association. The Illinois Supreme Court recently appointed Salvi to a three-year term as chairman of the Character and Fitness Committee. And his name is a fixture on Woodward/White's "The Best Lawyers in America" list—an annual survey in which lawyers rank their peers.

Salvi specializes in personal injury, medical malpractice and wrongful death cases. Prior to founding Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard in 1982, Salvi practiced law with his father. "We were very close," Salvi recalls. "He was the primary reason I became a lawyer."

Salvi's father had a general practice—he represented clients in real estate, divorce, personal injury and other cases. "I really wanted to get into court and try cases in front of a jury," Salvi recalls. "My heroes were trial lawyers—I admired their talent, tenacity, charisma and credibility."

Because general law practice cases seldom go to trial, as a young lawyer Salvi worked with the Public Defender's office. If the public defender had a conflict of interest, Salvi was one of a pool of outside lawyers who might

be summoned. The pay was modest but the experience was priceless as Salvi tried burglary, manslaughter and a variety of other cases.

"I was good at it," Salvi says. "But the trouble with criminal law is that your clients are criminals. It's a tough practice, you almost always lose. You might have lunch with a client one day and the next day he's spending 10 years in Stateville prison."

As a result, Salvi found himself gravitating to personal injury cases, particularly those involving medical malpractice. Some impressive early victories led to more referrals. "In the 1970s and early 1980s, medical malpractice wasn't an active component of most personal injury practices," he recalls. "It's expensive, complicated and can antagonize the medical profession. A lot of Lake County personal injury firms gave me their medical malpractice cases."

Salvi was selective about the cases he accepted. He built his reputation on meticulous preparation—a disciplined approach that gave him confidence in the courtroom and credibility among clients and adversaries alike. Attitudes shifted with the times—some people who once viewed the medical profession as sacrosanct took a different perspective, especially if they had a negative experience.

He defines success as "getting satisfaction and joy and having passion for [this] type of practice." He strives to find the balance between being a ferocious competitor and a compassionate man. "You don't become cold to it," he says. "A woman just called me about her 7-year-old daughter who was killed while riding her bike. These are stories that make me cry—I feel the pain."

Salvi and his fellow lawyers at Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard, including his eldest son, Patrick Salvi II '00, have represented many children. Pat Sr. and his firm have won over 170 jury verdicts and settlements of \$1 million or more, totaling more than \$600 million in various types of cases. One of Patrick II's clients, Christian Arroyo is an eight-year-old quadriplegic with cerebral palsy,

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a condition developed as a result of a neonatal blood infection that went untreated for 12 hours. Patrick II contended that Christian's doctors were negligent and secured a \$29.1 million verdict on his behalf. "My son is going to get all the care he needs for the rest of his life," Carlos Arroyo told the Sun Times. "That's all we care about."



When jurors hear the story of a brain-damaged child who will require round-the-clock care for the rest of his or her life, most can easily grasp the economic loss. Articulating mental grief and suffering into a loss can be challenging. "That's where a lawyer's skills come in," says Salvi. Pat Sr. and Patrick II also won the largest jury verdict in Lake County, a \$33.2 million verdict on behalf of a teenager paralyzed in an accident.

Salvi says much of the credit for his success must go to his family. "The life of a trial lawyer is very difficult," says Salvi. "You're consumed for weeks or months with cases." He met his wife Lindy during his third year of law school when she was a junior at Notre Dame's sister school, St. Mary's.

Married for 32 years, the Salvis have five sons. Patrick '00, David '03, Brian '05, Christopher '08 and William '09 are all Carmel grads. Mom and Dad have served on Carmel's Board of Directors and continue to generously volunteer their time on behalf of the school.

Most of the family currently can be found at Notre Dame. Christopher recently earned his letter on the football field; William is a theatre major and Brian is a second year law student. Since 2008, their father has served as an adjunct professor at the University of Notre Dame Law School—he's also chairman of the Notre Dame Law School Advisory Council.



Top Row: Chris '08, Will '09, Pat II '00, Dave '03, Brian '05;
Bottom Row: Lindy, Marita, Pat, Sr. '71

David, 26, the second oldest of the Salvi boys, shares Pat's enthusiasm for baseball—he is the Director of Marketing and Promotions for the professional minor league team known as the Schaumburg Boomers.

PAT SALVI:

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When Salvi isn't in the courtroom or class room, you might find him at the ballpark. He owns two area minor-league baseball teams: the Gary SouthShore RailCats, part of the American Association of Independent Baseball, and a recent acquisition, the Schaumburg Boomers, who play in the Frontier League.



"Being a sports owner is a lot of fun," Salvi says. "It's an opportunity to learn a different business; it's a whole different culture."

The RailCats play 100 games—Salvi has learned to pace himself to endure a typical season's roller coaster ride. "You can't treat every game like it's the seventh game of the World Series," he explains.

"Our manager, Greg Tagert is a very patient and calming influence. We've made the playoffs six years in a row."

As befits a Notre Dame grad, Salvi is an ardent sports fan. Christopher Wren had St. Paul's Cathedral. At Carmel, we have the Patrick A. Salvi Arena. "I'm very proud of that," says Salvi. "Of course it represents financial support rather than athletic prowess!"

Reflecting on his student days at Carmel, Salvi credits Fr. Peter's religion and philosophy classes with shaping his legal acumen. "He encouraged me; he told me I had a gift for public speaking. He gave me a great deal of confidence."

Salvi also recalls some misdemeanor scrapes with Fr. Simon, the dean of students. "I was good at talking my way out of trouble. He told me: 'I think you would make a fine lawyer!'"