



Pat Salvi

BY TJ SAYE

I've always been fascinated by the variety of reactions I get when I tell people that I work for Pat Salvi. This is especially the case when attending Lake County Bar Association events. Even those who haven't met Pat typically have an instant opinion of the man (I'm assuming due to years of Gridiron skits).

For some, Pat Salvi represents a certain toughness or intensity. Pat has never been afraid to raise his voice and pound a table or two to make a point. He can be a little intimidating. For others, his name represents the highest level of legal success and the personal wealth that comes with it. Not only is Pat a great trial lawyer, but as someone recently mentioned to me, "Pat also looks like what a great trial lawyer should look like." And for others, his name is associated with great generosity and kindness. Pat rarely passes up an opportunity to support legal foundations, community causes, or those in need.

For me, the man who helps run his law firm, Pat is all of the above. He's also a mentor and friend. In my career, which includes working for one of the world's largest law firms (Sidley), I have yet to meet a single lawyer who has more passion and drive than Pat Salvi, whether for the law, his clients, his family (especially his five sons), his employees, or even his favorite sports teams.

This isn't to say that working for

one of Lake County's most successful lawyers is easy. All due respect to the man who signs my paychecks, but soft spoken and patient are two attributes I probably wouldn't use to describe Pat Salvi! He goes from 0 to 100 mph faster than most, and I'm not talking about his driving. However, in his defense, passive doesn't get the job done when you're representing a spouse whose life was cut short due to a drunk driver, or the parent of a child brain damaged during birth, or a thousand other preventable catastrophic circumstances that have crossed Pat's desk over the years. This is a serious business that requires, or should I say—demands—toughness. Taking your eye off the ball for only a moment can have a devastating impact on your client and, ultimately, on your firm.

Clearly, Pat sets a high standard in everything he does. He demands nothing less than exceptional results. This philosophy drives those around him to be their very best as well. It's the same mentality he had on his 30th birthday when he started his own law

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firm here in Waukegan. Thirty-four years later, his vision and hard work have led to over \$1 billion in verdicts and settlements, including more than 215 cases with verdicts or settlements of \$1 million or more. An accomplishment not many firms nationally are able to achieve, let alone a small firm established in Lake County, Illinois.

A UNIQUE CHALLENGE

In 1978, just after graduating from Notre Dame Law School, Pat began his legal career working for his father, Albert S. Salvi, in Lake Zurich. During his first few years in practice, the younger Salvi was primarily a general practice lawyer who represented clients in real estate and divorce matters. Because general law cases very rarely made it to trial, Pat began working with the Public Defender's office in an effort to get trial experience.

Pat loved trying cases in front of a jury, and though he was quite good at it, it was often difficult on a personal level for him to represent alleged criminals. As a result, he soon found himself gravitating towards personal injury law, particularly medical malpractice cases. "I really admired personal injury lawyers, especially those that focused on medical malpractice cases," Pat told me. "Back then, only a handful of lawyers, mostly in Chicago, took on these high risk matters. I saw the incredible legal challenges, and my heart went out to the victims. These were the type of clients I wanted to represent."

In an effort to focus his practice on his passion, Pat broke away from his father's office and established his own law firm in Waukegan in January 1982. The Law Office of Patrick A. Salvi, P.C. was born.

Looking back, Pat took quite a risk when he left the comfort of his father's firm to handle complex medical malpractice and catastrophic personal injury cases. What other lawyers viewed as too difficult or too expensive Pat saw as a unique challenge—an opportunity to separate himself from his peers. As a result, inside the first few years of his new practice, Pat was winning several major, groundbreaking cases. In one case, Pat represented a hotel manager who suffered a back injury as a result of a traffic accident. He brought in an economist to prove loss of earnings, and was one of the first attorneys in Lake County to do so.

He was defying the odds and building a strong reputation in Lake County as a formidable and creative trial attorney. He was doing what he loved to do, and what few others locally were willing to do.

Through each case success, and as more clients requested his legal services, Pat brought on more people to assist him. One of those people was his friend and business partner, the late Michael Schostok, which led to the firm name transitioning to Salvi & Schostok P.C. in 1998. It changed once again to Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard P.C. in 1999, when David Pritchard joined us and helped establish the firm's Chicago office.

"I took a lot of heat from my defense firm colleagues when I made the switch over the plaintiff's side," joked David Pritchard who retired from the firm in 2015 and is now of counsel. "But the truth is, Pat's reputation had made its way down to Chicago years earlier and I was instantly intrigued by his talent. I walked away from our first meeting with the impression that he was a man of



great vision and he understood the benefits my defense background would have on the firm's clients. It proved to be a wonderful partnership."

METICULOUS PREPARATION

Those like Mr. Pritchard who have worked with Pat over the years have noticed a common theme to Pat's success: meticulous preparation.

"I remember that he was always working harder than his opponents would be," said Joseph Fusz, an associate at Salvi, Schostok and Pritchard from 2008 until 2010. "There were times he would be e-mailing me about cases at 4:30 in the morning. And when he would go on vacation, he would call into the attorney briefings. If there was one take away, Pat impressed upon me the importance of preparation."

I can assure you, those late night and early morning e-mails, text messages, and phone calls continue today. Pat's mind rarely rests.

"His preparation made him very efficient," said John Kornak, an associate at the firm from 1994 until 2003 and currently with the Law Offices of Thomas J. Popovich. "He always put the time in. To this day, I rarely take Saturdays off, a habit I likely picked up from my former boss."

Matthew Dudley, another past firm attorney who worked for Pat from 1996-2001 agreed. "Some lawyers have this ridiculous idea that you can wing it, that maybe if you are a talented, think-on-your-feet kind of person, you can be a successful lawyer," said Mr. Dudley. "That approach doesn't work when you are dealing with the representation of seriously injured people... you have to know every possible issue, and the only way to do that is through thorough preparation."

MENTOR

Twenty years ago, I started out here as Pat's marketing coordinator. This was many years before law firms hired marketing people. Pat had a vision about where law firms were headed and over the years would mentor me on how to best market a plaintiff's law firm. Later, when I came back to the firm, he transitioned that role into operations. When I told Pat I lacked some of the knowledge desired to be effective in this role he calmly told me, "I'll teach you what you need to know, and you can learn the rest over time."

My situation is far from unique. Interestingly enough, few of his key support staff members actually started off in the positions held today. This is a testament to Pat's ability to hire, mold, and train his people.

Stacey Hoover (Clark), a name familiar to anyone who knows Pat, has been at his side since 1995. "Pat originally hired me as his legal secretary. I worked at a local bank and really knew very little about being a legal secretary or working in a law firm," said Mrs. Hoover. "But Pat had faith in me, and took the time to teach me how he wanted the job done. Over the years he has been my greatest supporter, mentoring me for each new and wonderful opportunity." She is now the firm's Human Resource Manager.

Julie Scott, the firm's Comptroller started at the firm as an office clerk when she was just 18 years old in 1999. "Pat saw something in me back then, and gave me a pathway to success," said Ms. Scott. "He encouraged me to go to school, get my degree, and through the years continued to train and promote me. Without that support and direction, I would not be where I am today."

Loyalty goes a long way with Pat. It's a frequent topic of conversation around here. Those who work for him don't want to let him down. We believe in Pat, what he has accomplished, and we appreciate the enormous investment he's made in us.

Tara Devine, a partner in our Waukegan office and a member of the Board of Directors for the LCBA, began her employment with the firm in 2002. "I started here as a law clerk—completely inexperienced with no idea what to expect," said Mrs. Devine. "By watching and working with Pat, I learned very quickly there was no such thing as cutting corners, only hard work, commitment, and preparation would get me where I wanted to go professionally. That's what has always separated Pat from so many other attorneys...and years later, he still stands out today."

Mr. Dudley, the founding partner of Dudley & Lake LLC, recognizes Pat's role in managing his own law firm and clients. "He has always been someone I can talk to about running a law practice and issues about cases that I am working out. He has lots of proven insight. He's a constant source of information and help." Mr. Dudley is the perfect example of a lawyer who has passed through Pat's firm and went on to accomplish great things with his career.

"Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard is a great example of a Lake County law firm that has produced many talented lawyers," said Mr. Fusz, who is now an attorney at The Law Offices of David R. Del Re. "Those building blocks, they learned them from working for Pat Salvi."

When Patrick Salvi II joined the firm, he benefitted from his father's mentorship as well. Pat didn't go easy on him just because of family ties. Back in 2008 Patrick II was in his first full year as an associate at the firm. I remember sitting around a conference table when Pat began peppering his son with questions about an important case. As the questions continued, Pat pushed Patrick II harder. Finally, he raised his voice in frustration and asked, "Do you want to be a great trial lawyer, or just a trial lawyer?" For a few moments there was an awkward silence in the room. As we got up to walk out, Pat turned to me, winked, and smiled.

While I have many Pat Salvi stories, this simple one is among my favorites. With Pat, nothing is free. Everything is earned. It doesn't matter who you are or what you do at the firm. To me, that unexpected wink and smile after a heated discussion represented greater purpose—it was a precious moment where mentor and loving father came together. Two years later, that intense level of preparation proved fruitful when Patrick II and his father earned the highest Lake County verdict on record for that case, \$33 million on behalf of a teenager who was paralyzed in an accident. It marked the first time the father-son duo won a jury trial case together. I think it was one of Pat's proudest moments as a lawyer.

Despite all of Pat's accomplishments, he appears just as passionate about his job today as he was when I met him all those years ago. He isn't slowing down much. I'm sure working with Patrick II and his son Brian Salvi, who joined the firm as an associate in 2013, has rejuvenated him to some degree. Even at this stage in his legal career, he still works on the firm's top cases, personally conducts weekly attorney meetings and strategy meetings, bi-weekly file meetings, and quarterly attorney team meetings. The man loves to "talk shop" and makes it a priority to sit down with all the lawyers as frequently as possible to answer questions and provide direction on their files. If the file isn't progressing to his satisfaction, he's not shy to let you know.

"Well, Pat Salvi never passed up an excuse to meet and sometimes it was stressful," joked Mr. Kornak. "However, he used that time together as an opportunity to challenge you to be a better lawyer and improve your skill set... get out in the community, volunteer, get involved in the bar associations, speak, and write articles. He placed great value in your professional growth."

THE BENCHMARK

It's important to note that Pat's legal career was never about reaching gross settlement and verdict amounts or other financial plateaus. I, for one, have never been given a financial goal to meet. Pat isn't in the business to just settle a case, make a quick buck, and move on to the next one.

Mr. Fusz notes, "There's a philosophy at Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard of always doing things the right way... doing right by the client is the priority; it's what makes the place so unique."

The big results associated with Pat Salvi and his law firm is simply a byproduct of his vision, hard work and dedication to his clients. To support this further, at a recent motivational presentation he told his lawyers, "justice is the benchmark we hope to achieve for our clients, and if we achieve it, the reward will follow."

The reward has followed. When I later approached Pat to share the news of the \$1 billion accomplishment and to discuss my strategies for promoting it, his response was simply, "think about all those clients we helped." Further discussion regarding advertisements, direct mail pieces, and e-blast announcements just didn't seem appropriate.

He then told me to call a shelf-file meeting because, "we have a lot of cases, and a lot of work to do, TJ."

That's the Pat Salvi I know.