

Pat Salvi and Sons Pat II and Brian of Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard



From left: Pat Salvi II, Pat Salvi and Brian Salvi

By **Dustin J. Seibert**

Talk to any of the Salvi men, and chances are you'll get more than one sports metaphor before very long.

You might hear phrases like "game-time decision," which Patrick A. Salvi II uses to describe the possibility of his three other non-lawyer brothers getting involved in the family business. Or "coach vs. teammate," which Brian L. Salvi uses to describe his working relationship with his father, Patrick A. Salvi.

It's because sports runs through the family: Two Salvi boys played football for the University of Notre Dame and "Pat Jr." — as he's called by co-workers — hoped at a young age to be a Chicago Bears quarterback. The eldest child of Pat Sr. and Lindy Salvi never did make it to the Bears, but he followed in his father's footsteps to become an attorney, and is now a partner alongside him at **Salvi, Schostok & Pritchard, P.C.**, a personal injury and medical malpractice firm.

The Salvis' extended family includes a number of lawyers, but the immediate family's foray into law started

with Pat Sr.'s father Albert, a solo practitioner with a general practice that included civil and criminal work. That early exposure led Pat Sr. to attend college at St. Mary's University of Minnesota knowing he'd go to law school.

"We were always really close, and I admired what he did," Pat Sr. says of his father. "I always had an interest in helping people, solving problems and being in court. As it turns out, it was a good fit for my skill set."

Albert and his son worked together in the Law Offices of Albert Salvi from 1978 through 1981. It was the only time Pat Sr. practiced criminal law during his career.

"I enjoyed getting into court and doing criminal law as a young lawyer," he says. "But the problem, as I told my sons, is you're representing criminals in criminal litigation. It's very rewarding for those who are into it, but I wanted to do civil litigation."

When Pat Sr. determined he wanted to limit his practice to personal injury work, he hung his own shingle, opening the Law Offices of

Patrick A. Salvi in Waukegan in January 1982, when Lindy was pregnant with Pat Jr.

Two Lawyers out of Five Children

Pat Jr. languished for a bit during his early years at the University of Colorado, unsure of what to do for a living once he graduated.

"I talked to my dad to see what difference grades made in college," Pat Jr. says. "He said 'Do you want to get into a good law school?' A light bulb kind of went on, and it motivated me to study hard in college. From then on, it became a goal of mine to get into a good law school."

Any designs on not going straight to work with his dad went out the window after a conversation with a peer who also practices with his father.

"He told me, 'If you're contemplating going into the state's attorney's office or something like that before you go in with your dad, life's tough enough already,'" Pat Jr. laughs.

Pat Sr.'s middle child Brian, 27, was a Notre Dame finance major who discovered he hated his chosen subject after he had to start taking finance classes. Fortunately, growing up in a family of lawyers gave him something to fall back on.

"I was already very familiar with the way lawyers interact, talk and think about things, so I wanted to follow the idea of doing it professionally and seeing where it took me," Brian says. "When I got more involved in moot

court in law school and saw the action up close, it confirmed for me that it's exciting, thought-provoking and challenging work. And of course, being able to work with these two was always something I was drawn to."

Brian also learned during law school that he had no interest in practicing other types of law.

"If, for whatever reason, personal injury or medical malpractice ceased to exist tomorrow, I'm not sure I would continue being a lawyer," he says.

While many fathers would be hesitant for their sons to come and work with them immediately after law school without any other outside experience, the thought never crossed Pat Sr.'s mind.

"My belief is that these are cherished years," Pat Sr. says. "And I intend to have as many (years) as I possibly can with my sons. Plus, no one can mentor them better than I can. I know they have a good work ethic and won't ride on their dad's coattails."

"In fact, it's quite the opposite: I would say they're the two hardest working people in the firm, and we have a lot of hard workers here."

Pat Sr. made sure to always let his children find their own way: All five sons are working, but only two are attorneys. The others were turned off by the "long hours and constant fighting," Pat Sr. says.

"I always told my sons from Day One that law has to be something they want," Pat Sr. says. "Once you're

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in the day-to-day grind, if it's not truly something you want and it doesn't give you pleasure, joy and happiness, you aren't going to disappoint me if you go in a different direction.

"But if you do it, you must do it right and strive to be the best at it. It's going to take tremendous work, stress and effort, but if you do those things, you'll have great rewards, professionally, personally and financially."

Still, Pat Sr. admits he always hoped his oldest son would someday practice law with him.

"We've been like two peas in a pod since he was born, and I felt that, without a lot of prodding, he would be really great at law and we would really enjoy practicing together," Pat Sr. says. "He's always shown interest, and I could just tell he was destined to be a great trial lawyer. I'm admittedly biased, but sure enough, that's what he's becoming."

"Patrick is my rock, and I trust him 110 percent. He's just a wonderful partner to have. And Brian's only been out a year and a half, and he's doing a great job."

Practicing Law Together

Despite his 37 years as an attorney and 32 years as a father, Pat Sr. says trying a case with his sons is "not like going to a ball game with them."

"There's a lot of pressure and expectations and tension in this job, so it's not like we're always walking around big smiles on our faces having father/son mo-

ments," he says. "On the other hand, there's a great deal of trust and knowing each of us is going to step to the plate and do what's necessary to get the job done."

Brian recently served as first chair on a case involving a woman who delivered a stillborn baby after doctors failed to recognize fetal distress. Pat Sr. served as second chair, and they obtained a million-dollar verdict together.

"My expectations of the two were so high even when they started out," Pat Sr. says. "You figured they picked up on so much before law school through osmosis just by hanging out with me, but the practice of law in our area is so complex. I have to be patient as they take the years they need to really learn the nuances."

"Patrick is in a real sweet spot now — he practices now like someone who's been trying cases for 20, 25 years, and I think Brian is headed in same direction."

Pat Sr. is also able to tuck away his natural paternal inclinations to be deferential to his sons when he needs to be: Pat Jr. references a recent case on which all three of them worked, during which Pat Sr. was receptive to their suggestions, including how to approach witnesses.

"Here's a trial lawyer who's been trying cases for 35-plus years, and he would listen to us," Pat Jr. says. "Not that we're bringing some amazing wisdom...it's just that it was very much a team effort."

"But at the same time, when I have a difficult decision to make about anything, including selecting a case, what expert to choose from, whether I should take a deposition...he's the first person I go to. Brian and I always feel like dad will know the answer. We listen to each other, we help each other, but at the end of the day we know he's been doing it for a long time."

Just as Pat Jr. and Sr.'s work relationship has been honed during the former's eight years with the firm and Brian and Pat Sr. have been at it since Brian started in summer 2013, the two brothers also have their own work dynamic. It's easy since Brian is one of Pat Jr.'s best friends and was the best man at his 2013 wedding. The two are co-chairing a trial later this year.

"I'm at a point in my career where I've had multi-million dollar verdicts over last few months, and I'm starting to feel good in my own skin," Pat Jr. says. "I'm looking forward to later this year when I'll be able to watch him go. He has a greatness ahead of him if that's what he wants, and it's going to be fun to do it together."

A Fresh Perspective for Pat Sr.

At 62, Pat Sr. is certainly in the later part of his career. He credits his sons for keeping him in the game after the better part of 40 years.

"They provide a fresh perspective, they keep me positive, they don't let me fall into bad habits and they teach an old dog new tricks," he says.

"Any lawyer will tell you that when you practice for 25 to 35 years, you'll have ups and downs and periods of time where you might wonder how much longer you'll do it. But I think I've still got a few good years left in me."

Of course, he will be done practicing law at some point, leaving his sons, presumably, to keep the Salvi name alive and practicing in the firm. While Pat Jr. plans on staying with Salvi Schostok & Pritchard, P.C. for the long haul, he insists that looking at the firm as a family business is somewhat misguided.

"I understand why people view it that way, but I don't think of it like that because there are 40-plus employees and only three family members," he says. "There are a lot of people who are part of this operation, and they are important for so many reasons, and a lot of them have been with us a long time."

"Though," he adds, "nothing would be more satisfying for me than to take Salvi Schostok and really maintain its success, if not build on it, and do it with Brian."

The pressure to keep the "family business" aspect of the firm alive doesn't weigh heavily on Brian, but he does feel a sense of pride at being a member of a recognized and respected family.

"I don't look at the firm as like a (grocery) shop that we need to keep alive for the sake of the family," he says. "I think of it as just being proud of the family I have and what we do. Being recognized as part of this unit is very special."