

# Lawyers in Love

BY FRANK JOSSI

The competitive environment, rigorous classes, and long hours of studying can make law school a tough place to have a thriving social life. Yet despite the time-consuming and intellectual intensity of the profession, lawyers still manage to fall, and stay, in love with fellow attorneys. The University of Minnesota Law School has produced many happy unions among graduates. Some couples met at school, others met afterwards, and some came to the Law School already married. After embarking on legal careers, many couples find that having a soul mate in the same profession actually promotes a successful union. It turns out that you can be happily married to an attorney, even if you are one.

“I think the advantages outweigh the disadvantages, in that you always have an analytical mind to discuss legal issues that come up every day,” says Charles Nauen ('80), a partner at Lockridge Grindal Nauen PLLP. He is married to Pati Jo Pofahl ('86), once an attorney for Lindquist & Vennum who for the past several years has taught advanced Spanish literature at Como Park High School. “Before I’d get ready for trial, I’d run the issues by P.J. and get her analysis, on both legal issues and on the topic. There’s no better person,” says Nauen. Pofahl adds, echoing the opinion of many married attorneys, “It’s nice to be married to someone who is actively engaged in something I know about.”

## Complementary interests

Couples often say their spouses make them better attorneys and even help generate business. For example, Pofahl brought to Lindquist & Vennum several clients recommended by Nauen, whose firm has no securities practice. “There’s a lot of opportunity for cross-marketing when you do different things in different firms,” she says.

Grant Aldonas ('79) and Pamela Olson ('80) have thrown assists to one another frequently during their 29-year marriage. As Sen. John McCain’s trade advisor, managing principal of an investment–consulting advisory firm, and a chair in international business at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, Aldonas has tapped Olson’s nationally renowned tax expertise on several occasions. He couldn’t have a better tax advisor: Olson served as assistant secretary for tax policy at the Treasury Department for three years in the Bush Administration.

But the most powerful force in their union, Aldonas says, is their cultural connection. “One of the greatest advantages is I married someone from Minnesota,” he says.



**293:**  
number of Law School alumni couples



Charles Nauen ('80)  
& Pati Jo Pofahl ('86)



Grant Aldonas ('79)  
& Pamela Olson ('80)



Carol S. Johnson ('92)  
& E. Michael Johnson ('91)



Joseph Van Leeuwen ('96)  
& Leslie Van Leeuwen ('96)  
with Henry & Katie

“There’s an ethic in the school and in the state about how people approach life and the way they approach the profession, and that is a real advantage. It’s been a real stabilizing force in our marriage and in terms of raising kids in Washington.”

Talking shop at home is not for everyone. “What we do for a living is not what we are,” says Carol S. Johnson ('92), an attorney for the Legal Aid Society of Minneapolis, who is married to E. Michael Johnson ('91), a partner at Dorsey & Whitney. “There are so many things we like to do and are interested in doing that what we do for a living never really comes into the equation,” she says. If she were the bakery chef she has always wanted to be rather than a lawyer, she says, their lives would be no different, except that her husband might “be about 400 pounds” from eating her pastries.

As for Michael, he enjoys two important benefits in his partnership with Carol. When relatives come to him for legal advice, he can kindly demur, telling them that unless they’re buying or selling a company, Carol would be a better source of legal assistance. And, of course, there are the baked goods.

### Family life

Starting a family is always a significant change, and when Joseph ('96) and Leslie Van Leeuwen ('96) started law school, it was already under way. They had married and worked for several years for IBM in New York and Minnesota, and Leslie was six weeks pregnant when they started law school. A second child came two years later.

The timing worked well for them. “When you’re not in class, you don’t really have to be at the Law School or in the library, and we had each other to study with,” says Leslie. “Going to school 15 hours a week and taking care of a baby isn’t bad when you think of people in the working world, working 40 plus hours a week and trying to raise a family.” Joseph adds that law school “was a change from working every day at IBM. It was intellectual and enjoyable.”

After graduation, they relocated to Austin, Texas, where Joseph joined a patent boutique practice and Leslie worked first at a general practice firm and then at IBM as an in-house patent attorney. When Joseph’s firm dissolved in 2003, he started his own firm to allow flexibility in raising their two children, one of whom

has a learning disability. In 2004, Leslie left IBM and joined him. “I figured, I’m already running his life. I might as well run his firm,” she says.

Working from a home office with your spouse has its hazards. It’s hard to stop checking emails on the weekends, and “sometimes we continue talking about work and patent law and things that are going on in the office right through dinnertime and the evening,” says Leslie. “You never get away from it.”

Aldonas notes that “sometimes we talk to each other like lawyers rather than two people in love. Given what you do practicing law, which is an absorbing profession, it’s hard to turn it off when you’re home.” And, he adds, “Now with Blackberrys, it’s with you wherever you go.”

For Pofahl, kids changed her career path. “I did securities work and I didn’t find it rewarding,” she says. “I wanted more time with my kids and to be more involved in the community.” She found her true calling in teaching high school students and working with immigrants on St. Paul’s ethnically diverse West Side. “I don’t regret the decision to leave law at all.”

### Adaptability of a law career

Timothy Glynn, a professor at Seton Hall University, tells his students that the legal profession offers plenty of opportunities outside of law firms and in changing courses down the line. When he and his wife, Crystal Olsen Glynn, both 1994 graduates, began thinking about starting a family, they decided to investigate jobs in academia.

In preparation to teach, Timothy resigned from a major law firm and clerked for two years in the federal district court of Jack Tunheim ('80). At the same time, Crystal clerked in the U.S. district court in Minneapolis. When the couple moved to New Jersey, she found a job overseeing a program at New York University that, ironically, helps prepare attorneys for teaching positions at law schools.

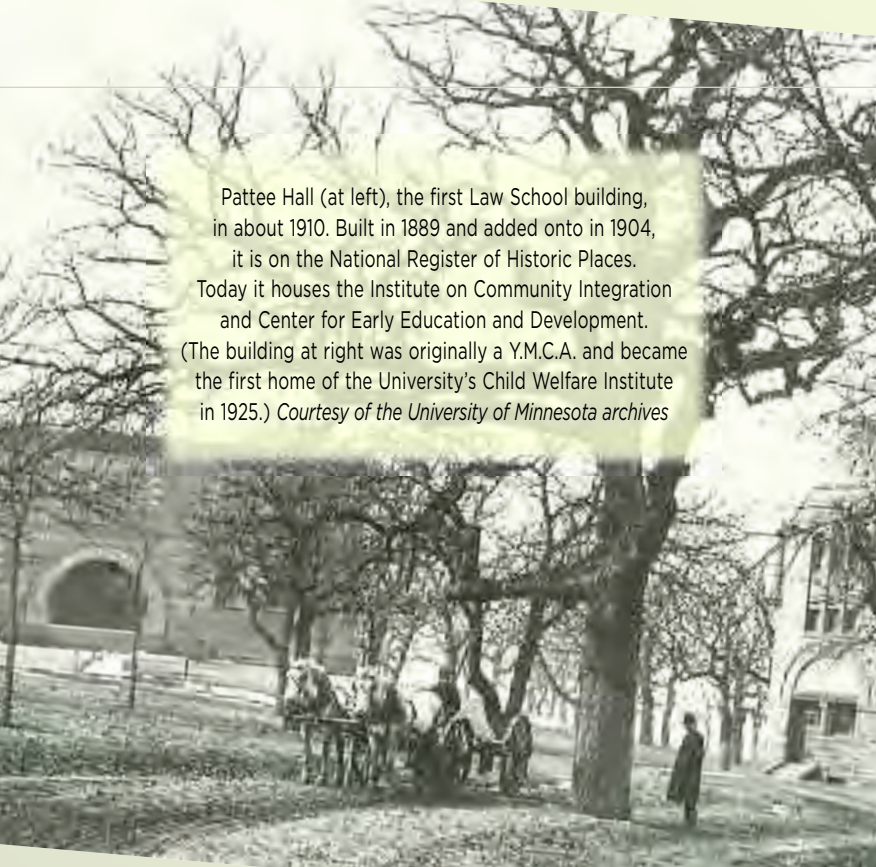
“I only work part-time as an administrator,” says Crystal. “I’m really a mom.” Adds Timothy: “We were anticipating having kids when we decided to take this kind of career approach. It certainly paid off. Both of us are extremely happy things worked out the way they did. Our career trajectories do show that the law degree gives you multiple options.”

By Frank Jossi, a freelance writer based in St. Paul.

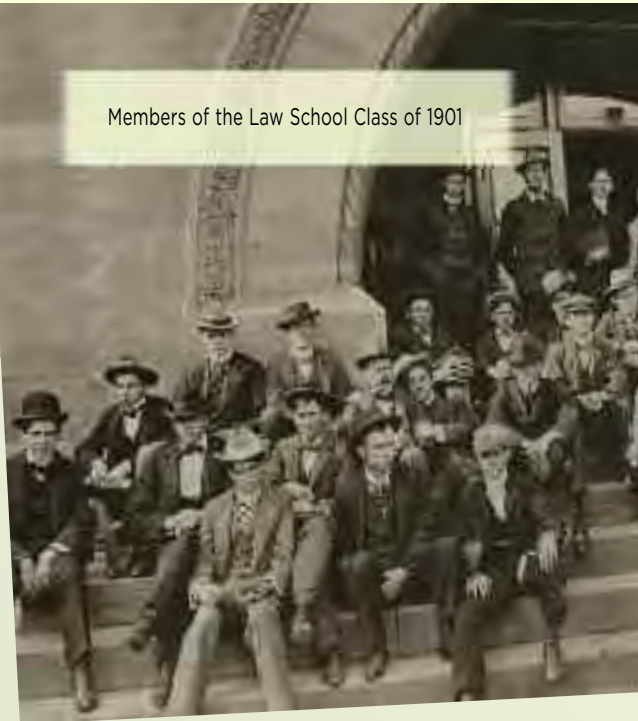
Pattee Hall (at left), the first Law School building, in about 1910. Built in 1889 and added onto in 1904, it is on the National Register of Historic Places. Today it houses the Institute on Community Integration and Center for Early Education and Development. (The building at right was originally a Y.M.C.A. and became the first home of the University's Child Welfare Institute in 1925.) *Courtesy of the University of Minnesota archives*



Construction of a separate Law School building in 1889, with library space, was cause for celebration. The student newspaper declared the Law Library to be the most convenient place at the University to study, especially with its modern gas lights.



Members of the Law School Class of 1901



The first women to graduate from the Law School, Class of 1893: Marie A. McDermott, an unidentified woman, and Flora E. Matteson

# Law School Marks 120 Years

From its start in a stuffy basement room, the Law School has never stopped climbing.

**The Law School came into being in 1888, when** University of Minnesota President Cyrus Northrop and the Board of Regents heeded the call for professional schools at the 31-year-old University. Classes in law began in 1889, all taught by the first dean, William S. Pattee. We've assembled a short photo tour of those early years and will continue it in the spring issue.

Only 32 students applied to regular classes the first year. With fees of \$10 for matriculation and \$30 for tuition, the \$1,280 total wouldn't even pay Pattee's \$2,500 salary. But adding a night school for working students brought in another 35, and Pattee was able to boast that 67 zealous young gentlemen were ready to learn the law. Zealous young women weren't far behind. In 1890, the

first woman, Flora E. Matteson, joined the student body.

In 1910, Pattee took a look back at the school he had personally nurtured for more than 20 years and proudly announced that 1,683 LL.B. degrees had been conferred. He died a year later, and the Pattee era came to an end.

The Law School has undergone enormous change since those first classes in an airless basement, conducted by Pattee who, Northrup observed, taught with an "unvarying seriousness of manner." With today's faculty—rich in knowledge, dedication, and even humor—the Law School is on its way, as Dean David Wippman predicts, to new heights.

Thanks to Professor Robert A. Stein for material gathered from his book, *In Pursuit of Excellence*.