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## Amicus Curious

### Newspaper delivery boy becomes lawyer

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Law Bulletin staff writer

The building that serves as home to Carmen B. Patti's law office looks almost the same as it did nearly six decades ago.

As the owner of Carmen Patti Law Group LLC, Patti's office sits on the 44th floor of the same building on 1 N. LaSalle St. that he used to deliver copies of the Chicago Daily Law Bulletin to as a newspaper delivery boy, a job he nabbed at age 9.

"Life was really different back then," said Patti, now 70, as he sat in the conference room of his office last week, recalling how operators used to man the elevators when he delivered the paper he now reads.

Patti got the part-time job through a neighbor and while he didn't know anything about the company, he heard the gig provided good tips around the holidays. He ended up sticking around for about four or five years, during which time he picked up some things about the printing process as he watched the press run.

And just like those who deliver the paper now, Patti trekked across the city each weekday to drop off the latest legal news to the doorsteps of the city's law firms and lawyers.

"Everyone would refer to you as your route," Patti said. "For a while, I was called 'Fields' because I used to deliver to the Fields building."

Anne McGovern Burkhart, a patent attorney at Patti's firm, said she finds the connection between her boss' childhood job and his current position neat.

"I think the coolest thing about it is that he delivered to this building and now he has the whole 44th floor," Burkhart said.

Despite Patti's early introduction to the Law Bulletin, he didn't think about joining the legal profession until he graduated from college.

Raised on the city's west side near Taylor and Halsted streets, Patti grew up watching his father, who didn't have a high school education, work as a freight handler before eventually buying a grocery store.

He said his father instilled a strong work ethic in him, one of the reasons he took a job as a Law Bulletin delivery boy and dragged mail sacks between trains during high school.

Patti said he grew up with an interest in the



Ben Speckmann

Carmen B. Patti

sciences and fell in love with engineering after his father bought him an Erector Set when he was a child.

He went on to study physics and engineering at the University of Illinois and became the first person in his family to earn a college degree in 1964.

Fresh out of college, Patti took a position as an electrical engineer at ComEd, but within six months, realized he wanted more. After seeing that many of the company's executives possessed a law degree, Patti said he decided to get one himself to get on the management track.

Patti attended night school at The John Marshall Law School and discovered a passion for patent law. After graduating in 1972, Patti left ComEd to join Square D Co. as a patent and licensing counsel.

He stayed there for about 10 years before leaving to become the managing IP attorney at Rockwell International Corp.

During his nearly 14 years at Rockwell, Patti

handled all of the IP matters for the company's telecommunications and graphic systems operations.

Patti said he enjoyed working at the company that used to specialize in the aircraft and space industries because it allowed him to combine his passion for patent law and the sciences.

"The law and engineering are very similar," he said. "They both require you to understand the facts and apply the pertinent facts to get results for your clients."

In 1996, Patti left Rockwell to go into private practice. He joined the intellectual property practice group at the firm now known as Edwards, Wildman, Palmer LLP as an equity partner a few years later, before leaving in 2001 to open Carmen Patti Law Group, which focuses in IP matters, including litigation, trademark preparation and prosecution, patent infringement and validity and unfair trade practices.

Scot Hewitt, senior counsel II at

Northrop Grumman Corp. in California, said Patti gave him his first in-house IP job at Rockwell. He also briefly worked with Patti at Wildman, Harrold and in private practice.

"Carmen was fantastic," Hewitt said. "He was easygoing and worked very well with all the business people. He understood their concerns and goals and knew how to get them to where they wanted to be."

Hewitt continues to work with Patti in his current job at Northrop, where his former boss handles some of the company's IP matters as outside counsel.

"Carmen is the same as he always has been. He is very concerned about business relationships," Hewitt said. "He does everything possible to make them good and he does the same for his personal relationships. I can't ask for a better friend or outside counsel."

Hewitt dubbed Patti "the Einstein of relationships."

Patti said his favorite part of being a lawyer

comes from working with clients. He said his time as in-house counsel at Square D and Rockwell proved beneficial in building these relationships.

"I got a first-hand understanding of what a corporation's needs are," he said. "I think that has been an asset in my practice."

After working with Patti for nearly four years, Burkhart said she couldn't agree more.

"Clients love working with him because he knows what they want," she said. "His experience as an in-house patent attorney is one of the major reasons I wanted to work with him."

On top of being "an excellent mentor" and "a wonderful attorney," Burkhart said Patti makes family, which includes his wife, Paulette, one daughter, three sons and 11 grandchildren, a priority in the firm and in his personal life.

"You feel like when you work here you are part of his family," she said.