

# *You can go home again*

Costello marks 30 years of law in Lakefield

By Mike Jordan – Lakefield Standard, September 2007.

Pat Costello was born, raised and educated through high school in Lakefield. Other than a few years away from Lakefield to continue his education, Costello has called Lakefield his home.

While I was still in high school I decided to become a lawyer,” Costello related. “Judge Harvey Holtan was one who influenced me toward this career choice. He and I had similar interests in politics and history and would talk when he came into my dad’s pharmacy where I worked. But it was my Sunday school teacher at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, David Meyer, who was probably most influential in my choosing to pursue a career in law.” After Costello received his undergraduate degree in social studies at Hamline University and completed his juris doctorate degree at Creighton University in Omaha, it was Meyer who hired him to work at his law firm in Lakefield.

I graduated from high school in 1970 and went on to Hamline University in the fall. I majored in social studies because I was interested in history, economics, geography, theology, sociology, psychology, anthropology and the like. In August of 1974, with a bachelor’ degree from Hamline, I went on to the Creighton University Law School,” Costello said. “Studying law was enjoyable. It was a Creighton that I developed an interest in agriculture, food policy and rural issues. The retired law school dean taught the class in agricultural law.”

Costello graduated from law school in 1977 earning his Juris Doctor degree. “Dave hired me, and I went to work at what was then the nine-lawyer firm of Muir, Lundblad, Meyer, Storey, Stier & Simons. I did just about everything starting out with what was for a small rural community a large law firm. As a 24-year-old I worked with banking law, real estate and estate law – transactional law, which meant I didn’t work with courtroom cases. I had an opportunity to work on specialty projects ranging from condominium developments in the Iowa Lakes to pension plans, and private charitable foundations. My practice has been primarily transactional work such as real estate, probate and trust administration, estate taxes, business entities, and agricultural matters.”

When Costello started with the law firm, they had offices in several locations including Lakefield, Windom, Mountain Lake and Jackson. “In 1987 the firm had an office in St. Paul,” he added. “David Meyer and Bill Simons stayed there and the other lawyers have since passed on their law practice to the lawyers now in our firm. Presently they include two partners, Hans K. Carlson and Chris Butzon; one associate lawyer, Candy Riordan; and our four secretaries. Hans and I had worked in the St. Paul office, but had no desire to relocate there.”

Long-time partner who has worked with Costello in the firm since 1981, Hans Carlson said of Costello, “It has been terrific working with Pat. I couldn’t have asked for anything more of Pat as a partner. We are like-minded in the important things and in the lesser things have been able to hash them out. Pat is really a member of a kind of dying breed of lawyer. His knowledge is huge

and varied in the areas of law. Pat is a huge benefit to his clients in that he can talk about specific problems, but when those problems are more involved, he can also help them by addressing those wider issues as well.”

“Probably the biggest change and challenge I experienced in practicing law came during the farm debt crisis of the mid-80’s,” Costello added. “We worked with a number of small banks and about 150 farmers on transactions helping people out and dealing with foreclosures. Those were difficult times, but since then I have received more gratitude from those farmers I helped out getting through that than one could believe.”

Pat also became active in numerous state and national bar association activities over the years. By the mid-1980’s he had established a solid reputation in the Minnesota State Bar Association and the American Agricultural Law Association as well. “I have twice been president of the 17<sup>th</sup> District Bar Association,” he related. “I have also served twice on the Board of Governors of the Minnesota State Bar Association and served a couple of terms as chair of the outstate and agricultural law sections of the Minnesota State Bar Association. I am currently on the board of directors of the 900-member American Agricultural Law Association. I am very thankful that my law partners have been encouraging and supportive of my extra activities and realize that it takes a significant amount of time to attend the many meetings in Minneapolis as they require.”

Costello and his wife Marcy have two children – Christian, who is 11, and a baby girl, Isabella, who is two months old. Last Christmas Eve Costello married Marcy Torres, whom he has known as a friend since 1986 when she was an exchange student in Lakefield.

“Coming back to my hometown of Lakefield the first five years was tough,” Costello said. “People the same age as my parents had problems with it initially. But Lakefield is my favorite place even though I have a great love for South America and Norway, places I have visited often. Generally knowing the people and families here has been a big help. The cities of Lakefield and Jackson and the City of Heron Lake and the surrounding areas have been good to my partners and me the last 30 years. Personally and professionally, it is everything I could have wanted. From a professional standpoint, I have been able to develop my legal responsibilities in a manner that I would never have envisioned growing up here in the 1960’s. I’ve been doing business with my friends and neighbors...wonderful people I have spent my whole life with. My hope is to help improve my community.”