

## Pam Hutul and Son Ben Page of Davis Friedman



By Paul Dailing

A family road trip has a different meaning for **Davis Friedman** partner Pamela J. Hutul and her son Benton H. Page, an associate at the firm.

While, for many families, the destination might be Disneyland or a ski lodge, the pair recently took a road trip to argue a case together before the Illinois Supreme Court.

“We got to, as a family, drive down to Springfield for the argument,” Page says.

For the last six years, Hutul and Page have both worked at Davis Friedman, one of the nation’s top family law firms. It tackles complex issues, including premarital agreements, co-ownership, forensic and future valuation of businesses, appraisal and division of property and income-tax implications.

Working to help families through difficult transitions has strengthened their own family, Hutul says.

The two can now bond not only as mother and son — sharing holidays and photos of Page’s 18-month-old daughter — but as colleagues who can relate through the same profes-

sional vocabulary.

“I had two cases in court this morning, two cases that Ben has worked on,” Hutul says. “We met yesterday afternoon and were able to strategize, do testimony outlines, crisscross — I gave him what I did, he gave me what he did, we both reviewed it, we both talked about it. It’s a wonderful opportunity and experience.”

Hutul considers it an evolution of the strong parent-child relationship, an opportunity families that work in different fields will never know.

“Imagine the next step, if you could go home and say, ‘This is what happened today’ and (your parents) know exactly what you’re talking about and have ideas for you,” she says.

### The Firm’s Collegial Culture Helps

It’s not only the ability to speak the same language that helps the pair unite over law, but the ability to work together in the collegial setting Davis Friedman has built, Page says.

“We’re both available to one another pretty much all the time, so when an idea

pops in one of our heads, we’re able to talk about it,” he says.

Hutul believes the 19-lawyer firm’s culture allows for casual brainstorming interactions among all attorneys, giving clients the advantage of decades of legal experience. In her own practice, she focuses on multimillion-dollar disputes, representing many of Chicago’s elite business leaders and families with multi-generational wealth.

“The firm has a very warm, easy culture,” she says. “If somebody has a question, they put it out on email and they get 12 responses in 20 minutes. It’s a very collaborative organization. I think we’re unique in terms of family law.”

It’s an extra bonus, Hutul says, when the legal mind she collaborates with happens to be her son’s.

The Law Bulletin Publishing Company, through its Leading Lawyers division, recently named Page to the inaugural class of Emerging Lawyers, a group of newer attorneys who were chosen by the state’s Leading Lawyers as the future of the legal profession. It’s limited to lawyers who are 40 or younger or who have practiced law for no more than 10 years. The list includes less than 2 percent of registered Illinois attorneys.

### The Third Generation of Lawyers

Page is the third generation of the family to go into

law. Hutul’s father was a lawyer, although he had retired by the time she started practicing. He died when Page was 8, meaning he never knew his grandson would continue the legal tradition he started. Her father would have been thrilled, Hutul says.

Because of the family connection, Hutul grew up in a legal community. She was encouraged by them when she entered the profession herself. She attended The John Marshall School of Law, earning her J.D. in 1975. She would later earn a master’s degree in history and literature of religion from Northwestern University in 1990 and her Ph.D. and A.B.D. in the topic in 1992.

She was warned from the get-go that joining this community could end up isolating her from those who don’t speak the same language.

“A good friend of my father’s said to me when I was starting law school, ‘The only problem you’re going to find, Pam, is that everybody else is boring,’” Hutul recalls, laughing.

Page also knows how easy it can be for lawyers to flock around other lawyers, and how difficult it can be to communicate how excited the law can make its practitioners feel.

“When you’re a lawyer, it’s very easy to talk about nothing but the law because you’re so used to talking about it every day. If you don’t catch yourself a little bit you end up often boring

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people to tears," he jokes.

Page's own legal career started in 2008, when he earned his J.D. from the University of Iowa Law School. He was admitted to the Illinois Bar in 2009 and joined Davis Friedman as an associate about six weeks before his mother joined the firm as a partner.

Nowhere in that time has there been any question of nepotism or favoritism, Page says. The "warm, easy culture" Hutul speaks of means all lawyers are respected for their ability and for what they provide the clients, Page says.

"It's been very welcoming since day one. We both came on about six years ago, and there's been no questions about anybody's credentials since then," he says, smiling at the notion.

For her part, Hutul says she's excited about the opportunities facing her son. Her own career has taken her in many unexpected places, from co-chairing the committee organizing the Dalai Lama's 2011 visit to Chicago to co-founding the William D. and Pamela Hutul Ross Clinic for Sexual Health within NorthShore University HealthSystem's John and Carol Walter Center for Urological Health in 2012.

She's excited to see what unexpected avenues law will take the next generation down.

Key to their relationship is the question of how they got there. How does one make the transition from parent to peer, or from child to col-

league?

For Page, the change has been a positive one, but one that requires time and communication. They talk several times a day, whether over a case, a new photo of the granddaughter or just whether one will pick up a sandwich for the other. It's a parent-child relationship Hutul says her friends envy. But it didn't come instantly.

"Be patient," Page says of learning to see a family member as a colleague. "It's a good thing. It's rewarding in a lot of ways. There's been a lot of time that we wouldn't have otherwise had together."

Hutul agrees, but says the benefits aren't just for her and her son. She says clients also benefit from having a legal team that works well together and speaks the same language.

"People probably get a better product from us by virtue of our vocabulary," she says.

In all, the two wouldn't have it any other way. "If you can figure out how to do it, I would tell everybody to do it," Hutul says.