



One on One with Patrick A. Talley, Jr., 84th LSBA President: *On Family, Goals and Moving the LSBA Forward*

Interviewed by Valerie T. Schexnayder

Patrick A. Talley, Jr. is a partner in the New Orleans office of Phelps Dunbar, LLP. He received his BA degree in 1976 from Armstrong College (Georgia Southern University), his JD degree in 1982 from Louisiana State University Paul M. Hebert Law Center and a LLM in Energy and Environmental Law in 1993 from Tulane University Law School. He was admitted to practice in Louisiana in 1982. He also is admitted in Texas.

Talley served as president-elect of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) from 2023-24, as LSBA secretary and editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Bar Journal from 2019-21 and as a member of the LSBA's Board of Governors from 2014-17 for the First Board District. Prior to this service, he was a member of the LSBA's House of Delegates (since 1994) and was re-elected to the House in 2017. He previously served on the Louisiana Bar Journal's Editorial Board and currently serves on the LSBA's MCLE Committee.



(Left) Patrick A. Talley, Jr., the 84th Louisiana State Bar Association President, third from left, with his family. From left, his grandson Patrick A. Talley IV (Ivey), his son Patrick A. Talley III (Trey), his wife Sharon Parker Talley, his daughter-in-law Margaret McDonald Talley holding his granddaughter Madeleine McDonald Talley, his daughter Sarah Ilene Talley and his son Peyton Joseph Talley. Photo by Paul Morse Studio.
(Above) Patrick A. Talley, Jr., the 84th Louisiana State Bar Association President. Photo by Paul Morse Studio.

Talley is a member of the board of directors of the Louisiana Bar Foundation and the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program. He is a member of the Louisiana State Law Institute, the New Orleans, American, Federal, 5th Circuit and Baton Rouge Bar Associations, the State Bar of Texas, the National Association of Railroad Trial Counsel (secretary and Executive Committee member) and the Maritime Law Association of the United States (Proctor member).

Talley is AV-rated by Martindale-Hubbell and has been recognized in several editions of *Best Lawyers in America*, including as the 2016 and 2021 New Orleans Lawyer of the Year in Railroad Law. He also has been recognized in several editions of *Louisiana Super Lawyers* and in *New Orleans City Business* "Leadership in Law."

In his community, Talley serves on the boards of the Southeast Louisiana Council of the Boy Scouts of America and Holy Name of Jesus School, where he served as president for many years. Following Hurricane Katrina, he was actively involved in the Louisiana Recovery Authority as a member of the Environmental Task Force. He was a co-founder of the New Orleans Charter Schools Foundation, which opened two of the first charter schools in the city limits, and served as the inaugural vice president. He was International President of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity and presi-



Law School friends. Front row from left, Greg Barro, Pat Talley, Deborah Parker Gibbs, Vance Gibbs and Paul Gallagher. Back row from left, David Forrester, Katherine (Kate) Loos, Jack Bellinger and Abie Dupont O'Shea. Photo provided by the Talley Family.

dent of the Carrollton Boosters Club, the Upper Hurstville Residence Association and Security District, and Academy of the Sacred Heart. He also served on the boards of the Louisiana Children's Museum and St. George Episcopal School.

Schexnayder: Congratulations on being sworn in as the 84th president of the Louisiana State Bar Association. First, tell us a little bit about yourself and your family.

Talley: My wife is Sharon Parker Talley, and we have three children. My daughter, Sarah Ilene Talley, lives in Chicago and is a scientist (Ph.D.) and a biological researcher. My son, Patrick A. Talley III (Trey), practices law in New Orleans at Riess LeMieux Law Firm. He was an engineer by profession but decided to go to law school. I am also proud

to have Trey's wife, Margaret McDonald Talley, as my daughter-in-law, and they are the parents of my two grandchildren, Patrick A. Talley IV (Ivey) and Madeleine McDonald Talley. My third child, Peyton Joseph Talley, graduated from college last May and is currently employed by the New Orleans Saints and the New Orleans Pelicans. I also must mention our dog, Chivas III (who, unfortunately, is no longer with us). We are happy to have my son's dog, Penny, join our family from time to time.

Schexnayder: What are your interests?

Talley: I work a lot, and I love my job. I love practicing law. I also enjoy doing our Bar Association work, especially collaborating with the people associated with the Bar Association. But, I do like to garden,



The Talley Family. Parents Patrick A. Talley, Sr. and Janice Talley. From left, brother Steven Talley, Patrick Talley, sister Karen Talley Perrie and sister Phyllis Talley. Photo provided by the Talley Family.



Law School friends. Standing from left, David Forrester, Sid Cook, Robert Johnson, Scott Wills, Eddie Lambert and Greg Barro. On sofa, from left, Pat Talley, Vance Gibbs and Jack Bellinger. Front row from left, Katherine (Kate) Loos, Deborah Parker Gibbs and Mary Chappuis O'Connell. Front, Paul Gallagher. Photo provided by the Talley Family.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr. participating in the 2002 House of Delegates meeting.



Judge (Ret.) Mary Ann Vial Lemmon, Louisiana Supreme Court Justice (Ret.) Harry T. Lemmon with Patrick A. Talley, Jr. at a Louisiana Bar Foundation event in 2019.

and I like to travel. I am a so-called expert with bromeliads, and I have a ton of them. If anybody wants one, let me know, and I'll be happy to give some to you. I hate to throw them away. I also have a little garden in my yard. We like to travel to North Carolina, where I like to hike, walk and spend time on Lake Glenville in Cashiers, some activities that I don't get a chance to do here in New Orleans.

Schexnayder: What first sparked your interest in law?

Talley: I always wanted to be a lawyer ever since I can remember. I can't really recall a time when I wanted to do anything else. On the same hand, I can't really tell you what sparked my interest in law, but it probably has to do with a gentleman named Alan Gaynor. He was a lawyer with the firm Bouhan Williams & Levy in Savannah, Ga., where I grew up and went to college. He was involved with the Boy Scouts of America when I became an Eagle Scout, and he helped me along the way. He was a Representative for our district in the Georgia Legislature and was a quintessential legislator, so much so that I thought you had to be a lawyer to be in the Legislature. He was overall a very classy and prominent gentleman, and I considered him a mentor and a role model. Because I wanted to emulate him, he was my inspiration for going into law.

Schexnayder: What was your path to law school?

Talley: I started out by going to high school and college in Savannah, Ga. I never left home to go to college. At the time, my fraternity, Pi Kappa Alpha, needed consultants to work for them, and they

traveled a great deal on the road. At the last minute, I changed my mind because I hadn't been away from home before and was concerned about how I would be affected by that amount of travel. Instead, they offered me a job as a Resident Counselor at LSU so that I was able to stay in one place. I came to LSU and obtained a master's degree in political science. While there, I assisted the professors with teaching their courses and research, in particular the Bureau of Governmental Research (BGR). In the spring of 1979, I decided to apply to law school at LSU and a couple of other places. I got into law school at LSU and started in the fall of 1979, which I was thrilled about. That's the first turning point in my life because I met some very good friends in law school (you will see some of their photos of my law school group on these pages). We are still close to this day and have reunion trips back to the beach where we first started as a group. We spend a lot of time together, and we have been through a lot since finishing law school more than 40 years ago.

Schexnayder: That's wonderful that you have such a close-knit group of law school friends.

Talley: I think it's very unusual. I don't see it in many other groups.

Schexnayder: Tell us a little bit about your law firm and your law partners.

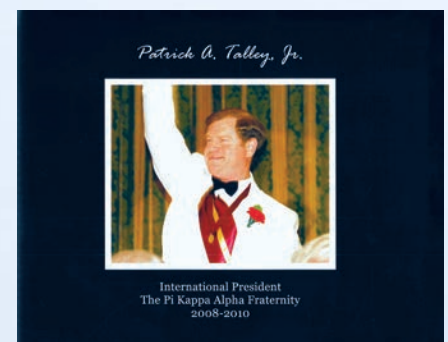
Talley: My law firm is Phelps Dunbar, and we have offices in Louisiana, Texas, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, Florida and North Carolina, making us a regional Gulf Coast law firm. Here in New Orleans, we have an excellent team, and I am very proud to be associated with these folks at Phelps.

Schexnayder: What is your area of practice?

Talley: My areas of practice are in litigation. I do civil defense litigation, commercial litigation, personal injury litigation, and environmental and toxic tort litigation. I primarily represent and work with companies.

Schexnayder: In your practice, what were your most memorable cases?

Talley: I have had two cases that were the most memorable. One of them was a Chevron legacy lawsuit in Vidalia in Concordia Parish. I was in a jury trial for two weeks with my co-counsel Bobby Meadows and his team from the King & Spaulding Firm. The opposing counsel was the Carmouche Firm and the District Attorney for the parish, Eddie Knoll. It was a hard-fought case, and, eventually, we obtained a verdict with which we were happy. The jury found in our favor that we did not have to pay damages for the remediation and cleanup of the property, which was the big-ticket item in the lawsuit.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr. was sworn in as the International President of Pi Kappa Alpha Fraternity in 2008 for a two-year term. Photo provided by the Talley Family.



Four generations of Patricks. Patrick III (Trey), Patrick Sr., Patrick IV (Ivey) and Patrick Jr. Photo provided by the Talley Family.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr. with his family, from left, son Peyton, son Patrick (Trey), with their dog Chivas III, daughter Sarah and wife Sharon. Photo provided by the Talley Family.

The other case was in Pointe Coupee Parish and involved the KCS Railroad. We tried the case for two weeks. I vividly remember that case because I woke up and had forgotten to bring my shoes on the second Monday of the trial. Over the weekend, I had gone home to New Orleans, and I forgot to bring my shoes back. I just had on top siders. So, early on that second Monday morning, I went to Walmart to buy a pair of shoes to finish trying the case; as I recall, they were some pretty good-looking shoes! We were not so successful in that case. The judge was against us through the whole trial. I can recount the beginning of the trial most specifically: I did not arrive to court until we were supposed to begin due to my prep meeting with witnesses running longer than expected. However, the judge called the case early, and when

I walked into the courtroom, everyone was already seated, including the jury venire. The judge then loudly announced to the entire courtroom, "Mr. Talley, I am glad you could join us," implying to the jurors that I was late. That's how the case started and didn't get much better throughout the trial, but the judge turned around in the end and was very friendly to us. We were joking around, waiting for the jury to come back.

Those were big cases, but I also had small cases that I handled. In the beginning of my career, I tried a lot of little railroad crossing cases. It seemed like almost every Saturday, we had an accident at one of the KCS railroad crossings, before the advent of gates and lights. For a while, there were new lawsuits filed every week, and it felt like we were trying a new lawsuit almost every Monday morning. It was

a great opportunity for a new lawyer like myself to learn how to try new cases.

Schexnayder: Did you learn any lessons from trial work early on in your career?

Talley: The lessons I learned from one of my cases were to be better prepared and to always know your witnesses. It was time for the railroad crossing case to begin, and I asked my client if my witnesses were here. My client said, "Yeah, they're sitting right outside." There were two men sitting there. Usually, I would have an engineer and a conductor that I had met with several times prior to the trial, but I did not have the opportunity to do so in this particular case. This case was supposed to be a slam dunk and an absolute win for us. Before the case started, I went to speak to them, but the judge then called the case. I had no chance to talk to my



Pat Talley is presented with a certificate of appreciation by Hon. Darrel J. Papillion, 2016-17 LSBA President, at the Annual Meeting in 2017.



Pat Talley, George Frilot with firm members at the 2007 Annual Meeting.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr. and Louisiana Supreme Court Chief Justice John L. Weimer at the Supreme Court Reception at the 2023 Annual Meeting.



Pat Talley and wife Sharon with attendees at the 2003 Annual Meeting.

witnesses before the trial. I was going to take a break and talk to them because I hadn't met them yet. We took a break, and I went out. But they were not there. I said, "What happened to the two guys here?" I was told, "What guys?" The client said, "Settle the case," so I went back in the courtroom and did. We were fortunately able to settle the case for very little money. We thought that it was funny at the time, but I learned a serious lesson from that experience.

Schexnayder: I see today you are walking around in a boot. Tell us about your latest injury. What happened?

Talley: My latest injury is a sprained ankle. I'm too old to run now, but I still like to walk. I was walking in the park with my two dogs, Chivas and Penny. I got distracted and tripped over some uneven concrete and fell down as my ankle twisted. My body weight fell on it. It's a fracture in the posterior talus, and it could require surgery, which I am hoping to avoid. But it's funny you should say, "What's my latest injury," because as long as I've been involved as an officer in the Bar Association, I have had injuries. I started out with a right shoulder sling. Then, I needed to change the sling to the opposite arm due to a break that I sustained in my left arm and shoulder which happened when I slipped on the rocks getting out of the water in North Carolina. Next was my right wrist, which I

had surgery on last year. So, I was back in a right-side sling for some time. And now, I am in a boot. Hopefully, this injury is my last. This will be the end of the crutches and slings, fingers crossed.

Schexnayder: Hopefully, nothing else will happen to you. I hope this is the end of your injuries.

Talley: (Laughing) I hope so too, fingers crossed. Rather than focusing on injuries, I have to get ready for Bar Association-related events and some traveling, which I'm looking forward to.

Schexnayder: Let's talk about how you began your involvement in the Bar Association.

Talley: I got involved in the Bar Association when I served as chair of the Bench Bar Committee for the Federal Courts. I was appointed chair of the committee by President Harry Hardin, and I was also the Bar Association's delegate to the Federal Fifth Circuit Judicial Conference, which the Bar was heavily involved in at that time. I recall working with Presidents Ben Hanchey, Jay Zainey and Charles Weems.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr., Barry H. Grodsky, Robert A. Kutcher, Shayna L. Sonnier and Stephen I. Dwyer during a reception at the 2023 Annual Meeting.

In my first year involved when Ben was president, Judge Morey Sear was the chief judge of the District, and he was charged with formulating the agenda for the conference. He didn't take suggestions too well from the Bar Association. I was the sacrificial lamb with the judge. Every year, Judge Sear would say, "You're back again, Talley, to get more ideas thrown out." And, he meant ideas getting thrown out the window. But, I came up with some good suggestions. The judge was a good man, and he did things for the Bar Association. I recall he did not like people putting briefcases on his tables. I saw that firsthand with a gentleman who came in and put his briefcase on the table. The judge asked him if he did that at home. The gentleman said, "Yes." The judge said, "Well, you must not have a nice table at home." That was quintessential Judge Sear for you!

But, that's how I first got involved with the Bar. Then, I ran for the House of Delegates in the early 1990s. I was fortunate enough to be elected at my first try. I ran again and was re-elected every elec-



Varuna Snowden, William C. Snowden, Louisiana Supreme Court Associate Justice Piper D. Griffin and Patrick A. Talley, Jr. during a 2023 Joint Summer School session.

tion after that. After a conversation with Bar leadership, the suggestion was made that I consider running for the Board of Governors in the First District. I did, and, lo and behold, I won. I stayed on the Board for three years. Instead of running for the Board again, I ran for secretary. I was elected (unopposed) as secretary, which also includes serving as editor of the *Louisiana Bar Journal*. I enjoyed doing that very much. After that, I was elected

back to the House for a few years, and I decided to throw my name in for consideration as president-elect and was elected, again unopposed. This experience was very humbling, as I realized a lot of people could do this job better than I could. But, my colleagues have given me this opportunity to be president, and I look forward to it very much.

Schexnayder: What are your goals for your presidency?

Talley: Well, it's not about me. It's not MY presidency; it's OUR presidency. It's all the officers. It's going to be our presidency, and we're going to do some good things. We will keep things going with Access to Justice. We're going to expand it by including the autism component, something that I feel is left out right now. We're going to continue the ATJ Conclave and other Access to Justice programs that we have. Focusing a bit on autism, Dr. Temple Grandin was one of our CLE speakers at the Annual Meeting this year, and she's very prominent in autism and neurodivergent workplace issues.

I also invited two judges, Justice Linda Marie Bell from the Nevada Supreme Court and the Hon. Soonhee (Sunny) Bailee, District Judge, Las Vegas, Nev., to speak about Access to Justice issues involving children on the autism spectrum and The Daay Court, which they established in Nevada, at the Annual Meeting. I met them at the American Bar Association (ABA) meeting in Denver last year, where they spoke on these topics.



Patrick A. Talley, Jr. addresses the House of Delegates in his role as the Secretary of the Louisiana State Bar Association in 2021.



LSBA Presidents, from left, Shayna L. Sonnier, S. Guy deLaup, David Bienvenu, Alainna R. Mire, Richard K. Leefe, H. Minor Pipes III, Robert A. Kutcher, Stephen I. Dwyer, Kim M. Boyle and Patrick A. Talley, Jr. during the 2023 Annual Meeting.

Another goal focuses on lawyer wellness, much of it working with and through the Judges and Lawyers Assistance Program (JLAP). JLAP offers judges and lawyers help with alcohol and drug impairment issues as well as mental health issues. But the task is challenging for everyone and there may be additional ways to fully meet lawyer needs in respect to mental illness and issues like work-life balance and burnout. I plan to appoint a five-person task force to develop and implement a Wellness in the Profession Program for the LSBA this year to gain further insight and suggestions.

We are also working on a new strategic plan, which will culminate into a Strategic Planning Retreat in September. There, we will look at the results of our membership and stakeholder surveys and utilize these tools to help us develop a strategic plan for moving forward.

An additional objective I want to focus on is Artificial Intelligence. I plan to appoint an Artificial Intelligence Task Force in June. This group will look at AI in the context of lawyer regulation. The ABA and other states are also researching this area, and we are monitoring these

efforts. Ultimately, we will compare our findings with those of other jurisdictions and determine whether we need to make any recommendations to the Louisiana Supreme Court.

Schexnayder: As the Bar president, you'll be focused on the needs and concerns of all members. What do you consider the major challenges to the practice of law today?

Talley: Professionalism is a major challenge, and we will continue to work on that. We have an excellent Committee on the Profession, chaired by Barry Grodsky, and I hope he continues in that role. But what concerns me most is lawyer wellness moving forward. As I approach the end of my career, I think I have more clarity about the work-life balance issues faced by younger lawyers. We all know that the practice of law is challenging and that lawyer burnout is very real if we do not focus on wellness within the legal profession. I wish for the younger lawyers in our profession that their legal careers bring them the same satisfaction that my career of more than 40 years has brought to me.

Schexnayder: We would like to say congratulations to President #84 and thanks for giving the Journal your time. It has been a pleasure.

Talley: It has been my pleasure to be with you today, Val, to discuss our plans for the upcoming year. It is also my honor to serve the Bar Association as its 84th President, and I am very much looking forward to this coming year. Thank you so much again for this interview.

Valerie T. Schexnayder is a mediator with Schexnayder Mediation Services, LLC, in Baton Rouge. She is beginning the second year of her two-year term as secretary of the Louisiana State Bar Association (LSBA) and as editor-in-chief of the Louisiana Bar Journal. She has practiced for more than 35 years with a large firm, a small firm and an international corporation and served as a LSBA Distinguished Access to Justice Pro Bono Fellow. She received a BBA degree in 1986 from Loyola University and her JD degree, cum laude, in 1989 from Tulane University Law School. (vals-chex@gmail.com; Ste. G, 17732 Highland Road, Baton Rouge, LA 70810)

