

*Bi-Monthly Newsletter of
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The Military Spouse JD Network is an international network of legal professionals working together to improve the lives of military families.



The Military Spouse JD Foundation is a non-profit organization dedicated to helping military spouse attorneys develop careers as legal professionals.

Faith & Family: The Center of a Military Spouse DC Circuit Nominee

By Reda Hicks



Author's Note: Every day MSJDN meets new military spouse attorneys doing incredible things in this country, and Patricia Millett is no exception. I had the great pleasure of speaking with several important people in Patricia's life, and I'm honored to present MSJDN's profile on this exceptional woman.

Patricia Millett (Pattie to her friends) is the complete package. From the beginning of her career, Pattie had all the markings of a legal rock star. Top of her classes at University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign and Harvard Law School. Prestigious clerkship for the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals. Appellate staff of the Department of Justice Civil Division. Assistant to the Solicitor General, serving

equal time under Presidents Bush and Clinton. Head of Akin Gump's Supreme Court practice. More than 30 cases argued before the Supreme Court. Sky-high stack of professional accolades. "Unanimously Well Qualified" ABA Rating. Seven Solicitors General support her nomination to the D.C. Circuit.

But somewhere in that rocket-propelled career, Pattie fell in love with a Sailor. And became a mom. And earned a black belt. All while living a genuine, intentional, faith-based life of success. And these qualities and experiences, even more than her legal fame, are what make her the complete package.

Her long-time friend and fellow appellate attorney [Tom Goldstein](#) knows that all too well: "Pattie is an outstanding talent, an incredibly hard worker, and the best legal writer I have ever had the good fortune to work with. But her success comes from a complete commitment to a core set of values, to family, God, and country that really drive all of her decisions."

Pattie met Bob King in 1995, in Washington, D.C., while he was serving at the Pentagon in the U.S. Navy. They met at a Washington Street United Methodist Church singles event Bob reluctantly attended at the urging of his roommate. Bob knew right away that Pattie was the one; he felt like they had been together forever because their core values were so in step from the very beginning. Bob and Pattie

were married a year later in June 1996, in the same church where they had first met.

Three years later, when it looked like Bob's next assignment would send him far from Pattie, they made the decision that Bob would transition to the Navy Reserves, where he served until his retirement in 2012. Commitment to family is a top priority for Bob and Pattie, who work together to make their children David and Elizabeth the center of their lives.

Like so many other military spouses, Pattie did the job of two parents while Bob was away on reserve duty, and eventually in 2004 he was called on to deploy. "It was really hard for her, working sixty hour weeks and keeping our family together in my absence with a three-year-old and six-year-old to handle at home," he says. "But she did an amazing job!"

During Bob's nine-month deployment, Pattie was still working at the Solicitor General's office and handled a heavy Supreme Court caseload. She argued one Supreme Court case and briefed five more while juggling her solo-parenting duties. Tom Goldstein says through it all, he never saw Pattie complain about these sacrifices for her country.

"She was proud of Bob's service, and was completely committed to her family as her first priority." Pattie might have made it look easy, but her associate Hyland Hunt knows differently. Hyland, also a military spouse, has been working with Pattie at Akin Gump for two years.

"Pattie has been a tremendous encouragement to me," says Hyland. "Other things pulling at us can sometimes make it very hard to focus on work, but watching Pattie helps me know that it can be done." But it doesn't just happen. "If Pattie has taught me anything, it's that you have to live intentionally in each part of your life."



Reunited! Pattie welcomes Bob home from his deployment in 2005

Pattie served as a mentor for Hyland on the law, but has also been a sounding board as she navigates the difficult choices military spouses have to make when balancing career and a spouse's military service. Helping others is a practice familiar to those who know her, as Pattie is held in high esteem as much for being a good person as for being a good lawyer.

"Pattie is a really good human being," says [Judge Thomas Ambro](#) of the Third Circuit Court of Appeals. "And, as everyone knows, she's in the first rank of appellate practitioners in this country." Judge Ambro met Pattie in 2000, when a friend suggested she would make a good addition to an appellate panel he was working on. The success of the first panel led to many more, and Pattie now speaks to Judge Ambro's Georgetown undergraduates each year about how to manage all of the things tugging at their time and balance. It's a message that really resonates with them.

"[She] combines talent, hard work, judgment, and focus; she's the complete package," Judge Ambro notes.

"And she does it all without being nasty."

"The thing that amazes me, knowing how much stress she is under, is that she is incredibly kind and unfailingly humble and gracious," says associate Hyland Hunt. "You never hear her snap at opposing counsel. She keeps an equanimity that is remarkable."

For Pattie, this kindness goes hand in hand with her and Bob's core principles. From that first fateful day when Bob and Pattie met at Washington Street United Methodist, they have been committed to putting service and faith at the center of their family.

"We firmly believe that we are here to serve," Bob says, "and we are very intentional about teaching that to our children." Today, the whole family is involved in various ministries. David worked on the Highland Support Project in Guatemala, bringing running water to remote areas. Elizabeth's service started when she raised \$1,800 selling lemonade to raise money for children living in a garbage dump in Cambodia. And both kids have

been on mission trips to West Virginia, where they worked with the Jeremiah Project to help repair and rebuild low-income housing. Next summer, says Bob, they are very excited to be going on a mission trip together for the first time, working with the White Mountain Apache Tribe in Ft. Apache, Arizona.

The project most near and dear to Pattie's heart is [Mondloch House](#), a group of homeless shelters for families and individuals that Pattie has been involved with for many years. Each week, Pattie coordinates fruit and vegetable deliveries, organizing volunteers for pick-ups and drop-offs to make sure the shelters have fresh produce to serve. Hyland Hunt says Pattie's family has a well-known tradition of serving dinners together at one of the homes, called Hypothermia Shelter

Pattie, Bob, and the kids love to do things together. In fact, Bob says spending time, all four of them together, is Pattie's favorite thing to do. That's why, many years ago when their daughter joined her older brother in taekwondo lessons, Bob and Pattie decided to start taking lessons, too.

"We wanted something to do together that was active," says Bob. "It is a fun family activity, but it also teaches each of us basic self-defense skills, which are very important." Now, all four of them are black belts; in fact, Pattie is a second degree black belt, surpassing her husband and nearly catching up to her son David's third degree belt.

Pattie's colleagues say unequivocally that her passion for the law takes a backseat to her husband and their two children. Maintaining balance between family and a demanding legal field is probably also one of her greatest career challenges. But she has a champion in her biggest fan, her husband.

"Seventeen years is no short amount of time, but I have loved every minute with her," he says. "She still amazes me with how she can juggle everything and keep her sanity."



Pattie and Bob say that David and Elizabeth "are the rock stars in the family!"

From her very first Supreme Court argument, Bob wanted to be in the gallery cheering Pattie on. But Pattie refused. "I don't want you to see me crash and burn!" she would say, although Bob knew that she certainly would not.

It took Bob five years to convince Pattie to let him come watch her argue, and when she finally agreed, Bob was blown away. Now, Bob goes to watch her every chance he gets. "I've seen four or five arguments now, and I'm just amazed every time because you have to be so fast on your feet! I could

never do that. She's one of the best! I know I'm not objective on that, but it's true!"

Watching Pattie before the Supreme Court, Bob says it is clear she has earned the respect of the Justices. "They know what they will get when Pattie comes before them, because she is always prepared." That might be an understatement.

Before an argument, Pattie spends weeks studying the record, going through moot court arguments until she knows her case inside and out. Tom Goldstein calls Pattie a "ferocious preparer, committed to leaving no stone unturned, and thinking of every possible nuance and counter argument to the counter argument." Says Hyland Hunt, "It always amazes me how she can digest and know the record," but Pattie's is the kind of knowledge that comes from plain and simple diligence.

Pattie's hard work, focus, and tenacity have made her a great advocate. Her kindness, wisdom and graciousness have made her a highly respected professional. But her strong center, built on family, faith, and service make her the complete package.

Military spouses forging their own careers can learn a lot from Pattie's example. Whatever our professional pursuits, true success starts at the core; build a strong one, then hold on to it tightly.