



## Fellows Spotlight Richard Beem Illinois Fellow

Q: What does being a Fellow mean to you?

A: It means being recognized by my peers as a distinguished lawyer, honoring and serving all that is good and noble in the law and the legal profession.

Q: Where did you go to law school?

A: University of Houston.

Q: What type of law do you practice, and how did you become interested in it?

A: Intellectual property (IP) law, specifically, patent law. I was Intellectual property (IP) law, specifically, patent law. I was always interested in law, and I also had an aptitude for math and science. A college friend persuaded me that a degree in chemical engineering would qualify me for a good, high-paying job after college and also for admission to law school. Chemical engineering took me to Houston, oil and chemicals, and the University of Houston Law Center. Having worked in the oil industry, I sent my resume to the oil and gas departments of Houston law firms, and I heard back from the IP Section of Vinson & Elkins, where I obtained my first experience in IP law. Other law firm clerkships, followed by a judicial clerkship with the Hon. Edward S. Smith of the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit, cemented my decision to practice IP/patent law, a field that was burgeoning when I entered it in the 1980s and that has continued to be extremely active. I've based my national and international practice in Chicago for more than 25 years.

Q: If you had decided to not go into law, what would you have done?

A: My choice of career was partly by process of elimination. I have been a dairy farmer, industrial painter, carpenter, factory worker, refinery engineer, and technical sales representative. I've made cheese, vodka, and gasoline, though not at the same time. I've even been a Shrine circus clown. If I had not gone into law, I might have pursued technical sales in an entrepreneurial way, or I might have been a writer, perhaps in a style similar to that of John McPhee, whose nonfiction I enjoy and admire. I have found law practice to be a good way to apply my varied interests and experiences.

Q: What was the last book you read?

A: Augustine's Confessions. I started it a long time ago, set it aside for more contemporary books, and then picked it up and finished it in a recent bout of insomnia.

Q: Anything else you would like to share with us?

A: I have a collection of original patents signed by early Presidents—Adams, Jefferson, Madison,

Monroe, Jackson--and original letters written and signed by famous inventors—Edison, Morse, Watt. They're on my firm's website at <http://www.beemlaw.com/patent-collection> and the originals are on the walls of our offices. We welcome visitors.

I'm on the Board of the Union League Club of Chicago, where I am always glad to host my fellow Fellows. My hobbies include ballroom dancing and rock climbing. I'm also a big fan of high school and college wrestling, having once had some success in the sport as a Wisconsin state champion in high school.