

PACE TESTIMONIAL
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I started working with attorneys as a legal secretary to help pay my way through college. At that time, I was studying Nursing. In the early 1970's, legal secretaries were the premier secretaries, earning the highest salaries and looked on as the best in the business. Because I had taken typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping my senior year of high school as electives after all of my college prep courses were completed, I had no problem getting started in the legal profession. A few years later in the early 70's, the profession of a paralegal entered the legal scene. My boss bought me a textbook for Christmas and encouraged me to consider becoming a paralegal rather than a nurse. I loved what I was doing and the challenging assignments he was giving me, so I looked into it.

I enrolled in the paralegal program at Indiana Central University and worked full-time while going to evening classes part-time. Four years later, I received my degree. During this entire time, I continued to work for the same firm, but my responsibilities (and income) began to change substantially. I was given more challenging legal work, was called on to attend depositions, hearings, and client meetings. My firm bought me a briefcase. This was a hard adjustment for some of my co-workers with whom I had worked as a legal secretary for many years, but eventually those "growing pains" subsided and I had the full support of everyone in the firm.

While attending school and meeting other paralegals, a group of us decided we needed to form an association which could respond to the growing needs of the paralegal profession in Indiana. As a charter member of the IPA, it was very fulfilling to see the paralegal profession become recognized and respected. Eventually IPA affiliated with NFPA and, as time went on, I learned of the PACE credential.

I knew from the very beginning that some day I was going to take PACE. I saw earning the R.P. designation as the next step in my career development. It felt good to be respected in my firm as one of the pioneers of the profession in Indiana and I wanted that respect and professionalism to continue. Although I eventually went back to school and finished my Nursing classes (with the exception of actually doing the clinicals), I never obtained a Bachelor's Degree. Therefore, I set a goal of taking PACE prior to the end of 2000 so that I could qualify under the grandfathering clause with my Associate's Degree and years of experience.

Even though by 2000, I had worked for the same firm for almost 30 years, I still wondered if I would be able to pass PACE. For the first half of my career, I had dealt with public utility law, family law, civil and criminal litigation and probate. The second half of my career had been a complete change to Medical Malpractice Defense where I have remained ever since (thus, the need to finish my Nursing classes). I had been fortunate enough to have participated in many Federal and State trials, so I wasn't completely intimidated by Federal issues, but it was scary. I just maintained a positive

mental attitude and decided that it was a rewarding challenge to be able to go back and refresh my educational base after all these years. In addition, my older sister had joined our firm as a paralegal several years prior and had taken PACE during the summer of 2000. Though we didn't know yet if she had passed, I couldn't let her pass me up! 😊

So I obtained the study manual and video and started working on my own. The study manual was helpful in that it suggested other material to read, which I did. For several months I disciplined myself to study and prepare for the exam. I focused primarily on the NFPA Study Manual, supplemental references which they recommended, reviewed legal and Latin terms in *Black's Law Dictionary*, studied the Blue Book of Citations carefully and looked through some of the old textbooks I had maintained.

I applied for the exam, sat for the exam, finished it well before the end of 4 hours, and then had to wait and see if I passed. In the meantime, my sister had received notification that she had passed. Of course, I was soooooo hoping I received that same result! In thinking about the test, however, I remember my biggest concern was that at times it felt like there could be two right answers. I had not been privy to the history of how PACE was developed or how the test questions were designed. Today, I would highly recommend that a candidate include that as part of their study material to better assist in selecting the "best" answer.

The good news was that I received notification that I had passed! I felt so proud having attained this goal. Having the R.P. designation after my name gives me the confidence to know that I am not just "any" paralegal. Though I have worked at the same firm now for nearly 35 years, this demonstrated to my employer that I had been nationally recognized as competent in my profession. Since that time, my employer has used that distinction to market my credentials to our clients as well as to demonstrate personal respect and professionalism to me within the firm. I feel proud to have started where I began with this firm and to have achieved the designation of a PACE Registered Paralegal. It feels good to represent my firm well and to receive their support for my professionalism. Now, as PACE Ambassador for IPA, it adds yet another chapter to the story and is a true blessing to be able to help other paralegals achieve their goals.

If you have taken the PACE exam and passed, I congratulate you!!

If you are studying for the exam or scheduled to sit for the exam, I extend my sincere good luck and congratulations on your decision. If you will take the time to prepare, you will find the challenge both very rewarding and the personal achievement to be extraordinary. As Tiger says, "JUST DO IT!" Not only will you be advancing your career, but you will be helping to advance the entire paralegal profession!

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