

VINCENT N. DEPALO

Partner, Smith Duggan, Boston
University of New Hampshire School of Law, 2013

A practitioner in many areas of complex civil litigation, including toxic torts, environmental claims and commercial disputes, Vincent N. DePalo recently secured a defense verdict for his client in the first joint asbestos-tobacco trial in Massachusetts history.

Q. What's the most satisfying case or matter you've worked on so far?

A. I represented a doctor in a dispute with a health insurance company. The doctor worked in an under-served community treating patients with significant quality-of-life diseases, most commonly diabetes. A health insurer attempted to claw back payment for certain necessary treatments that the doctor performed over many years that had produced empirically proven positive results for her patients, even though the health insurer never objected to such treatments in the past. Coincidentally (or not), the health insurer changed its policy after a corporate restructuring and a renewed, corresponding focus on its profits. After substantial resistance, we were able to depose a senior vice president of the health insurer. I was able to confront the vice president with the company's policy reversal – which was unsubstantiated by any peer-reviewed medical journal – and uncover that my client was singled out as a target. A week after the senior vice president's deposition, the health insurer relented and ended up paying my client.

Q. What's the best piece of professional advice you ever received?

A. My mentor, Judge Dennis Curran, always told me the advice his mother gave him: "Your reputation

both precedes you and proceeds you." The legal community is not that big, and your reputation colors many of your interactions, both in litigation and social contexts.

Q. What's the toughest part of your job?

A. Measuring my life in six-minute increments.

Q. What's one thing about you that might surprise people?

A. My love for karaoke.

Q. What makes someone a really good lawyer?

A. All of the best lawyers that I've ever met have an unyielding curiosity and inquisitiveness. The lawyers I consider "good" are not afraid of new types of cases, and they challenge themselves to learn different areas of the law or try new techniques to help their clients. This continuing quest for knowledge separates the good lawyers from the rest.

Q. As a lawyer, what are you most afraid of?

A. I am most afraid of becoming boxed into a single specialty. While I value becoming an expert in an area of the law, my goal is to be the best trial lawyer I can – wherever that may lead me. I strive for a well-rounded experience through a diversity of case types. **MLW**



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Member, Massachusetts Bar Association; fellow, MBA Leadership Academy, 2017-2018; member, Justinian Law Society; adjunct professor, Northeastern University School of Law