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## Law firm closes doors downtown

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Record correspondent

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PAXTON - For the first time since before World War I, there is no man named Pacey working as an attorney in Paxton.

Chip Pacey, the sole remaining lawyer at Pacey & Pacey Lawyers PC for the past 14 years, quietly closed the office on June 30.

Pacey, who will turn 64 in the fall, then spent 11 days at the family's summer home in northern Wisconsin. After a week in Paxton of working a quarter of the way through the names on the law firm's clients list, notifying them of his decision, Pacey is back in Wisconsin.

### Chip Pacey

"I had no intention of working forever like my father did," Pacey said.

Pacey joined the firm in 1988 after working nearly 20 years in bank trusts in the Chicago area. Pacey said he returned to his hometown roots when he did because his father, Warren, said he was going to retire. Instead, Warren maintained office hours until about 2005, usually the first one to arrive every morning. Warren Pacey died in 2007 at age 90.

Warren's uncle E. J. Pacey opened the law firm before World War I. Partners were in and out over the years before the firm became known as Pacey & Pacey.

Chip's brother Steve worked in the firm until 14 years ago when he became Ford County's judge. When asked how he felt about the office closing, Steve Pacey said: "Sure, sure, (it's sad). Things change. People change."

Chip Pacey said he will miss his clients but not the challenges of the profession. He said lawyering is the kind of job that is never finished. In retirement he said he could foresee himself as a Wal-Mart greeter or mowing the golf course near his summer home because either job would require little mental effort.

When he stopped mowing for the day, his job would be complete.

In the next generation of Paceys, there are nine Pacey cousins in the two families. None have chosen to enter the legal profession, though.

"My wife, Judy, and I (an educator) encouraged the three girls to be anything they wanted," Chip Pacey said. "Judy grew up in a time where the two main choices for young women were teacher and nurse. Judy wanted our girls to have limitless choices, and we've ended up with two teachers and a social worker."

Pacey said he thinks his girls saw his work load and how he could not spend entire summers with the rest of the family in Wisconsin. They opted for summer freedom.

Steve Pacey has six children. Four of them are teachers, and one is a swim coach. Youngest son Tom is headed this fall to the University of Illinois to study business.

Indeed, of the attorneys who currently practice law in Paxton, none have grown children who chose to become lawyers.

Both PACEYS said they did not necessarily raise their children with the idea they would follow them into the profession as is the case in many farm families.

Chip PACEY said it is difficult for a law school graduate to make a go of it in a small-town practice. Students come out with a load of debt and starting salaries might seem low. The firm would have to carry them for about 18 months until the new attorneys are capable of making contributions to the firm.

Chip PACEY said he did some looking for someone to take over the firm but was unsuccessful. "But if someone walked in wanting to, that would be fine," PACEY said.

Chip PACEY said there will be no auction of the building or furniture. PACEY said no one needs to consult the law books that line the walls of the conference room.

"Everything that's there would fit on a dozen compact discs," he said. "There used to be some book resale value for decorative purposes but no more. We'll probably throw them away."

Chip PACEY will spend substantial time over the next several months working through clients files and notifying them of his retirement. In January he will retire officially through the Illinois Supreme Court.

He'll spend more time in Wisconsin this summer and maybe a total of two weeks in Florida over the winter. Judy has been retired for three years after serving as regional superintendent of education in Champaign and Ford counties. She currently supervises GED testing at Lincoln's Challenge in Rantoul. PACEY may become qualified to administer the tests.

Paxton will remain their home for now. Their children and grandchildren live in the Chicago and Milwaukee areas. They will spend more time with them.

"We don't have a plan; we'll wing it," Chip PACEY said.