



*In Memoriam: Charles W. Key*



It is with deep sorrow that Damon Key Leong Kupchak Hastert mourns the passing of our partner, colleague, and friend Charles W. Key. Charlie died at home September 10, 2008. He was 79.

Charlie was a man of wry charm whose legacy in his community, with the Bar, and in our firm which bears his name, is secure. Prior to attending Stanford Law School, he served in the Navy as both an enlisted man and as an officer. He also served as President of the Hawaii State Bar Association, and was instrumental in “unifying” the Bar, requiring that all lawyers become members. Charlie was elected as Hawaii’s delegate to the American Bar Association, and also was a member of the ABA Standing Committee on Ethics. He was consistently recognized by his peers as among the Best Lawyers in Hawaii.

We would like to share with you a letter written by Philip R. Wood, Charlie's friend, to the *Honolulu Advertiser*. His reminiscence captures well Charlie's spirited approach both to life, and to the law —

*Anybody who met Charlie Key didn't soon forget him. Hidden beneath a gruff exterior and voice that could be heard several offices away was a mind that demanded close attention. Charlie was primarily concerned with fairness, and if that wasn't what you had in mind, he could eviscerate with a well-timed sentence quickly followed by his familiar ironic smile.*

*This, along with a well-made intellect, made him a formidable opponent, and just one more reason he would become one of Hawaii's leading lawyers and an expert in Hawaii real estate, condominium and development law.*

*Charlie, who spent his youth in Iowa and Michigan small towns, wore his Midwestern values on his sleeve. Right was right and wrong was wrong. These values directed him to Stanford Law School and, in 1959, to Hawaii and the 1963 formation of the law firm now known as Damon Key Leong Kupchak Hastert, one of the Hawaii legal firms that pioneered multi-racial partnership.*

*Ever the determined competitor, he was a committed runner and was known to destroy friend and stranger alike on the racquetball courts of Honolulu. As Charlie grew older, he discovered the maddening challenge of golf at Oahu Country Club, where he and his buddies would compete for every dollar as if each one was his last.*

*To the end, Charlie loved nothing better than the practicing of law. It was, in every way, his life. For almost 50 years Charlie Key was a part of Hawaii's legal community, and his mark will be lasting.*

*His family will miss a sense of humor that brought laughter to all. His friends will miss the possibility of winning sawbuck from him on the golf course. And Hawaii will miss one hell of a lawyer.*

Both in his personal and professional interactions, Charlie could be refreshingly direct, as many of us at Damon Key experienced. But he was also equally considerate, compassionate, and a reminder of a time when the practice of law was more personal, more intimate. Perhaps no better illustration of this camaraderie can be found than in Charlie's founding and long-time participation in the Wednesday Club, a group of eight prominent Honolulu lawyers from different firms who gathered at a new restaurant each week to share lunch together — their guiding resolution: "To eat in a different restaurant every week of the year and never to repeat a selected spot." Which they did, for more than 30 years.

Of course we shall always remember Charlie as a candid, forthright, and accomplished lawyer. But where he remains in our hearts more deeply is as the friend and mentor who quietly demonstrated to us that the practice of law can be both a personal service and a collegial profession. A calling where consideration and courtesy still have a place even among the most zealous of advocates.

Thank you, Charlie, and aloha oe.