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Coming Full Circle: Mark Murakami Receives Law School Honor

On Friday, December 6, 2019, Damon Key attorney Mark M. Murakami was recognized by the University of Hawaii's William S. Richardson School of Law as its "Dean's Alumnus of the Year." Mark accepted the honor at the school's 16th Annual All Class Reunion.

Mark was the valedictorian of the law school's class of 1999. "After joining us in 2005, Mark was a rising star from the moment he arrived at the firm, and his success is a direct reflection of the quality legal education he received from the Richardson School of Law," said Damon Key Vice President Michael Yoshida. "For Mark to be awarded this distinction is both fitting and inspiring. We congratulate him and look forward to his continued leadership at Damon Key."

After a demanding and noteworthy stint on Coast Guard ships on the West Coast, Mark excelled at the Law School, receiving numerous academic awards, including the Dean's Scholar and the Porter Scholastic Award (twice); awards for highest grade in Property I, Torts I, Contracts I, Corporations, and Professional Responsibility; the Kono Award for Academic Achievement; the Phi Delta Phi Professional Responsibility Award; and the HSBA Real Property and Financial Services Section Award. He also served as Articles Editor of the University of Hawaii Law Review.

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The proud alumni of the University of Hawaii's William S. Richardson School of Law.

Kim and Mark Murakami

Mark maintains his connection to the Law School, serving as a panelist for “real world of lawyering” discussions and teaching law classes. As a member of the firm’s hiring committee, he also has the pleasure of interviewing and hiring well-qualified Richardson students and graduates.

“When you think of the alumni of the Richardson School of Law, you see Supreme Court justices, judges, law firm partners, elected officials and hundreds of attorneys dedicated to the practice of law, in all its forms. Being selected among all those worthy graduates is humbling,” said Mark. “I graduated twenty years ago and would go back to law school in a heartbeat. I fondly remember my time there and consider myself fortunate to have been able to attend. The faculty, staff, and my classmates made my law school experience rewarding and I value the relationships made at the school to this day,” he added. “Of course, the best part of my time in law school was meeting (and eventually marrying) my Constitutional Law II classmate, Kim. Kim has been by my side for the past twenty-one years and we take joy in our two children, Tyler and Kyra.”

Today, Mark practices in the firm’s Dispute Resolution, Real Estate and Construction, and Business and Commercial Law practice groups. He focuses on complex commercial disputes, eminent domain, land use and litigation, and probate and trust litigation. He has appeared in all federal and states courts in Hawaii, most of the administrative boards and commissions, and is licensed in the U.S. Supreme Court, Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and Court of Federal Claims. Mark has been consistently selected by his peers to the Super Lawyers and Best Lawyers in America lists.

Mark has continued his military service as a Captain in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve. A graduate of the U.S. Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut, he served for 13 years on active duty before joining the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve the same year that he joined the firm. During his time on active duty, he served on three different Coast Guard cutters, including command of a patrol boat in California. He spent four years assigned to the Fourteenth Coast Guard District Legal Office. Over the years, Mark has been awarded numerous medals for his distinguished service.

Mark was born on Maui and raised in Kailua. He is a graduate of Kailua High School and was active in the Castle Performing Arts Center. He currently serves as President of I’m A Bright Kid Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the performing arts and education. He has served on the boards of other non-profit organizations, is a pro bono arbitrator for the Judiciary, and handles several cases on a pro bono basis.

When Mark reflects on his time in law school, he admires the “singularity of purpose to learn the law” that was evident among such a diverse group of students. “Progressive to conservative, kamaaina to malihini, we gathered in classrooms together for three years to learn how to think like lawyers and how to become them. Many of my classmates have moved on to new adventures outside the law, including business, government and family. I cherish my time spent at that school with my wonderful classmates. When we see each other in court or on the street, we always smile and give the knowing local-style eyebrow lift,” added Mark, with a sense of pride and deep gratitude. “I went to the perfect law school for me and I am perpetually grateful for the education I received there, for the professors who shared their wisdom with me, and for the opportunities and network I gained.”