

This month's interview features father and daughter Paul Alston and Chrystn Eads. Paul is a stockholder and director of Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing. His daughter, Chrystn, worked in the government with Mayors Carlisle and Hannemann as well as in the office of Senator Inouye and is currently also at Alston Hunt Floyd & Ing.



Paul Alston, a graduate of the University of Southern California Gould School of Law shares with us his thoughts on the changes he has seen within the practice of law as well as his thoughts on having a daughter follow after him into the profession.

How has the practice of law changed since you first began practicing?

The pace of work has changed in ways that were unimaginable when I started working at Legal Aid in Waianae in 1972. Then, researching anything meant a trip to the Supreme Court law library, where lawyers had after-hours access. Now, it takes .23 seconds on Google to find any case. There were no faxes, much less emails. Now, communication is instantaneous and responses are expected in minutes, not days. The changes are all for the better.

You've been involved in some very high profile cases; are there any that you think were particularly memorable?

The first case I filed--just 4 months after starting work, was a class action challenging the DOE's failure to provide services to handicapped children. That led to a consent decree and, 25 years later to the *Felix* case, in which our firm played a leading role. That led, in turn, to our current class action (*E.R.K. v. Matayoshi*) against the DOE for denying services to young adults. That line of cases is memorable because it reflects a frustrating reality--no matter how well-intentioned the leaders may be (and the current leaders ARE well-intentioned), the DOE is nearly immune to change.

In an interview from when you were HSBA President, you stated that you did not want your children to go into law. Considering that, how do you feel about Chrystn going into law?

Chrystn spent 18 years using her law degree in government service. She contributed a lot and learned a lot. I am thrilled that she is now using those talents at our firm.

What are some things that you've learned that you'd like young lawyers to know?

Three things: (1) the loudest lawyer is rarely the best lawyer; (2) hard working lawyers win more than lazy lawyers; and (3) this is, first and foremost, a service business. If you don't like serving clients and serving the law, quit now and save yourself (and everyone around you) a lot of grief.



Chrystn Eads, a graduate of the University of Southern California Gould School of Law, shares with us the experience from working in the government that she applies to her practice.

Was your father an influence in deciding to go into law, and did you ever think that you would be practicing with him?

I didn't go to law school planning to "go into law." In fact, my law school entrance essay focused on how I planned to use the skills learned in law school in other pursuits. I didn't think I'd be practicing law at all, much less with my dad.

How does your experience working with Mayors Carlisle and Hannemann as well as in the office of Senator Inouye contribute to your current practice?

Aside from the personal growth that came from being able to observe, work with, and learn from those dedicated public servants, there are three elements that I draw from in my current practice. First, is that I used to be a client. Particularly in my work with the City, I have relied on the services of attorneys and understand the different roles filled and needs met by attorneys. I am able to anticipate the client's needs and communicate effectively. Let's be honest, attorneys often use language differently than our clients. My experience "on the outside" made me more cognizant of that potential disconnect and I strive to overcome that language barrier. Next is my understanding of the legislative process at the federal and county level, to include the various stakeholders. It can be a daunting process for someone who is unfamiliar with the process, but drawn in by proposed legislation or a proposed rule change that will affect their business. I am able to help clients navigate through the process. Finally, it would be the ability to clearly define a problem, because when you work in the government you need to be very creative in finding solutions.

You received both your undergraduate and law degrees from mainland schools; did you always intend to return to Hawaii to work?

I probably shouldn't admit this to the Bar, but whenever I thought about returning to Hawaii to live it wasn't about the work. I was focused on wanting to raise my children near family and with an appreciation for Hawaii's unique culture.

If there was one piece of advice that you had in terms of your professional and personal life, what would it be?

Treat everyone with respect.