

This month's interview features Coralie Chun Matayoshi, Regional Chief Executive Officer of the American Red Cross, Pacific Islands and her two children, Scot Matayoshi, an associate with McCorriston Miller Mukai MacKinnon in Downtown Honolulu and Kelly Matayoshi, an associate with Farella Braun + Martel's Business Litigation Group in San Francisco.

Coralie Chun Matayoshi, a graduate of Punahou, UC Berkeley, and Hastings College of the Law shares with us her secret to balancing her professional and personal roles, which one can say recently came to a crossroads when both Scot and Kelly graduated from Law School on the same day, on two different coasts, on a day that was meant to celebrate her.



You're a lawyer, a wife, a mother, and active volunteer in the community.

Please share with us the secret to balancing these roles.

Balancing a career and family is never easy, especially for women who society still expects to bear the lion's share of household chores and caregiving (for both children and aging parents). I remember getting a call at my law firm in the middle of the day. It was the pre-school - "your child is sick; please come and pick him up." Great way to make me feel guilty!

Fortunately, I have a wonderful husband Ron who was the one who took Scot home from pre-school that day, and who did more than just "help" as our 3 kids were growing up. Since his job was always more flexible than mine, he could take the kids to doctor's appointments and coach their sports teams. Working for a law firm billing in 6 minute increments and later as head of HICLE and HSBA left me little time during the day, so I would stay up until midnight baking cupcakes for the kids to take to school the next day, and take vacation time to cook in bulk and clean the house.

What I learned is that you have to be as organized and efficient at home as you are at work. When the kids are young, your life revolves around them, and there is no rest for the weary. Yes, it's hectic, fun, frustrating, rewarding, and exhausting, but totally worth it. They grow up so fast - one day they're in diapers, and the next day they are going off to college. You have to treasure your time with them.

Some people think that it's better to wait until you are settled into your career to have kids, but there is never a right time. Each phase of your life has a different focus of time, energy, and priorities. Now that the nest is empty, I am dedicating an enormous amount of time and effort as a University of Hawaii Regent, something I would never have been able to do when the kids were young.

You have served in leadership positions for several organizations including the HSBA and now as the Regional Chief Executive Officer of the American Red Cross, Pacific Islands. It seems that you were born to lead. Can you tell us what qualities or 'life mantras' that have helped you achieve such success?

Actually, all I ever wanted to be was a lawyer, but life threw me a curve ball. After I had my first child, I shied away from the adversarial nature of legal practice and didn't want to live my life by billable hours. But what else was I qualified to do? I took a leap of faith and became the head of HICLE, which I later

discovered was bankrupt. Through sheer determination and the help of great volunteer lawyers and judges, we pulled HICLE out of the red and built a highly successful organization.

Eighteen months later, the HSBA Executive Director position opened up. I applied, but didn't get the job. I was 32 years old, presumably too young and inexperienced.

Lesson #1: When things don't happen the way you want, keep going because sometimes things are just not meant to be. I was so disappointed. You've heard about wanting something so badly that you would be willing to give up your first born child? I would have been willing to give up having our third child and serving as President of the YLD (I was President-elect at the time). I am so glad that I didn't get the job because one year later the job opened up again after our third child was born and my term as YLD President was complete. I got the job, and the rest is history.

Lesson #2: Take every opportunity to learn new skills, even though you don't think you will ever use them again, because you never know when opportunity will knock and where life will take you. Even though I'm not practicing law, my legal skills are invaluable to me and I use them every day. I wouldn't be where I am today without a law degree. Don't just prepare yourself for one career because you may find out later that you don't like it or that it doesn't make use of your best talents. Life is a wonderful adventure and you need to hone all of your skills so that you will be ready when opportunity knocks.

Lesson #3: Don't burn bridges and always do your best, because that will open the next door to where life will lead you. I never imagined ending up as CEO of the American Red Cross. In retrospect, everything I did in life prepared me for this job – I just didn't know it.

Whether a lawyer or executive director for a non-profit or corporate office, what do you believe is the most valuable tool that you can have to be a great leader? Trusted staff, mentors, or family support maybe?

Trusted staff, mentors, and family support are all important, but what really makes a difference is passion. If you truly believe in what you are doing, others will follow. As the head of an organization, the role of a leader is to inspire people to do things they thought they couldn't do.

Another key attribute is confidence in your own abilities. A leader does not have to be an expert in every facet of the organization. That's why you hire a team of great people like CFOs and managers to provide expertise and advice.

Learn how to delegate by allowing those under you to make mistakes they can learn from, while still having their back. It may be faster and easier to do things yourself, but you are not giving others an opportunity to grow and in the end, you'll burn yourself out. And along the way, don't sweat the small stuff. Maybe age and the Red Cross have given me a greater perspective. As long as something isn't a major disaster, we don't fret over it or try to assess blame. We fix it and move on.

Finally, don't be afraid of failure. You will never know your full potential if you don't push yourself to learn new things that make you both scared and excited. It is not failure, but low aim that is a crime. You cannot have success without failure.

You mentioned to me that your daughter Kelly and son Scot shared the same law school graduation date. Kelly graduated in California and Scot here in Hawaii. What was the game plan for the family to share in these two momentous occasions?

Quite a dilemma being on the UH Board of Regents and formerly on the Board of Governors of the Hastings Alumni Association, and on top of that, it was Mother's Day. In the end, I attended Kelly's commencement along with our other daughter Alana who lives in San Jose, where I got to "hood" and walk across the stage with Kelly as a fellow alumnus. My husband Ron and the rest of the family attended Scot's UH commencement, and I attended Scot's swearing in ceremony after he passed the bar.

What would you say was the most important quality that you felt was important to instill in your children? Now that Scot and Kelly practice law do you think there was something that you did early on to pique their interest in the law profession?

Optimism, perseverance, and gratitude. Always look on the bright side and be grateful for what you have. Whether it's your job, personal life, or health, don't ever feel sorry for yourself because it could always be worse. Count your blessings for what you have and always see the glass as half full, not half empty. Find your passion, and happiness will follow. And what might have sparked Scot and Kelly's interest in the law is my mantra of never being afraid of doing the right thing.



Scot Matayoshi, a graduate of Punahou and the William S. Richardson School of Law details his experience with teaching Hawaii's youth before moving on to the profession of law.

Along with your sister and mother, you all are affiliated with the legal profession. Have you found family conversations a bit more interesting as a result?

Family conversations do take an interesting turn when Kelly and I can talk about legal issues with our mom and each other (keeping client confidentiality, of course). It always helps to have a sounding board you can trust. But to be honest, my sister Alana has far more interesting stories from her job helping autistic children.

You've mentioned you're passionate about the Teach for America program. Please tell us about this program and how you came to be involved.

I had applied to go to law school straight out of college, but decided to defer to join Teach for America, which had just opened a branch in Hawaii. Teach for America recruits motivated college graduates, gives them a crash course in teaching, and places them in high-need schools where they commit two years (or more) to making a difference. I was fortunate enough to be part of the 2006 Hawaii charter corps, and was placed out at Nanakuli High and Intermediate School to teach



middle school science. It was a great chance to give back to my community. Leaving the teaching profession, and my students, for law school was one of the most difficult decisions I've ever had to make. I strongly recommend that college graduates take the time to give back somehow, whether through Teach for America or another program or project. I also found that three years of teaching gave me the determination and dedication I needed to succeed in law school, not to mention the ability to handle stress levels far beyond that of even the bar exam.

Photo inset: Scot with his students on a field trip to replant native plants in the back of Nanakuli valley.

Is there an early memory that you can trace back to that piqued your interest in the profession of law?

High school debate was what first piqued my interest in law. I was surrounded by attorneys growing up on both sides of my family, but it wasn't until I joined the Punahou debate team that I knew I wanted to be a lawyer. That, and the stark realization that I lacked the necessary skills to become an astronaut.

As a William S. Richardson School of Law graduate what piece of advice would you give current law students who look to be successful right out of law school?

Treat law school like a job, especially if you're coming straight out of college. It can be very tempting to treat law school as an extension of college, but law school is really a three-year interview for the job you'll likely have for the rest of your life. Study hard, do the work, and try to get involved in extracurricular activities. Through the Jessup Moot Court team, I was able to improve my speaking and research skills, and had the opportunity to meet law students from around the world, from Singapore to Palestine, in the international rounds competition. Also, explore a variety of classes- the classes you end up loving might surprise you. I would not be working at McCarriston Miller Mukai MacKinnon if I had not put everything I had into law school.

Sidebar- if you're going to law school not intending to practice law, I'd like to offer some helpful advice: save yourself three years of studying and tuition and just jump into what you wanted to do in the first place.



Kelly Matayoshi, a graduate of Wellesley College and Hastings College of the Law works and lives full-time in San Francisco. Read on as she shares with us her love for community involvement and tips for overcoming that initial fear when meeting new people.

I noticed that you graduated from Hastings College of the Law. Your mom is also a graduate of the school. Was there a bit of family footsteps you intended to follow?

A little. My mom and my four aunts and uncles who also attended Hastings showed me that Hastings produces great lawyers. So when it came time to applying for law schools I applied early to Hastings and held back sending most of my other applications. When I heard that I got in, it saved me a lot of time (and money) not having to apply anywhere else! And I didn't regret it for a second, I got a top notch education and was involved in outstanding extracurriculars that have helped me to get where I am today.

You've worked with the Special Olympics Hawaii, the American Red Cross, and even went abroad to attend school at the University of London. Sounds like you're quite the adventurer and find pleasure in providing service to others. Please tell us a little about this.

I love being involved in the community that I am in. I've lived in quite a few places and I find the best way to get settled is to join an organization. And community service organizations are the best to get involved in because you meet amazing people doing amazing work. This is one of the aspects I like most about the law, we get to help people going through a really difficult time in their lives. At my law firm, Farella Braun + Martel, I've been able to do a lot of pro bono. In the past year I've represented two families who were threatened with eviction and ended up settling both with great results. It's a good feeling, and the experience you gain is unbeatable.

Since you and Scot share the same law school graduation day and were unable to share in each other's day, did you get to celebrate together at a later time?

Not right after graduation, but after we took the bar exam our entire family went on a trip to Thailand and Cambodia. It was amazing that we were all free, we had not been able to go on a family trip with everyone there for a long time.

Photo inset: Ron, Kelly, Scot, Jennifer (Scot's wife), Alana, and Coralie.

If there was one piece of advice that has rung true for you in both your personal and professional life, what would you tell us it was?

Just get out there and don't be afraid of failure. Join groups, run for positions, go to events. You'll find that some of them are not good fits, you'll lose an election, or you'll feel awkward not knowing anyone at the party. But every now and then you will find something or meet someone that will change your life in a way you never could have imagined. I think I fail more times than I succeed, but if I stopped trying then I know that I would never find success.

