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JAY M. FUJITANI, 1959-2016

Munger partner known for his calmness, passion

The longtime partner died Sunday of pancreatic cancer

By Joshua Sebold
Daily Journal Staff Writer

Munger, Tolles & Olson LLP partner Jay M. Fujitani died Sunday after a battle with pancreatic cancer.

Fujitani was a corporate partner who assisted clients with mergers and acquisitions, corporate governance and regulatory compliance. His partners remember him as an extremely calm and reasoned presence, both as a negotiator and around the office. Many said he had a handle on his emotions that other attorneys envied.

“Jay was an outstanding lawyer, serving his clients with an extraordinary and creative mind and an uncompromising commitment to their best interests,” wrote Ronald L. Olson, one of the firm’s name partners, in an email.

“Jay was truly one of the most centered and insightful people I have ever known,” wrote Judith T. Kitano, another corporate partner in the firm. “He had a brilliant legal mind with absolutely none of the difficult qualities that can sometimes travel with it.”

Corporate partner Kevin S. Masuda echoed that thought, saying that Fujitani was a “consummate gentleman” who he never saw angry or rude in 20 years with the firm.



JAY M. FUJITANI

Despite his outward calm, partners said Fujitani was passionate about many issues, especially diversity and LGBT rights, as he was a gay man.

He worked pro bono on the legal team that represented Equality California and gay and lesbian couples petitioning the California Supreme Court to declare that Proposition 8 was unconstitutional. Prop. 8 was a measure that precluded same-sex couples from marrying in the state.

Fujitani also chaired his firm’s diversity and recruiting committees.

On the clock, Fujitani worked closely with Southern California Edison, a client since the 1990s, and with former Munger Tolles partner Robert L. Adler, now retired, who left the firm to become the company’s general counsel in 2008.

“Jay was a terrific lawyer and the most honest and decent of men,” Adler wrote. “He loved helping other people, and his good cheer and sweetness attracted their friendship back.”

Partner William D. Temko said Fujitani’s impact on young attorneys as a mentor could be seen when friends and colleagues gathered to spend one last night with him on Saturday.

“A lot of the younger lawyers at the firm and people who have gone on to do other things, who aren’t even at the firm anymore, were there on Saturday night,” Temko said. “He was friends with everyone.”

Temko said his friend’s cancer was discovered at a very late stage several months ago and many are still in a state of shock.

Fujitani is survived by his husband, Paul O’Reilly; his mother, Constance; brother Riki and sister-in-law Mallory, as well as his nephews, McKenna and Cade, and his niece Emma.