Margaret W. Wong ’76 Receives Jaeckle Award at Gala Alumni Luncheon

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Available at: https://digitalcommons.law.buffalo.edu/ub_law_forum/vol27/iss1/27
Margaret W. Wong ’76 receives Jaeckle Award at gala alumni luncheon

An accomplished alumna who emigrated to the United States and has helped countless others to become American citizens has been accorded SUNY Buffalo Law School’s highest honor.

Margaret W. Wong ’76, born in Hong Kong and now a nationally renowned immigration lawyer based in Cleveland, received the Edwin F. Jaeckle Award at the New York City Alumni Luncheon on Jan. 25.

The award recognizes Wong’s “significant contributions to her University, her Law School and the legal profession. … As a longtime member of the Dean’s Advisory Council, she has helped to enhance the quality and reputation of the Law School. Herself a Law School scholarship recipient, she has endowed a substantial scholarship program and a full professorship, gifts that place her among the most generous alumni in the Law School’s 125-year history.”

Wong came to the United States on a student visa along with her younger sister, Cecilia. Between them they had four suitcases and $200. She worked her way through college in Iowa and then Illinois as a waitress and spent summers doing hotel work in New York’s Catskills resorts. After completing her SUNY Buffalo Law School on a full scholarship, she struck out on her own in Cleveland, handing out her business card on buses to develop a client base. Now Margaret Wong & Associates has offices in Cleveland, Chicago, New York City, Columbus, Atlanta and Detroit, serving both individual and corporate clients.

“arget is a force of nature. She is irrefpressible, she is simply indomitable, she is smart, she is hard-working, but most importantly she is very selfless. She gives and then gives

At the awards lunch, master of ceremonies Francis M. Letro ’79 (winner of last year’s Jaeckle Award) and Law Alumni Association President Brian M. Melber ’96 welcomed those in attendance, including much of Wong’s extended family. Dean Makau W. Mutua gave a brief update on developments at the Law School, including its participation in the UB 2020 University-wide planning process and the hiring of three promising young faculty members. He noted that of the 20 professors hired during his five-year tenure as dean, “we have hired in areas of black-letter law.”

Letro shared some words of congratulation from UB President Satish K. Tripathi, and Kenneth Forrest ’76, Wong’s Law School classmate and himself a Jaeckle Award honoree, said, “There is no member of the Class of 1976 who has achieved more than Margaret Wong. There is no better advertisement for SUNY Buffalo Law School than Margaret.”

In conveying the award, Dean Mutua said, “Margaret is a force of nature. She is irrefpressible, she is simply indomitable, she is smart, she is hard-working, but most importantly she is very selfless. She gives and then gives

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and then gives some more."

The dean noted that Wong is typically at work by 5 a.m. and works into the evening, but also makes time to contribute her service to numerous community organizations. "I think she must sleep very little, to do all these things," he said. He also noted her deep commitment to family, including the pull-out-all-the-stops Wednesday night dinners that she and her husband, pharmacist Kam Chan, have hosted for many years for their large extended family. (Their daughter Allison Chan ’11 now works for her mother’s law firm.)

It was with her family that Wong began her remarks, thanking them for their support—including her 93-year-old mother, who was in the audience, and her aunt and uncle, new immigrants themselves at the time, who supported her through her college and Law School years.

Of her alma mater, Wong said: "I could never be who I am if I did not come to SUNY Buffalo Law School. Somehow, somewhere, they found me a scholarship. I didn’t have money to get a good haircut, I didn’t have money to buy beautiful glasses, but UB treated me like an equal. I never walked out thinking I’m a second-class citizen. We took the bar, we passed it and we became lawyers. And we walked with our heads high."

The New York City Luncheon planning committee included Letro as chair; Melber; Rebecca Monck Ricigliano ’99, chair of the New York City chapter of the Law Alumni Association; and from the Law School, Vice Dean Ilene R. Fleischmann and Assistant Dean Lisa M. Mueller ’93, executive director and assistant director, respectively, of the Law Alumni Association.