

MENTORS

APPRECIATIONS OF GUIDANCE & SUPPORT

Legal professionals write about their mentors



Jocelyn Burton, left, and Mike Baller

Morris 'Mike' Baller

GOLDSTEIN, DEMCHAK, BALLER, BORGEN & DARDARIAN, OAKLAND

Over the last 20 years, Mike Baller at Goldstein Demchak Baller Borgen & Dardarian has been an extraordinary mentor. I met Mike when I went to Marron, Reid & Sheehy as a second-year associate. When I started there, I was the only woman attorney in the litigation group and the only African-American attorney in the San Francisco office. Mike provided me with excellent training and the opportunity to receive great experience as a young associate. More importantly, he has generously given his time and been a great friend throughout the years.

At Marron, Reid & Sheehy, Mike often invited me and other women associates to social events with his family and friends. Whether it was sailing, the symphony or a sporting event, Mike took the time to get to know me and to introduce me to other attorneys and clients. One day, I happened to tell him that it was my birthday. When I later revealed that I didn't have any plans, he promptly invited me to his home for dinner even though his in-laws were visiting from the East Coast.

Even though I left Marron, Reid & Sheehy after four years, Mike and I have remained in touch. When I contemplated career changes or moves, often I called Mike Baller and simply said, "I've been thinking about some things and I need to talk." Mike and I would go to the symphony or a basketball game and I always received wise and candid advice.

After years of working at law firms and government, I recently co-founded an employment law firm in Oakland. Mike immediately set up lunches and introduced me to other employment lawyers that could provide advice and potential referrals. I realize that many women attorneys have a difficult time finding mentors early in their careers. I was extremely fortunate in finding one in Mike Baller.

—Jocelyn Burton, *Burton Mousseau*