

Michael Kun Featured in "Making Headlines"

UVA Lawyer

November 29, 2018 | Media Coverage

Michael S. Kun, Member of the Firm in the Employment, Labor & Workforce Management practice, in the firm's Los Angeles office, was featured in the *UVA Lawyer*, in "Making Headlines."

Following is an excerpt:

Articles in the Virginia Law Weekly offer readers the scoop on a microcosmic community: that of a law student. Accumulated over 70 years, they create a powerful narrative of academic and social life. ...

Michael Kun '88 started writing for the student newspaper at Johns Hopkins University as an undergraduate and wrote a humor column, "Ham on Wry," for most of his time there.

"I had always enjoyed writing that humor column at Hopkins," Kun said. "At UVA, I knew a few people who were working on VLW, and they asked me if I would be interested in writing a similar humor column, which I was glad to do. It was a nice distraction from studying."

In addition to the column, he continued to write short stories during his first two years of law school.

"I would write them in long hand, often in the Law School lounge, head home to type them up, send them off to publications and await the inevitable rejection letters," said Kun, who works at Epstein Becker & Green in Los Angeles. "I wish I'd kept those rejection letters. They were a good motivator."

People



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In his second year, however, he sold five or six short stories to different publications within the same month.

Then came his biggest break.

Ahead of his third year, an editor passed along one of Kun's short stories to a colleague at a New York publishing house, and Kun was invited up to do a reading. The publisher afterward offered him a generous contract, but Kun was given only a year to write the novel and 24 hours to accept the offer.

"I toyed with the idea of postponing my third year of law school so I could write the book, but ultimately decided that I would find a way to do both," he said. "So I signed the contract and wrote my first novel during my third year, writing at night and between classes—and, admittedly, during classes if an idea struck me."

"A Thousand Benjamins," which has been described as "a wistful tale about two sad but funny people," was completed by graduation and published in 1990. The Law Weekly's headline announced on the front page in 1987: "Kun writes serious novel."

Since law school, Kun has filled his personal bibliography with books on sports and fiction, as well as co-creating the Wage & Hour Guide for Employers app. His 2005 novel "You Poor Monster" was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

His novel "The Locklear Letters," a farcical look at celebrity worship, will be made into a movie titled "Eat Wheaties," starring Tony Hale, Danielle Brooks, Elisha Cuthbert and Sarah Chalke.

"The main character, Sid Straw, happened to write a humor column in college and sends some of his old columns to people," he said, "and, for that, I used revised versions of some of my old VLW columns."

As Kun's column illustrated, though the paper started as a fairly formal institution—"The VLW was always a high-class operation," Hackworth said—it evolved to include more humor and irreverence over the years. The paper published an annual fall humor edition during his day.