

Rising Star: Crowell & Moring's Gerry Murphy

By **Daniel Wilson**

Law360, Washington (April 1, 2016, 9:30 PM ET) -- A broad breadth of aviation regulatory expertise and experience, demonstrated by his work for clients such as United Airlines Inc. and recognized by his firm with selection as an aviation group co-chair, has earned Crowell & Moring LLP's Gerry Murphy a position among Law360's top transportation attorneys under 40.

Murphy, one of four transportation attorneys to make the Rising Stars list, told Law360 that becoming a lawyer was always on the cards for him, with both of his parents attorneys and his grandfather serving as a judge. A role in aviation law, however, was not something he had initially foreseen, he said.

Instead, it was his interest in working on international issues that first drew him into aviation work, beginning with an internship at the U.S. Department of Transportation's Office of International Law while in law school.

The experience gained from that internship led the Chicago native to work as a law clerk with Crowell & Moring in 2003, and the 38-year-old has stayed with the firm — and in Washington, D.C., where he lives with wife Sonya and daughter Reina — ever since, with aviation law having proven to be an excellent outlet for pursuing his interests.

"One thing I really, really enjoy about aviation ... is the international aspect of it," he said. "Being able to work on something that is inherently global has always been, and continues to be, one of my favorite parts of the job."

Since joining the firm, he has risen through the ranks, named partner in 2012 and then chosen as co-chair of the firm's aviation group in 2014, a promotion he attributed partly to fortunate timing, with the retirement of some partners in the group, but also to a solid track record in strategic and business planning and strong relationships with his mentors.

"I was very fortunate to have both people in the industry and in my firm to give me the perspective I needed to grow into that role — I never felt when I was put into that role that I was just dropped in. I

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Gerry Murphy
Crowell & Moring

felt like I had some very good preparation for it," Murphy said.

His practice encompasses a range of aviation industry issues, with a particular focus on regulatory compliance, including issues that come along with transactional work, and his clients include major U.S. airlines, trade associations and other aircraft operators.

A good representation of the breadth of Murphy's expertise is shown in his work for United, a long-standing relationship — both for the firm, and for Murphy himself — that began with predecessor Continental Airlines.

For instance, he and his team were recently called upon to help secure first-ever route authority for direct flights from the U.S. into the Chinese cities of Chengdu and Xi'an and to secure expanded flight access into Shanghai, as well as helping the airline to win the right to fly into Haneda Airport in Tokyo.

Murphy has also recently helped secure antitrust exemptions from the DOT for the airline and its Star Alliance partners, allowing them to participate in global cooperation deals, and is involved in what he described as the "exciting and historic" work of attempting to win approval for direct flights from the U.S. to Cuba, after a recent loosening of U.S. trade and travel restrictions.

A particular career highlight, he said, was his involvement in helping to resolve regulatory issues around the tie-up of United and Continental, one of the largest-ever mergers in the industry. The deal involved a number of complex regulatory and other issues that had to be addressed, leading to "one of the most exciting and challenging projects I've ever been involved in," Murphy said.

"They're operating on a 24/7 basis during [the whole merger process], so all the issues you have every day are still going on and you can't ever press pause," he said.

Asked for his advice for younger attorneys seeking to become the next rising star, Murphy noted that alongside potential challenges, such as difficulties in being taken seriously by clients, younger attorneys can also have some natural advantages that they can leverage.

For instance, when dealing with emerging technologies or markets — like the nascent unmanned aircraft system, or drone, industry, another significant part of his practice — industry players and young attorneys can often relate well to each other's thought processes, he said.

Most of all, if a young attorney finds a practice area where they enjoy and are challenged by the work, even if it's not what they initially expected they would do, they should "give it a shot and pursue it," he claimed.

"I consider myself lucky not just to be a lawyer ... but to really enjoy the area that I'm working in and feel challenged from it both on a professional and intellectual level," he said.

--Editing by Aaron Pelc.
