

Recap: “The Scott Carey Speaker Series—The Real Estate Lawyer”

By Patrick Atchison, J.D. Candidate 2018 | November 3, 2015

On October 29, 2015, the [Berkeley Business Law Journal](#) and the UC Berkeley Department of City & Regional Planning welcomed [Leo Pircher](#) '57, a founding partner at [Pircher, Nichols & Meeks](#), for a Q&A discussion about his career as an industry leading real estate attorney and changing dynamics in real estate law.

A graduate of UC Berkeley '54 and UC Berkeley School of Law '57, Mr. Pircher began his legal career working in a variety of practice areas including tort litigation, wills & estates, and tax. After several years of firm work, Mr. Pircher joined J&B Reedly Corporation, which at the time was the largest private equity real estate company in the nation. As corporate counsel, Pircher innovated real-estate tax structures and legal techniques for real estate transactions that remain industry standards to this day.

In 1983, Pircher founded a boutique real estate law firm with 17 attorneys in Los Angeles. Today, the firm employs 70 attorneys, with offices located in Los Angeles and Chicago. The firm specializes in large real estate transactions, representing well-known equity funds and REITs, as well as institutional and private investors. Pircher noted that competing with national “mega-firms” means that smaller firms must narrowly focus on one or two practice areas and rigorously hire the best talent.

After practicing in several different areas of law, Pircher has realized he enjoys real estate practice for two reasons. First, he has found that no matter if the economy is up or down, there are always real estate assets being bought and sold. Second, Pircher says real estate law has remained interesting because it touches upon so many different aspects of the law. A truly effective “deal-maker” is an attorney who not only understands contracts, but also corporate structures, land-use, tax, and has the skills to funnel that knowledge into clear, carefully constructed agreements. After almost 60 years of practicing law, Mr. Pircher stills finds excitement in his work, comparing drafting complex real-estate contracts to crossword puzzles, “it’s just the most fun thing in the world.”

Pircher also shared advice to aspiring corporate attorneys. As a senior partner, Pircher has found the key to becoming a partner at any firm is talent, willingness to work hard, luck, and most importantly, establishing a meaningful mentorship relationship with a prominent partner. Pircher emphasized that having a mentor who is “really in your corner” is always vital when climbing the corporate ladder.

When asked what traits he looks for in a young associate, Pircher explained that law school grades are not everything. A young attorney who asks the right questions, understands the important issues of a deal, and constantly volunteers to take on challenging assignments will stand out.