

FROM GERMANY TO ALASKA: ALUMNUS USES DRAKE LAW DEGREE ACROSS THE GLOBE

Nathan MacPherson, LW'06, is proof that a degree from Drake University Law School can take you anywhere.

MacPherson, a constitutional and tax defense attorney, heads the Anchorage, Alaska, office of The MacPherson Group, P.C. He is licensed in California and is a solicitor of the senior courts of England and Wales. He has lived and worked on three continents, represents clients all over the world, and is fluent in German and conversant in Brazilian Portuguese.

Being a lawyer is in MacPherson's blood. His father, Donald "Mac" MacPherson, is a renowned tax and criminal defense attorney. Growing up in Glendale, Ariz., MacPherson watched his father represent clients ranging from governors to Hollywood stars to CIA operatives.

"I grew up in my dad's firm, watching, sitting in on court cases around the country," MacPherson says. "I think in the back of my head I always knew I was going to be a lawyer."

After earning his Bachelor of Business Administration (B.B.A.) in finance from Grand Canyon University in Phoenix, MacPherson decided to attend Drake Law School. As a law student, MacPherson participated in summer study abroad programs in Germany, Austria, and Hungary.

It was at the University of Augsburg in Germany that he attended a presentation by Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer, LLP, the largest law firm in Germany and the second-largest in the world. The presentation led to an invitation to dinner, which led to a job offer.

MacPherson graduated from Drake Law School in December 2006 and passed the bar the following February. He and his wife moved to Germany, and he started at Freshfields as an associate in June 2007.

"I was sworn in as a lawyer at the U.S. Consulate General in Frankfurt, Germany, before a consul officer," MacPherson explains. "It was interesting to be in a foreign country and to raise my hand and take an oath to defend the U.S. Constitution. It had more special meaning to me."

He worked in the firm's Frankfurt and London offices for nearly four years, during which time he advised international banks in cross-border commercial real estate financing, derivatives, and complex securitization transactions. He also drafted and negotiated contracts for German bank bailouts, representing both the banks and the government at different times.

While practicing overseas, MacPherson was often confronted with differences between the United States and other countries.

"Germany is a civil law country, and we are a common law country," he explains. "And that common law heritage completely changes the way we think."

In late 2010, MacPherson decided to move back to the United States and join his father's firm.

"I had a son and was about to have another, and I wanted to raise my children in the United States to have that same heritage that I have," he says. "Also, my dad had no one to carry on the firm, so I came back to carry on the torch."

MacPherson opened an office for The MacPherson Group, P.C. in San Diego, and then later an office near Anchorage, where he and his family currently reside. His practice focuses primarily on federal and state civil and criminal tax defense, with clients around the world including a five-star restaurant, German royalty, and churches and family businesses targeted by the IRS.

He also does public speaking engagements, appears regularly on national radio, and has authored numerous professional articles in addition to a book, which is expected to be published early next year.

Still a frequent traveler, MacPherson often works from remote locations – both in the United States and abroad – while visiting clients or researching issues. He also travels regularly with his family, and about once a year they visit Brazil, where his wife is from.

"I've been to 47 states. My kids and wife and I have actually seen the country," he explains. "I like to see the diversity, all the different areas. There's a common thread that connects us, and it's interesting to see that."

When asked what advice he would give to law students interested in international work, MacPherson says, "They should learn about and appreciate the differences between our legal system and other legal systems."

He also says students should take advantage of every opportunity in law school.

"It's such a rich time with so many opportunities and valuable experiences," MacPherson says. "I don't regret at all going to law school and choosing Drake. It prepared me because it taught me where to look, how to think, how to find the answers. I think that was one of the most life-changing decisions I made."

