Good morning,

My name is Zach Dayno. I practice at Gravel & Shea in Burlington. I am also on the Young Lawyers Division Board and a former law clerk of Judge Peter W. Hall of the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit.

I want to begin by thanking the Bar for the many nominations for this year’s Peter W. Hall Integrity Award. I want to also thank the other members of the selection committee who worked with me in selecting this year’s award recipient— the other committee members are Rose Rizzico, who served as Judge Hall’s judicial assistant for many years; and Jill Pfenning and Justin Brown, two former Judge Hall law clerk’s.

It is an honor to present the third annual Judge Peter W. Hall Integrity Award. As many of you know, we lost Judge Hall in 2021.

The Young Lawyers Division created this award in Judge Hall’s honor because he was a remarkable lawyer and human being.

The Young Lawyers Division honors Judge Hall today and henceforth by presenting an annual award in his name to an individual of the Vermont Bar who exhibits the exceptional characteristics for which Judge Hall was best known:

* integrity, humility, empathy, good humor, love of Vermont, mentorship, and a steadfast commitment to public service and the rule of law.

The YLD’s goal in presenting this award is to reinforce the paramount role that integrity and professionalism play in our profession, so that practicing law in Vermont continues to be a special and unique experience.

This year, we received many nominations of highly qualified and deserving individuals. But one nominee stood out.

If I had to wager a guess, I think that almost everyone in this room knows this year’s award recipient – Michael Kennedy.

A native son of Vermont, Mike was raised in South Burlington, graduated from South Burlington High School and then the University of Vermont. He received his law degree from The George Washington University Law School.

As most of you know, Mike serves as the Bar Counsel for the Vermont Judiciary, providing both attorneys and non-attorneys with guidance related to legal ethics and the Vermont Rules of Professional Conduct. In other words, he is Vermont’s legal ethics guru.

Before serving as Bar Counsel Mike served as Disciplinary Counsel, investigating and prosecuting allegations of professional misconduct by attorneys. He has also served on the Vermont Board of Bar Examiners, was Chair of VBA Pro Bono Committee, and is a former President of VBA Board of Managers.

Away from the law, Mike has found time to serve his community. He was the Varsity Basketball Coach at South Burlington High School for 15 years and served on the Executive Board of the Vermont Basketball Coaches Association. An avid runner, having completed many marathons, Mike also serves on the Board of Directors of RunVermont.

The letters of support nominating Mike for this award were many and glowing. Words that came up often were: “humorous, personable, accessible, compassionate, knowledgeable, heroic, the ultimate teacher.”

Chief Justice Reiber of the Vermont Supreme Court, Judge Hall’s dear friend and colleague of many years, said the following about Mike receiving this award in Judge Hall’s honor:

“There was a sense of humility about Pete Hall that distinguished him that I see in Mike Kennedy.

I see in Mike Kennedy a similar self-effacing demeanor. Don’t mistake me, it’s not that he is reticent or withdrawing, rather his disposition is to listen…. to receive. It is an openness calculated to make all of us who seek him out for advice comfortable talking and confiding in him.”

Justice Reiber continued:

“I have greatly valued our friendship over the years, as has the bar. Sage wisdom, great advice, tough love when needed. Mike is a good friend not only to each of us individually but to the entire justice system in Vermont. I appreciate the Young Lawyer’s Division honoring Pete’s memory with this award to such a deserving candidate, Mike Kennedy!”

And Chief Judge Crawford of the United States District Court for the District of Vermont says the following about Mike:

“There is no more appropriate recipient for this award than Mike Kennedy. His service to the bar and to the greater Vermont community has been generous, wise, and gently humorous. He has quietly guided countless lawyers through thorny problems and in doing this he has protected the public. Mike is literally a lawyer’s lawyer — and it is marvelous to have a chance to thank him for the help he continues to give us all.”

Mike is always there for us. His Wellness Wedsnesday and Five for Friday quizzes are a staple of our bar. He is a constant at bar events. His CLEs are always informative, funny, and engaging.

With his humble demeanor, he dispenses nuanced, thoughtful advice. He is our rudder, guiding us through some of the most difficult decisions we as attorneys face. And beyond that, he advocates for us to be well and care for ourselves and one another.

Mike’s most recent Wellness Wednesday blog was about gratitute. He encouraged us all to take a gratitude pledge, which I encourage you all to do. In practicing gratitude today, I want to say, on behalf of myself and the Vermont Bar, I am so grateful that Mike is our Bar counsel. We are all better attorneys and people for it.

So without further ado, please join the YLD in congratulating Michael Kennedy as this year’s recipient of the Judge Hall Integrity Award.