



A.J.
MCWHORTER
LOOKING BACK

Isle broadcaster departed to mainland but came back

Former television reporter Roberta Wong Murray has come full circle. After living on the mainland for more than 30 years working in the public relations and communications sector, she decided to move back to the islands. This month we look back and see what she is up to today.

Murray was born and raised in Honolulu, graduating from Star of the Sea school. She attended Boston University but on summer breaks worked at KPOI radio in the traffic and production departments. Tom Moffatt decided to put her on the air at KPOI-FM as a weekend deejay playing progressive jazz.

"Loved it. I really enjoyed working for Tom. He is the consummate promoter," Murray said. She was able to attend many concerts and was one of the emcees for the 1972 Sunshine Festival in Diamond Head Crater featuring Carlos Santana.

After graduating from BU in 1973 with a degree in public relations, she was hired as a news editor and producer by KHVH radio. While at KHVH, Murray worked with longtime local

radio newsmen Dick Cook and Cecil Seavey. Also while working in radio, she met her future husband, Mark Murray, former KORL radio news director and KHVH reporter.

In 1975 KITV had a shakeup of staff and was looking to hire a new news team. Roberta got a call from KITV News Director Stewart Cheifet asking her to come down for an audition. She got the job.

Working at KITV, Murray's colleagues were Don Rockwell, Karen Ahn, Mason Altiery, Gene Okamoto, Matt Levi, Paul Guanzon, Jacque Scott and Emme Tomimbang.

"One of the things I loved about Roberta, she always stayed in touch with her island roots," Tomimbang said.

Murray said she found her experience working in local television news both educational and rewarding. "Hawaii is a welcoming community. It was a great place to learn how to gather news," she said.

In 1977 the Murrays moved to the mainland, and Roberta landed a job in the Bay Area as a news writer and relief reporter for KPIX,



COURTESY ROBERTA WONG MURRAY

Roberta Wong Murray, shown during her time at KITV, now lives in Kona and works for PBS Hawaii.

the CBS station. The news director at the NBC affiliate, KRON, took notice of her reporting and hired her as a full-time general assignment reporter. She also served as a bureau reporter and weekend and midday anchor. San Francisco was spotlighted in the news at the time with the assassinations of Mayor George Moscone and Harvey Milk. Murray was right in the middle of it all, interviewing notable figures such as California Gov. Jerry Brown.

In 1980 she decided to leave the news business behind. "I never regretted it," she said.

Kaiser Aluminum hired Murray as a broadcast coordinator, and she produced and hosted video magazine

programs for the company. She later became director of corporate public relations for Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp. and then vice president of government relations. In 1987 she and her husband formed Wong and Murray Inc., a Telly Award-winning public relations firm that specialized in crisis communications management and video production. In 2005 she was hired as senior vice president of corporate communications for Bank of the West, a sister bank of First Hawaiian Bank.

A.J. McWhorter, a collector of film and videotape cataloging Hawaii's TV history, has worked as a producer, writer and researcher for both local and national media. Email him at flashback@hawaii.rr.com.



Roberta Wong Murray:
She anchored for KITV during 1975-1976

The Murrays had bought a condo in Kona with the intention of eventually retiring on Hawaii island, but then her oldest brother died in 2008. "Something spoke to me at the time," Murray said. The couple moved back to the islands in 2009, settling in Kona.

"Even though I've lived longer in my adult life on the mainland than in Hawaii, being local never leaves you," Murray said.

In 2010 she was hired by the U.S. Census Bureau to be the media specialist in Hawaii, and she was able to reconnect with the local media. In April she was hired by PBS Hawaii as vice president of programming and communications, truly coming full circle in her career.

"It's a good feeling to be back home. I feel re-planted," Murray said.