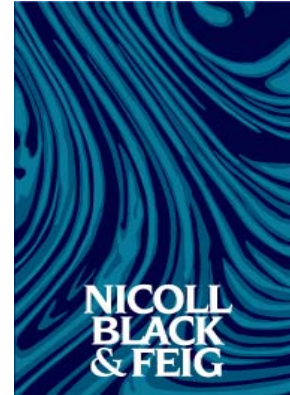


## **W.L. Rivers Black**

Member / Co-Founder

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### **Practice Areas**

- Admiralty & Maritime Law
- Commercial Litigation
- Insurance Coverage
- Insurance Defense
- General Litigation

### **Personal Narrative**

Rivers was commissioned in the U.S. Navy as a deck officer and transferred to the JAGC to attend law school. Upon graduation, he served as a county prosecutor and then spent five years on active duty, first serving as Head of the U.S. Foreign Claims Commission in North Africa, and then working in the United Kingdom as a Staff Judge Advocate. Thereafter, Rivers pursued two advanced legal degrees, receiving a Masters in Marine Law from the University of Washington Law School (1982), and a Masters in International Law, *Cum Laude*, from the University of Brussels, Belgium (1993). Rivers then joined the Maritime Litigation group of Lane Powell, Seattle. He left to join the national firm Cozen O'Connor as a Senior Member in 1999, departing to form Nicoll Black Misenti & Feig PLLC in 2004.

For the past 25 years, Rivers has focused his practice on representation of vessel owning and insurance interests, including maritime PI and death defense, products liability, hull claims, marine insurance coverage disputes, and claims involving the tanker, cruise line, fishing and recreational vessel industries. He is past chairman of the Maritime Law Section of the Seattle King County Bar Assn. and past chairman of The Maritime Law Committees of both the Inter-Pacific Bar Assn. and Asia Pacific Lawyer's Assn., two of the largest bar associations in Asia.

A past member of the Editorial Board of the Maritime Law Reporter, Rivers currently serves as a member of the Board of Directors of Pacific Marine Research. He is a Proctor member of the Maritime Law Association of the U.S. and a frequent lecturer on marine claims and defense topics. Also experienced in the practical side of the industry, prior to law school Rivers was a deck hand on the fishing vessel BOUNTY HUNTER. He is also an avid racing and cruising sailor with a significant number of ocean miles under his belt. Rivers recently retired with 30 of service from the U.S. Naval Reserve with the rank of Captain. He is AV Peer Rated.

### **Education**

University of Mississippi School of Law ("Ole Miss"), Juris Doctor, 1977

University of Washington School of Law, LL.M. (Marine Law) 1982

University of Brussels, Belgium (Vrije Universiteit), LL.M. (International Law) 1983

### **Prior Professional Experience**

U.S. Navy, Judge Advocate General's Corps, 1977-1981

Instructor in Business Law, University of Maryland, 1979-1981

Lane Powell Moss & Miller / Lane Powell Spears Lubersky, Seattle, 1983-1999; Partner

Cozen O'Connor, 2000-2004; Senior Member

## **Honors and Civic Activities**

*Washington Law & Politics Magazine*, named as Washington Super Lawyer (8 years)

Board of Trustees, Seattle Children's Theatre

Associates Board, Corporate Council for the Arts / Arts Fund

Boy Scouts of America – Eagle / Adult Leader

## **Bar Memberships**

Washington, Oregon and Mississippi (all courts)

U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington

International Court of Claims

U.S. Court of Appeals, Ninth Circuit

## **Representative Matters**

- Legal correspondent for London and Norwegian based P & I Clubs representing interests of owners and charterers of ocean going vessels - casualty investigations, claims & litigation defense.
- Represented pollution underwriters in sinking of fully laden fuel oil bunkering barge, barge salvage and pollution cleanup. Incident remains one of the largest spills in Washington waters. Represented State of Alaska in appellate matters and in incident involving ferry vessel grounding and salvage.
- Represented excess underwriters in sinking of large Bering Sea seafood processing vessel with loss of all 15 crewmembers; largest fishing vessel casualty in the U.S in fifty years at the time.
- Appointed by GCL insurer to defend drug product manufacturer from numerous personal injury and wrongful death product liability claims (Ephedra litigation) over a multi-state geographic area.
- Defense counsel appointed by vessel owners or their insurers in many hundreds of lawsuits to defend personal injury or wrongful death claims involving crewmembers and passengers.
- Represented port district and port liability underwriters in claims involving the destruction of hundreds of yachts due to marina fires or collapse of marina structures.
- Litigated product liability and subrogation actions on behalf of vessel owners and hull interests to recover for total losses of multi-million dollar mega and supper yachts due to fire.
- Representation of Asian yacht manufacturer and large Russian ocean carrier regarding general corporate and transactional matters, casualty/risk counseling and general litigation.
- Represented the State of Washington in multi-million dollar property subrogation recoveries from third parties due to vessel propulsion failures and resulting damage to terminal facilities and docks; Represented interests of subrogated cargo underwriters in recovery actions for multi-million dollar losses of refrigerated seafood shipments.
- Represented London property and casualty insurers in property claims following the destruction of a multi-million dollar seafood processing plant in Alaska.
- Insurance Panel Counsel representing several yacht and recreational vessel P&I and hull insurers involving a wide variety of liability and hull claims related to pleasure and recreational vessels.
- Retained by numerous foreign and domestic commercial hull and P&I underwriters for coverage opinions and in defense of marine insurance coverage denials and bad faith claims.