



# A Legacy Honored and Preserved

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

Rural law firms play a crucial role in the communities they serve.

Lawyers' work affects not only clients but also the communities in which lawyers live and work, even long after cases are closed or representations end.



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In 1976, Myron LaRowe and James Gerlach established LaRowe & Gerlach S.C. on Main Street in downtown Reedsburg, Wis. That same year, a beautiful medallion of Lady Justice, carved of California red oak, was commissioned and prominently displayed on the front of the firm's building. For the next 47 years, the carving, by Wisconsin artist Ronald J. Kinart, would be a symbol of the commitment and dedication to advancing justice that occurred inside every day.

About one year ago, Myron called and asked if I would come and visit with him and his wife, Rosemary. As we sat by the fireplace in their living room, he shared with me that the firm that he and Jim had spent a lifetime operating was closing. Myron and Jim had been retired and for a number of reasons, the remaining partners and associates, one by one, had headed in different directions. I could see the heartbreak in Myron's eyes. His concern was for the impact on his beloved Reedsburg community and the legacy that would be wiped away and forgotten.

But impact and legacy do not reside in a building. They remain in the hundreds of individuals, businesses, and community organizations that Myron and Jim helped and guided in their long tenure practicing on Main Street. The legacy will be felt for generations to come.

Rural law firms play a crucial role in the communities they serve. Often the backbone of legal representation in underserved areas, these firms provide essential services that enable residents to access justice and navigate a complex legal system. They act as hubs of community support and knowledge.

Lawyers and their firms are essential threads of the social, cultural, and political fabric of their communities. They lend their expertise to neighborhood projects, fostering economic development, and support local businesses, nonprofits, and civic initiatives. These vital community anchors enhance the well-being and resilience of the regions in which they choose to live and practice.

During our living room conversation, Myron and Rosemary shared that they, along with Jim and Jan Gerlach, were giving the medallion, along with an accompanying pen and ink drawing, to the Wisconsin Law Foundation.

After restoration funded by the State Bar of Wisconsin, the "Justice on Main Street" display is now prominently residing in the rotunda of the State Bar Center. It is a powerful symbol of the legacy that Myron, Jim, and all "Main Street" attorneys continue to play in the pursuit of justice and the strengthening and support of community.

I know that my friend Myron, who passed away in March, would be pleased as his and Jim's legacy lives on. **WL**



Myron LaRowe (left) and James Gerlach standing next to carving of Lady Justice on the front of LaRowe & Gerlach S.C. on Main Street in downtown Reedsburg, Wis. The medallion now resides at the State Bar Center in Madison.

