

Moving the Profession Forward – Honoring a Lawyers' Lawyer

Dean Dietrich celebrates the lives of State Bar past presidents Ralph Cagle, Myron LaRowe, and Mike Guerin, who passed away in 2023, and the achievements of Lavinia Goodell, who became Wisconsin's first woman lawyer 150 years ago this year.

BY DEAN R. DIETRICH

One of the most difficult responsibilities of a bar association president is to attend the funeral of past presidents. During my term, that responsibility has occurred several times and each has weighed heavily. I recently attended the celebration of life for past president Ralph Cagle. Ralph was truly an example of a "lawyers' lawyer." His dedication to the profession, his showing of gratitude for all that has happened in his life, his profession of teaching new lawyers, and his contributions to the profession and the State Bar of Wisconsin are unmatched within our local legal community. I have been greatly affected by working with Ralph and discussing issues of professional responsibility with him.

I also attended the life celebrations of past presidents Mike Guerin and Myron LaRowe. Mike had a tremendous love of the law and desire to help people, first as a police officer and later becoming one of the most respected criminal defense lawyers in Wisconsin. Myron is the prime example of a small-town lawyer who contributed to the profession, to his clients, and to his community. His love of the profession is reflected in the "Lady Justice" wood carving now housed at the State Bar Center.

It is also important to remember the anniversary of the lawyer who broke ground for women in our profession. Lavinia Goodell was the first woman licensed to practice law in Wisconsin. Goodell was also one of the first women trial lawyers in the United States and the first woman to run for city attorney. She co-founded Wisconsin's first female law firm and was a champion for women's legal rights.

On June 17, 2024, the sesquicentennial of Goodell's admission to practice law will be celebrated in Rock County, where she began her law practice. A presentation also will be made at the State Bar Annual Meeting & Conference about the significant contributions by women lawyers and the legal developments that have affected women in our state.

We should celebrate the impact of members of all backgrounds on the future of our legal profession.

Remember: Lawyer wellness is important! **WL**



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