

# Building a Legacy, One Leader at a Time

**Ralph Cagle left an indelible impression on the legal profession in Wisconsin, including by founding the State Bar of Wisconsin's G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy.**

BY LARRY J. MARTIN

When Ralph Cagle, a retired University of Wisconsin Law School professor and State Bar of Wisconsin past president, died in December, we lost a great lawyer, teacher, mentor, and friend. Few members of the State Bar were better known or more beloved.

I first met Ralph when he was running for State Bar president-elect and I was the State Bar's member services director. After he won, we had lunch and I found his curiosity and enthusiasm for the Bar's mission and work invigorating.

Two Italian kids, with a common passion for red sauce pasta (none of that white sauce that Ralph called "Swiss food"). We hit it off immediately.

One of my happiest memories of Ralph is traipsing around with him in Atlanta after a National Conference of Bar Presidents meeting. We toured the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum, visited Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s grave, spent time at Ebenezer Baptist Church, and stopped off at the World of Coca Cola for a Coke and a smile.

When I was named the State Bar's executive director, the presidents called me into an office to inform me, pat me on the back, and offer their sage advice. Ralph smiled and said, "Congratulations kid, now don't screw it up" (though he used a more colorful metaphor).

During his term, Ralph promoted participating in sections, attending the Annual Meeting & Conference, and supporting the Wisconsin Law Foundation. His greatest passion was for leadership development and mentoring the next generation of legal leaders.

Ralph was the visionary who founded the G. Lane Ware Leadership Academy, building on State Bar past president Ware's commitment to leadership development. Ralph had a simple concept: to create an ongoing program to inspire and mentor lawyers to step into leadership roles

comfortably and confidently, both in the profession and in the civic life of their communities.

Since its founding in 2016, 146 lawyers have participated in the academy. Almost all have gone on to volunteer, serving on local and State Bar committees and boards or the State Bar's Board of Governors, including as officers. In addition, numerous nonprofit organizations have benefited from their leadership.

Ralph's influence has been profound.

To honor my friend and to continue to expand his work, I donated in Ralph's memory to the Wisconsin Law Foundation's Ware Fund for Leadership Development. It is from this endowment that the academy is supported. It is the Law Foundation's goal to add an additional \$25,000 to the fund this year to increase the program's reach and impact.

I hope you will consider joining me in donating, as we continue Ralph's work mentoring and inspiring new leaders. It is a legacy worthy of his memory. **WL**



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A long-time University of Wisconsin Law School professor, Ralph Cagle celebrated his presidential swearing-in with Bucky Badger in June 2015.