

Profile in Atlanta Bar Leadership - Robert G. Wellon

Robert G. "Rob" Wellon – A Role Model for the Profession

By Judge T. Jackson Bedford, Jr.
Fulton County Superior Court

Robert G. Wellon, known to everyone as Rob, joined the Atlanta Bar Association one year after I did in 1973. Our professional and personal lives have been intertwined ever since. As we both became active in the Association, we learned early on that we enjoyed the same activities and believed in the Association and the programs it provided. We were Proud to be Atlanta Lawyers long before the cliché was formed.

Rob's first leadership role in the Atlanta Bar Association was chairing the Law Day Committee in 1977. Notwithstanding his youth and his relative inexperience as a lawyer, Rob played a primary role in the creation of the Litigation Section in 1978 and served as its second chairperson in 1979-80. The Litigation Section currently has approximately 2,000 members, being the largest section of the Atlanta Bar Association. If the Section were a stand alone organization, it would be the third largest bar association in Georgia, quite a testament to Rob's vision and leadership!

In 1979, Rob was elected to the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Bar Association and elected as President in 1986, serving on the Board continuously for eight years. He then returned to the Board in 1999 to serve another six years as our Delegate to the American Bar Association. Rob has now served a total of 14 years on the Atlanta Bar Association's Board of Directors. Rob was also a member of the original Board of Directors of the Atlanta Bar Foundation when it was organized in 1985 and continues to serve on that Board today.

In 1986, with Rob's encouragement, input and assistance, I helped him create the Sole Practitioner/Small Firm Section, which was probably the first bar section in the country dedicated to the needs of sole practitioners. As the Section's membership grew it became known as "Atlanta's Largest Law Firm". Rob and I are very proud that it continues to flourish today. Without Rob's leadership this would not have been possible. In return for our efforts the Section recognized both of us with "lifetime" positions on the Board as "Founders".

In the late 80's one of the most active committees of the Association was the Cultural Affairs/Special Events Committee. With assistance from my wife Patty, Rob and his wife, Jan, were instrumental in helping to organize every event from groups of 200+ who attended such cultural events as The Nutcracker (with special visits from the Sugar Plum Fairy!) to bus loads going to the Steeplechase, and many others enjoying night concerts under the stars at Chastain Park.

The Atlanta Bar Association's fundraising musical parody "A Courthouse Line", began in 1999 with Rob participating in every show, "acting" in the first four and more recently soliciting over \$40,000 in sponsorship funds for the sixth show. Rob and Jan have also assisted with the Patron Party and Silent Auction at Ed & Judy Garland's home which preceded the last two shows.

The list of Rob's service to the Atlanta Bar Association indicates that his activities for the Association alone would take all of his non-practice time. Amazingly, this is not the case! In addition to his continuous service to the Atlanta Bar Association for over thirty years, and his service to Northside United Methodist Church, where he has served in numerous capacities, including receiving certification as a Stephen Minister, Rob's participation with activities of the State Bar of Georgia are just as impressive. He has been a long-time member and advisor to the Professionalism

Robert G. Wellon

1970 - Emory University, B.A.
1974 - Stetson University, J.D.
1974 - Admitted to the Georgia Bar
1979 - Chair, Litigation Section
1979-1988 - Board of Directors of
Atlanta Bar Association
1986 - President, Atlanta Bar
Association
1995 - Recipient of the Charles
Watkins Award
1997 - Principal Founder, Master
and First President of
Charles L. Weltner Family Law Inn of Court
1999-2005 - Delegate to the American Bar Association
2005 - Recipient of the Distinguished Service Award



Committee of the State Bar and a leader of the Law School Orientations on Professionalism since 1993. This major project of the Professionalism Committee has become a permanent feature of the orientation programs for all first year law students at the four major law schools in Georgia.

Rob has also served on the Attorney's Oath Revision Subcommittee of the Professionalism Committee which recommended updated and more relevant language for the Attorney's Oath of Admission to the State Bar of Georgia. The recommended oath revision was approved by the Bar's Board of Governors and ultimately by the Supreme Court in 2002. Rob has also chaired the Oath Rededication Subcommittee that coordinates ceremonies of local bar associations at which practicing lawyers are given the opportunity to rededicate themselves to the profession.

Incredibly, considering all of his other activities, Rob was the inspiration for and principle founder, Master, and first President of the Charles L. Weltner Family Law Inn of Court. He also currently serves as an adjunct faculty member at Emory University Law School teaching advanced litigation techniques, another one of his activities in which he has recruited my involvement. From 1981-1994 Rob was a faculty member of the Masters in Litigation Program at Atlanta Law School. He has served on the Board of Directors of the Atlanta Foundation for Psychoanalysis, Inc. since 1992. He was a recipient of the Atlanta Bar Association's Charles Watkins Award in 1995 and Distinguished Service Award in 2005.

Everyone who knows Rob, knows that his family has also always been involved with his Atlanta Bar Association activities along with Rob. Since Rob and Jan's children, Robert and Alice, were small, they served by their parent's side at events such as the Cultural Affairs/Special Events activities, ACYL barbeques, Legal Run Around races, and as elves with the Atlanta Santa Project. A new little Wellon joined the family in September, Parks Montgomery Wellon, and the Atlanta Bar Association looks forward to her following in her grandfather's footsteps in the years to come.

There is no doubt that Rob Wellon's years of commitment, dedication and action personifies Leadership and Professionalism. Rob Wellon is all about what a lawyer should be.

I am proud to be Rob's friend and fellow lawyer.