



A Tribute to Richard V. Wellman

Georgia Law lost venerated law professor Richard V. “Dick” Wellman, Alston Professor Emeritus, on June 3, 2005. He passed away at the age of 82 due to congestive heart failure.

Wellman joined the Georgia Law faculty in 1974, after teaching at the University of Michigan, his alma mater, for 20 years.

In addition to instructing in the areas of property law and trusts and estates, Wellman served as a commissioner for the National Conference of Commissioners on Uniform State Laws (NCCUSL) for over 30 years. He was also the reporter and chief drafter of the Uniform Probate Code, one of the organization’s most widely adopted pieces of legislation, and later served as the educational director and executive director of the Joint Editorial Board for the UPC.

Wellman formally retired from Georgia Law in 1990, although he continued to teach for several more years. Dedicated to his profession, Wellman remained active in academic endeavors within the legal field until a month before his death.

Many members of the law school community and legal profession have been touched by the loss of this respected scholar and teacher, and have shared reflections on his camaraderie, work ethic and classroom lessons. Below are a few of these thoughts.

“Dick was a giant in the field of law reform, [he is] truly the ‘Father of the Uniform Probate Code.’ He was also a gifted teacher whose classes bubbled over with his enthusiasm and energy. The law school community was enriched by his presence and his contributions,” close friend and fellow law professor Paul M. Kurtz said.

One of Wellman’s colleagues at NCCUSL described him as a “true pioneer and original thinker in the law, one of those upon whom the great reputation of the conference is based.”

Former student R. Wayne Thorpe (J.D.’79) called Wellman a “brilliant teacher, possibly the best I ever encountered in my 19 years of schooling. All of us who took his classes are far better lawyers because of him.”

Wellman is survived by his wife, Natalie; a sister; four daughters; two sons; a stepdaughter; three stepsons; 16 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

- Kristin Kissiah