

ERNSTROM & DRESTE LLP



Ernstrom & Drete, LLP is saddened to announce that our founding member, J. William ("Bill") Ernststrom, passed away on November 28, 2025. Bill was 80 years old. For the last number of years Bill had been residing in Chicago and then in the Lake Geneva, Wisconsin area. Bill maintained that he always wanted to be an attorney. His peers marveled at the level of drive and gusto that he brought to his career as an attorney. He was with the Harris Beach firm for 12 years before forming his own boutique firm in 1985 to concentrate on construction law matters. Thirty-plus years ago that firm grew into the present day Ernstrom & Drete.

Bill approached his practice and nearly all aspects of life as a challenge to master. Bill was a talented athlete, holding basketball scoring records in college until the three-point line was created. Had that line existed in his era the records may have stood forever. He had a long-standing weekly tennis match with one

friend, often wagering a monthly mortgage payment for the winner. Bill ran the New York Marathon in 1979 simply due to the challenge. He was indefatigable in his approach to law and life. He (and we) worked hard and played hard, always with his infectious optimism, humor, and drive. These examples provide a glimpse into Bill's trailblazing life, but those who knew him fully understand that his persona cannot be captured in this small snippet.

Bill was a masterful trial attorney, but also gave back to the construction industry, especially via countless hours in assisting the New York and National Associated General Contractors of America. He presented many seminars while championing the construction industry's positions, including in the development and negotiation of changes to widely used contract documents. Bill received lifetime achievement recognition from both the State and National levels of the AGC, among many other accolades.

Bill's obituary may be found here: <https://www.nelsonfuneralhomes.com/obituaries/James-William-Ernstrom?obId=46515026>

One New York AGC officer aptly stated on Bill's passing that "we lost a giant". We will miss him.