

Wisconsin Restaurant Association: A Strong and Vibrant History



WISCONSIN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

— 90th Anniversary Edition —

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MISSION

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association is dedicated to the success of the foodservice and hospitality industry.

Member Value

Delivering and demonstrating membership value through available programs, benefits and services.

Advocacy

Monitoring and influencing industry regulation and public policy at the state and local levels.

Industry Impact

Promoting the impact of the industry on the state's economy, jobs and the opportunities for a career.

Education and Workforce

Offering programs that support worker training and retention as well as member professional development.

Strategic Sustainability

Positioning WRA for strength through governance and management excellence.



Foreword



The History of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association

In 2023, the Wisconsin Restaurant Association is celebrating its 90th Anniversary! To celebrate our rich history of helping restaurants grow and thrive, we have updated the WRA history book to reflect updates since the prior version.

As stated by the late and former CEO, Edward Lump, “a lot has changed and yet, much has stayed the same.” The WRA team works hard each and every day to help restaurateurs be successful, for employees to gain skills and hone their craft and for customers to experience the best in Wisconsin hospitality when they visit. The challenges that restaurant and hospitality businesses face have evolved. Out of necessity, WRA has changed to help our members meet those new challenges head-on.

One thing that has forever changed our industry are the challenges faced during and since the Covid 19 Pandemic. We saw shutdowns, mandated closures and felt the ripple effect in every corner of our state and in every aspect of the restaurant and hospitality industry. But, throughout it all, we also saw creativity, resilience and the entrepreneurial spirit that restaurateurs are known for.

Technological advances that help both the customer experience and the operations side of the business have accelerated. QR codes, electronic point of sale systems, electronic ordering and back of the house technology all help restaurants be more efficient. While technology provides tools to run a restaurant more efficiently, it does not replace the need for exceptional customer service and great tasting food—all served in a safe and welcoming manner.

Through the years what has not changed, and what we celebrate here, is the spirit of Wisconsin hospitality that is served up at our members’ restaurants every day by dedicated employees who make it all happen. Currently, we face some of the worst workforce challenges and shortages ever seen and it is critically important for operators to engage with their teams and make sure their operation is an employer of choice. For this to happen, restaurateurs must build and maintain a culture of teamwork, resilience and acceptance with an eye towards excellence.

It is truly an honor to lead the amazing team of WRA rock stars who are devoted to our members and help them to be as successful as possible. Our entire team at the WRA/WRAEF works tirelessly to provide services and resources needed to be successful and offers benefits to help operators be more efficient and save money. This has been—and will continue to be—a cornerstone of our organization: a dedicated team of professionals at the WRA.

We use this book to honor the foundation on which the WRA is built and to remember those who were key to building this great organization and the industry in which we all serve. Do not think, however, that we will be stopping here! Work continues daily to provide services that matter, programs that teach and build skills and advocacy efforts that help small businesses thrive. More than ever, the work that the WRA does matter.

Kristine Hillmer

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristine Hillmer".

President & CEO of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association



WRA Board of Directors

Executive Committee

Kris Larson

Chair of the Board
Becket's - Oshkosh

Brad Hammen

Chair-Elect
Outback Steakhouse - Greenfield

Bob Prosser

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Lake Delton

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Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant
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Parthenon Gyros - Madison

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Smokehouse - Madison

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Erbert & Gerbert's Sandwich
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Eric Boelter

Boelter Companies - Waukesha

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Gordon Food Service - Kenosha

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CLA

As of January 1, 2023

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EF Board Treasurer
Buck & Honeys - Sun Prairie

Kristine Hillmer, CAE

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EF Board Immediate Past Chair
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The Cheel - Thiensville

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Brunch - Milwaukee

Derek Small

National Restaurant Association
Educational Foundation

Tammy Vaassen

Wisconsin Beef Council - Verona

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Culver Foundation - Prairie du Sac

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WE Energies - Milwaukee

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Fox Valley Technical College - Appleton

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Brookfield

Ward Torke

Torke Coffee Roasting Company -
Sheboygan

Linda Wilke

Hartford

As of January 1, 2023

Chapter 1:

1931–1939: IN THE BEGINNING

[Modified from material written by Jan LaRue for the 50th Anniversary Issue of *Wisconsin Restaurateur* in 1983.]

FIRST ORGANIZATIONAL MEETING, JUNE 1931

Deep into the Great Depression, as restaurants were struggling to survive in June of 1931, Herman Lehman, owner of Milwaukee's Boston Lunch and Director of the National Restaurant Association, along with Walter Mase, Director of the Hotel and Restaurant Division of the Wisconsin Board of Health, arranged the first meeting of what was to become the Wisconsin Restaurant Association (WRA). Twenty restaurateurs desiring to unify the industry for the protection and clout that strength in numbers could bring, attended that meeting at the historic Republican Hotel in Milwaukee. A tentative platform was established; Howard Ashworth, who at the time was Executive Secretary of the Wisconsin Hotel Association, was appointed Executive Secretary and Herman Lehman became the first WRA President (prior to the official incorporation of the Association).

THE PIONEERS OF WRA— OUR FOUNDING FATHERS

In June 1931 some 20 Wisconsin restaurateurs held a meeting at the Republican Hotel, Milwaukee, Wisconsin for the purpose of organizing a Restaurant Association. It was not until 1933 that the actual incorporation of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association took place, but the following far-sighted individuals should have the gratitude of our entire state industry for their foresight in initiating the Association.

Herman Lehman.

(1st President of WRA)
Boston Lunch, Milwaukee

E. J. Specht.

(2nd President of WRA)
Peacock Restaurant, Oshkosh

H. L. Ashworth.

(1st Executive Vice-President of WRA)
Executive Secretary of the Wisconsin Hotel
Association, Milwaukee

Walter Mase.

Director of Hotel & Restaurant Division of Wisconsin State Board of Health

Elmer M. Froelk.

Plankinton Arcade Cafeteria, Milwaukee

J. I. Coppernoll.

(3rd President of WRA)
Cop's Cafe, Madison.

Mae E. Lindsay.

Madison Cafeteria, Madison

H. J. Rooney.

Hy & Frank's, LaCrosse

Frank S. Bartel.

Keeley's, Chippewa Falls

Michael F. Kresky.

Green Mill, Marinette

Otto Kaap.

Kaap's, Green Bay

Mrs. J. C. Arntz.

Arntz Restaurant, Wisconsin Rapids

Peter Nelson.

Hotel Nelson Restaurant, Racine

E. A. Lewis.

Lewis Restaurant, Beaver Dam

Unfortunately the other 7 names are not known but in the celebration of our 50th Birthday, we will remember them also.

Little did these gentlemen who met at the Republican Hotel realize that they were laying the foundation of one of the most successful state restaurant associations in the country.

WRA'S FIRST BOARD OF DIRECTORS:

In November 1932 a meeting was held for the purpose of writing the articles of incorporation for the Wisconsin Restaurant Association. At 1 o'clock in the morning at the Peacock Cafe in Oshkosh four gentlemen proceeded to write the articles of incorporation along with the by-laws of WRA in long-hand which would later be dispatched to the Secretary of State with the fee for incorporation as a non-profit organization.

Those four gentlemen, E. J. Specht, from Oshkosh, Gustave Graham of Kenosha, Jim Watson of Kenosha and E. A. Conforti, proceeded at that meeting to appoint the very first Board of Directors for WRA. They were:

E. A. Lewis.
Lewis Restaurant,
Beaver Dam

J. E. Campbell.
Campbell's Coffee Shop,
Milwaukee

J. Watson.
Watson's Grill,
Kenosha

Howard L. Ashworth.
Executive Secretary of
Wisconsin Hotel Association,
Milwaukee

Gustave Graham.
Graham's Cafe,
Kenosha

A. J. Pfankuch.
The New State Restaurant,
Appleton

Alice Topzant.
Van Buren Grill,
Milwaukee

E. Lubnaw.
Goff's Restaurant,
Waukesha

John Boder.
Broadway Tea Room,
Milwaukee

T. J. Burke.
Plankinton Arcade,
Milwaukee

Mr. Leeson.
Spanish Tavern,
Beloit

J. I. Coppernoll.
Cop's Cafe,
Madison

M. F. Martin.
Martin's Restaurant,
Madison

E. L. Kelly.
Egan & Kelly,
Madison

Miss Poull.
Beacon Restaurant,
West Bend

HARD TIMES AND THE "FREE LUNCH" MOVE RESTAURATEURS TO ACTION

In addition to the Great Depression, Prohibition had been repealed (1933) and restaurant businesses were facing unfair competition from taverns which gave away free meals to patrons who bought drinks. While the practice had a long history in Wisconsin, it had become particularly onerous to struggling restaurants during the Depression. By the end of 1932, there was an ever-increasing number of restaurant owners hoping that the "strength in numbers" of a trade association could help save their businesses.

1932 WISCONSIN FIRST STATE TO ENACT UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE LAW

A movement to unionize restaurants began to gather steam in the early 1930s, but in addition to union woes, restaurateurs were assessed a new payroll tax to provide a fund from which to provide partial pay for employees during periods of unemployment. Wisconsin's law was the first of its kind in the US.

CODE OF FAIR COMPETITION

The National Recovery Act was passed by Congress in June 1933 to give the president and the US government the authority to regulate prices and wages, as well as competitive practices, in order to level the playing field and promote recovery throughout the US economy. Industry representatives were involved in writing the Code of Fair Competition for their industry and were initially supportive of the National Recovery Administration. The Code actually set minimum prices for products as well as minimum wages

and maximum hours for employees. The National Restaurant Association submitted the Code for the restaurant industry and it was approved in February 1934.

Among other benefits of the Code, it defined taverns as restaurants and prohibited restaurants from serving free food under its fair competition rules, thus reinforcing the new state law prohibiting the tavern "free lunches" in a stricter manner.

1933: WRA BECOMES OFFICIAL WITH ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION

In the early morning hours at the Peacock Café in Oshkosh, the restaurant's owner, E.J. Specht, along with Jim Watson of Watson's Grill in Kenosha, Gustave Graham of Graham Cafe, and Elmer Conforti wrote the articles of incorporation and the first bylaws of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association. The handwritten pages were dispatched to the Wisconsin Secretary of State along with the fee for incorporation as an official not-for-profit trade association. Thus, the official beginning of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association in 1933. At the same meeting, those four gentlemen also appointed the first 15 member WRA Board of Directors, including two women.

LET'S WORK TOGETHER!

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association represents the great majority of restaurant operators in this state.

Its members are doing the predominant share of the restaurant business of the state.

They are employing the overwhelming majority of persons engaged in the state-wide restaurant industry.

They are paying the preponderant portion of wages to restaurant employes throughout Wisconsin.

Now the Association, representing as it does the entire state restaurant industry, has taken upon itself a new and heavy duty.

It feels that the adoption of a permanent State Restaurant Code will solve many of the present and distressing problems of the restaurant industry.

It has taken upon itself the grave task of writing this Code — YOUR CODE — and it looks to YOU of the restaurant industry as a whole for support.

This support can be of many kinds, moral as well as financial. Your suggestions, always eagerly received, will in this case be doubly welcome.

A questionnaire will be mailed to you shortly. Your promptness in filling it out and returning it will add greatly to the smoothness and efficiency of our immense and detailed task.

It has been estimated that the adoption of the State Restaurant Code will cost approximately three thousand dollars. Of this amount two thousand dollars will be paid to the state, and the remaining one thousand will cover office and postal expenses of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association in the pursuance of its strenuous Code program.

How well this strenuous and vital program succeeds depends upon YOU.

If we all go our own individual ways we can get nowhere.

But if we work TOGETHER, in co-operative effort for a common cause, we must inevitably reap mutual and surpassing benefits.

Now — let's work together!

This call to action appeared in the April 1934 issue of Wisconsin Restaurateur.

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY ELMER CONFORTI TAKES THE REINS

The first WRA office was the back of Conforti's car. The notes, formulative plans and ideas were mostly kept in Conforti's head, as he organized and enlisted the support of his industry colleagues to make the WRA dream a reality.

Eventually, Conforti settled into WRA's first tangible headquarters in the U.S. National Bank building in Kenosha, then moved the headquarters to the more centrally located Plankinton Arcade building in downtown Milwaukee a year later, in June of 1934.



Elmer Conforti

Plankinton Arcade

That the change is meeting with the approval of the membership is evident from the great number of members that visit and call at the office for information and service. This is a good sign, for it proves the absolute need of an Association.

We extend a cordial invitation to all restaurateurs to visit our offices when in the city.

A FLEDGLING WRA MARCHES INTO BATTLE

The first order of business for the fledging association was the elimination of the taverns' "free lunch" promotions. The practice had been running rampant over restaurants throughout the state as many taverns served full free dinners to patrons who bought drinks.

WRA members were first successful in getting the City of Kenosha to pass an ordinance prohibiting the "free lunch" practice. In February 1934, they succeeded in passage of a new state law which prohibited taverns from serving free "meals" (except for "popcorn, cheese, crackers, pretzels, sausage, fish, bread and butter"). The new law also prohibited restaurants from giving away free alcoholic beverages.

THE NEW ASSOCIATION'S "PLATFORM" FOR ACTION

The original WRA "platform":

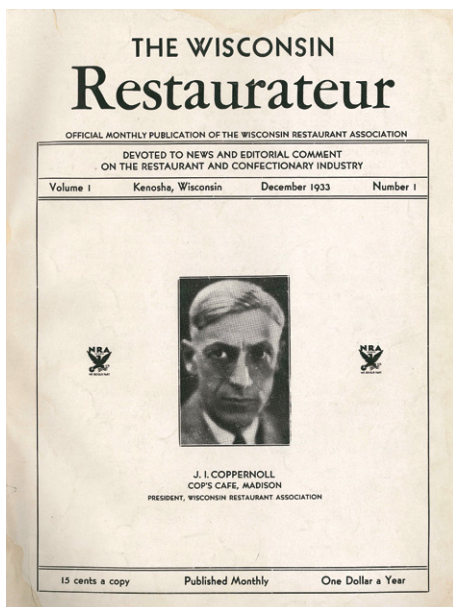
1. Enforcement of health laws (probably related to taverns serving free food)
2. Elimination of free lunches
3. Work for special classification of restaurants
4. Write a state restaurant code

Revised "platform":

1. Require more efficient actions from health authorities
2. Cooperate with state and local health authorities and expect like cooperation from them
3. Make present rules more exacting
4. Set up a permanent committee to observe and study the enforcement of the state sanitary code
5. Determine the advisability of raising the restaurant license fee so as to permit the proper enforcement of the state sanitary code
6. Require the allocation of funds received from restaurant permits to those purposes which promote legitimate restaurant operation, and protect the legitimate restaurant
7. Write a state restaurant code

WISCONSIN RESTAURATEUR

The WRA's flagship publication was one of the first benefits established by the founders in 1933. The magazine was considered to be a necessary tool for keeping members informed about issues facing the industry and the course of action to be taken. The first issue was published in December 1933, containing advertising, various messages from WRA's officers, and industry news and views. Those credited with getting the first issue to press were Gustave Graham, Jim Watson and Anthony Franks, all of Kenosha.



LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE AND STATE RESTAURANT CODE

During its second year, WRA's leaders formed a Legislative Committee of members to study trends, identify problems, plan legislation and appear at hearings for all pertinent bills. They also began work on writing a state restaurant code. When the code was finished the WRA paid \$2,000 to the state for implementation of the code and another \$1,000 on office and postal expenses in pursuance of the Code program. About this same time, the State Board of Health's regulatory powers were expanded to include authority to close a foodservice outlet if the management failed to comply with a written order.

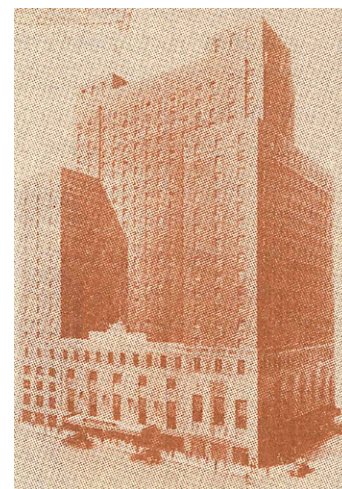
WRA CONVENTIONS IN THE 1930s

WRA's first convention in 1933 was held in the Crystal Room in Madison's Lorraine Hotel where hundreds of restaurateurs found friendship, fun and valuable information.

The Second Annual WRA Convention was a 3-day affair in October of 1934, once again held at the Lorraine hotel in Madison. Promotion for the convention included the following enticement:

"The Dutch Lunch and—beer—then step into the Crystal Room and dance your favorite waltz to the strains of Larry O'Brien's orchestra. Let's all sing 'When Irish Eyes are Smiling,' 'Let Me Call You Sweetheart'... See the sparkling floor show headed by the Williamson family, formerly with Ziegfeld Follies... hear 'Minnie the Mermaid' ...and then everybody join in for the community sing."

By 1936, the WRA Convention was boasting an exhibitor force of 32! The Schroeder Hotel, Milwaukee, started its eight year run as convention headquarters and the first annual golf tournament was held at the Brynwood Country Club. Milwaukee was clearly the right venue, and the number of exhibitors grew to 52 in 1938.



The Schroeder Hotel

UNION BATTLES

By the mid 1930s, unions were beginning to plague Wisconsin restaurateurs, particularly the Cooks and Waiters' International Alliance, a recognized affiliate of the American Federation of Labor

(AFL). Many believed the rise of unions was fueled by the National Recovery Act codes which included minimum wage and maximum hours for employees. Restaurant businesses got a break when Judge C.L. Aarons ruled in favor of Wrigley's Restaurant in a court battle over sit-down strikes. The judge ruled that the United Catering Workers' Union Local 324 sit-down strike amounted to a "substitute of force for law," and was thereby unconstitutional.

ARTICLE VI

WAGES

Section I. Basic Schedule of Wages

(a) Except as hereinafter otherwise provided, employees shall be paid each week at not less than the minimum rates of wages hereinbelow set forth for a fifty-four (54) hour work week.

Population of Cities or Places	Non-Service Employees	Service Employees
Over 500,000	\$15.00	\$10.50
250,000-500,000	14.50	10.50
100,000-250,000	14.00	10.25
25,000-100,000	13.50	10.25
10,000- 25,000	12.75	10.00
Less than 10,000	12.00	9.50



The first Award of Merit presentation held in Madison in 1937. The award was presented to Senator Frank Panzer.

FIRST AWARD OF MERIT

In April 1937, the first WRA Award of Merit was given to State Senator Frank E. Panzer, sponsor of the Wisconsin Restaurant Separation Law, which was considered a national milestone in restaurant sanitation. The law made it mandatory for anyone opening a restaurant after March 1, 1936 to separate the restaurant from any other business by a substantial partition extending from floor to ceiling. Executive Secretary Conforti stated, "By this simple legislative act, Senator Panzer has done more to protect public health ... than any other individual that we know." Later the law would be declared unconstitutional by the Wisconsin Supreme Court.

1938: A YEAR FOR NEW MEMBER BENEFITS

Waitress Training School

In February 1938, WRA opened a waitress training school in Milwaukee at the Plankinton Hotel. Over 100 waitresses attended the first three weeks of operation. Plans were made to extend the education activity to other large cities in the state. One of the rules taught to the waitresses was "never date customers."

Employment Agency

In April 1938, the WRA Board instructed Executive Secretary Conforti to apply to the state for a license to operate a public employment agency.

Cooperative Advertising

In mid 1938, WRA's cooperative advertising program made it possible for members to secure high efficiency from their promotional match giveaways and provided visibility for the Association. WRA staff did all the ordering with information provided by the member. The price of the book matches was \$7.25 for a case of 2,500. Each matchbook had the restaurant's logo and name on the front and the WRA logo on the back.

First Restaurateurs Ball

They called it the "biggest event in the history of our Association." It was the First Annual Restaurateurs Ball held at the Eagles Ballroom, Milwaukee, complete with Bob Garrity's

All Star Orchestra and a "Queen of the Ball" contest for waitresses. It was held on December 14, 1938 and attended by approximately 3,000 people.

NEW DAIRY PRODUCT GETS WRA SUPPORT

The August 1938 issue of the *Wisconsin Restaurateur* magazine announced, "A comparatively new dairy product which has rapidly gained popularity during the past few years is now available to Wisconsin restaurateurs through the Wilke Dairy Company of Milwaukee. The product is known as 'Homogenized Milk,' a crowning scientific achievement of the dairy industry."

WHAT DOES IT TAKE TO SURVIVE THE BAD TIMES?

By the end of 1938 and nearly a decade of the Great Depression, Executive Secretary Conforti recognized that in the restaurant industry during these bad times, it was clearly a matter of survival of the fittest. He had some straight talk for WRA members: "...only such restaurants that are financially strong are able to withstand ... this tumultuous financial recession. These ... restaurants go on year after year, operating and making money... Most operators can do likewise if they take the time to inform themselves on what constitutes good business principles. All that is involved is the will to learn to become a better restaurant operator. With success so close to one's fingertips and failure so remote, *why fail?*"

SMORGASBORD COMES TO WISCONSIN

In 1938, C. Wesley Archbold came to Milwaukee from the "Land of the Midnight Sun" to take over proprietorship of the Plankinton Arcade Green Room. He brought with him a new concept in restaurant food presentation: Smorgasbord, the one word expression for hospitality and fine food in his native country.



BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH VOCATIONAL SCHOOLS AROUND THE STATE

In 1939 Executive Secretary Conforti was a proponent of creating an educational program that would train future employees for the industry, explaining, "The WRA is presently working on a plan whereby various vocational schools in the state will make restaurant employee training a regular part of their curriculum." Since then, WRA has enjoyed good working relationships with technical schools statewide.

WISCONSIN RESTAURANT AND DAIRY INDUSTRIES FORM NEW BOND



Miss Betty Domm is serving Charles W. Tramp a "Milkman's Cocktail."

In 1939 when Governor Julius Heil focused public attention on promoting Wisconsin dairy products and talked of opening milk bars in downtown Milwaukee, he aroused the Wisconsin restaurant industry to action. After a heated meeting between the Milwaukee Chapter board and the Governor,

conferees emerged with plans for a statewide restaurant milk sales campaign. This jointly sponsored dairy promotion resulted in a new and lasting positive relationship between the two industries. Prior to this, many restaurateurs had complaints about Wisconsin's dairy industry's merchandising of its products. Restaurants had not been able to access certain kinds of cheese and milk was a very low profit item.

BLIND PIG TRIES FOR A COMEBACK

In order to get around local liquor license quotas, those wanting to open taverns in communities where there were no liquor licenses available would apply for restaurant permits with the intention of using the restaurant to disguise illegal beer and liquor sales (aka speakeasy or blind pig). This was a common disguise used during the "prohibition" era.



1939 brought the first year of a Women's Chapter of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association.

SPECIALIZED CHAPTERS CREATED

The Women's Chapter of WRA became quite active prior to the 6th Annual WRA convention. The Purveyors Chapter was known for sponsoring special entertainment at the end of the annual conventions beginning in the late 1930's. This entertainment included dancing and vaudeville acts.

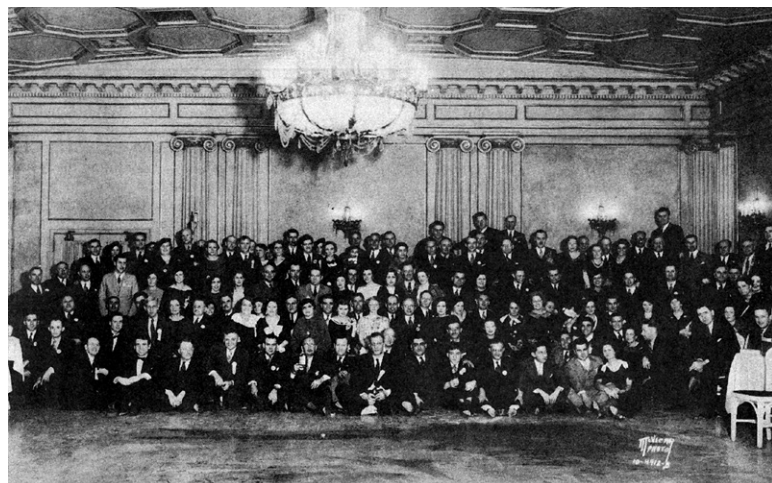


The Three Royal Rollers and the Betty Co-eds entertained the crowds in the late 1930s, courtesy of the Purveyor Chapter.



EVIDENCE OF EARLY SUPPORT OF RESTAURANT LICENSING AND EXAMS FOR FOOD HANDLERS

In the summer of 1938, Milwaukee area restaurants met with Dr. John P. Koehler, the city's health commissioner, to plan a city restaurant licensing ordinance with a corresponding fee of \$5 in an effort to raise the standard of the hotel and restaurant industry.



An early convention at the Hotel Lorraine.

WRA Past Chairpersons


In 2001 the WRA Bylaws were amended to call the chief elected officer of the WRA Board—Chairperson (formerly President) and to call the Association's chief executive officer—Chief Executive Officer and/or President (formerly Executive Vice President).

Note: Herman Lehman was the Association's first president in 1931-32 prior to the official incorporation of the WRA.


<p>1933 E.J. Specht Peacock Lunch, Oshkosh</p> 	<p>1934 J.I. Coppernoll Cop's Café, Madison</p> 	<p>1935, 1937 E.N. Quinn Mrs. Quinn's Restaurant, Madison</p> 	<p>1936, 1938, 1939 A.C. Wagner Wagner's Restaurant, Neillsville</p> 
<p>1940-42 Harry J. Ziegler Ziegler's Grill, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1943-48 George F. Mader Mader's Famous Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1949-51 Marvin M. Rich Rich's Avenue Coffee Shop, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1952 Walter M. Clist Kimberly-Clark Corporation, Neenah</p> 
<p>1953 Karl Ratzsch, Sr.* Karl Ratzsch's Old World Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1954-55 John Von Gnechten Central Café, Wausau</p> 	<p>1956-57 Richard Gust Yankee Doodle Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1958-59 Frederick Brick Brick's Restaurant, Manitowoc</p> 
<p>1960-61 Isaac "Shorty" Sader Shorty's Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1962-63 Clarence J. Petrie Petrie's Restaurant, Fond du Lac</p> 	<p>1964-65 Gustave Mader Mader's Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1966-68 William Heckel Heckel's Fine Food, Racine</p> 
<p>1969-70 John Bjork Skogmo Café, Chippewa Falls</p> 	<p>1971 Carmen Durante Carmie's Northwood Supper Club, Rhinelander</p> 	<p>1972 Karl Ratzsch, Jr.* Ratzsch's Restaurant, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1973 Henry "Andy" Anderson* Andy's Restaurant, Kenosha</p> 
<p>1974 Bernie Schreiner Schreiner's Restaurant, Fond du Lac</p> 	<p>1975 Clarence Miller The Antlers, Mosinee</p> 	<p>1976 Don S. Kennedy Westmoor Country Club, Brookfield</p> 	<p>1977 Ed J. Lump Unicare Food Service, Milwaukee</p> 
<p>1978 Joe LoCicero LoCicero's, Milwaukee</p> 	<p>1979 Louis Bemis Bemis Restaurant, Crittitz</p> 	<p>1980 Jim Speth Speth's Chalet, Brodhead</p> 	<p>1981 John "Butch" Arps Butch's Anchor Inn, Oshkosh</p> 

*WRA has had three sets of fathers and sons who both served as the WRA Board Chairman.


1982
Fred Krautkramer
Boder's on the River, Mequon



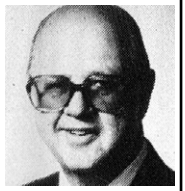
1983
Chuck Roherty*
Mr. Steak, Janesville




1984
George Pandl
Pandl's in Bayside, Milwaukee




1985
Bob Chuck
Chuck's Supper Club, Oconomowoc



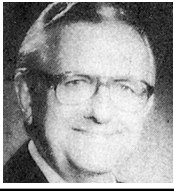
1986
John Kavanaugh
Esquire Club, Madison



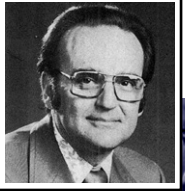
1987
Karl Van Roy
River's Bend, Green Bay



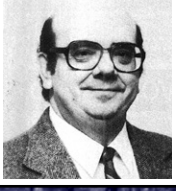
1988
Don Zarder
Zarder's Restaurant, New Berlin




1989
Harold "Lucky" Lewis
Lewis' Prime Rib, Madison




1990
Alfred Peck
Alfred's, Green Lake



1991
Ron Slaght
The Red Geranium, Lake Geneva




1992
Ron Trimberger
Trim B's, Appleton




1993
Dick Kroening
Biz-Mark, Green Bay




1994
Ron Heuser
Tailgate Restaurant & Motel, Mountain



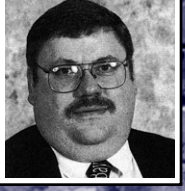
1995
Rollin Natter
Oasis Restaurant, Janesville




1996
Mike Pitzo
Polecat & Lace, Minocqua




1997
Bruce Wolf
Rock Garden Supper Club, Green Bay



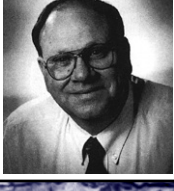
1998
Bernard Kurzawa
Bernard's, Stevens Point




1999
Tom Warren
Alioto's Restaurant, Wauwatosa



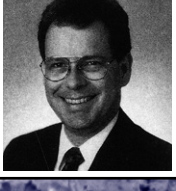
2000
Gary Anderson*
Andy's Restaurant, Kenosha



2001
Bob Otto
Cousins Submarines, Menomonee Falls



2002
Paul Cunningham
Schreiner's Restaurant, Fond du Lac



2003
Mark Dougherty
Mark's East Side, Appleton



2004
John Roherty*
Roherty's Restaurant, Janesville



2005
Steve Davis
Ardy & Ed's Drive-In, Oshkosh




2006
Bill von Rutenberg
von Rutenberg Ventures, Waunakee



2007
Dale Leffel
Belvedere Supper Club, Marshfield



2008
Trey Hester
Rocky Rococo Restaurants, Oconomowoc




2009
Linda Wendt
Wendt's on the Lake, Van Dyne




2010
Tom Saxe
Saxe's Dining and Banquets, Delafield



2011
Mary Rowley
Goose Blind, Green Lake




2012
Lynn McDonough
Connell's Restaurants, Eau Claire




2013
Charlie Gray
Culver's Frozen Custard, Rothschild




2014
Ada Lara Thimke
Lara's Tortilla Flats, Oshkosh



2015
Steve Schilling
ZaZING!, North Prairie



2016
Chico Pope
Buckhorn Supper Club, Milton



2017
Susie Patterson
AI & AI's Stein Haus, Sheboygan



WRA Past Chairpersons Continued

2018
Jean Landreman
Landreman's
Family Restaurant,
Kaukauna



2019
Dave Flannery
Apple Holler
Restaurant,
Sturtevant



2020
Joanne Palzkill
Draganetti's
Ristorante and
ZA51, Eau Claire



2021
Chris Wiken
The Packing
House,
Milwaukee



2022
Danielle Baerwald
Erv's Mug,
Oak Creek




AWARD OF MERIT RECIPIENTS: 1979–2017

NOTE: The WRA Award of Merit was also given out starting in 1937 with Senator Frank Panzer being the first awardee. These were awarded until 1970 when the WRA Award of Merit was discontinued. The Award of Merit as it exists today began in 1979 and continues to be awarded at the WRA Awards Dinner at the Midwest Foodservice Expo. This award may be given to non-restaurateurs.

2022	Gary Rudy	2008	Bernard Kurzawa	1997	John Kavanaugh
2022	Norm Eckstaedt	2007	Bob Otto	1994	Jeff Steren
2020	Stephanie Klett	2007	Casper & Sara Balistreri	1993	Bernie Schreiner
2018	Jennifer and Joe Bartolotta	2005	Craig & Lea Culver	1989	Chuck Thompson
2017	Larry Deutsch	2003	Alfred T. Peck, Jr.	1988	Heinz Fischer
2016	Ed Chin	2002	Tommy G. Thompson, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services	1987	Eldon Johnson
2015	Bob & Deb Davis	2000	Knut Apitz	1983	Joe LoCicero
2014	Steve "Saz" Sazama	2000	Tom Diehl	1979	Tony Fazio
2012	Carl Brakebush	1999	Joe DeRosa		

WRA Restaurateurs of the Year

2022	Joanne Palzkill	Draganetti's and Za51, Eau Claire area
2021	Dave & Vicki Flannery	Apple Holler Family Farm & Restaurant, Sturtevant
2020	Charlie Gray	Culver's, Wausau
2019	Susie Patterson	Al & Al's Stein Haus, Sheboygan
2018	Chico Pope	The Buckhorn Supper Club, Milton
2017	Mark & Jean Landreman	Landreman's Family Restaurant, Kaukauna
2016	Mary Rowley	Goose Blind, Green Lake
2015	Lynn McDonough	Connell's Restaurants, Eau Claire
2014	Trey Hester	Rocky Rococo Restaurants, Oconomowoc
2013	Steve Schilling	ZaZING!, North Prairie
2012	Craig & Lea Culver	Culver Franchising System, Inc., Prairie du Sac
2011	Bill von Rutenberg	von Rutenberg Ventures, Waunakee
2010	Mark Dougherty	Mark's East Side, Appleton
2009	Dick Rudin	House of Gerhard, Kenosha
2008	Steve Davis	Ardy & Ed's Drive-In, Oshkosh
2007	Tom & Lynn Saxe	Saxe's Dining & Banquets, Delafield
2006	Linda Wendt	Wendt's on the Lake, Van Dyne
2005	Paul Cunningham	Schreiner's Restaurant, Fond du Lac
2004	Tom & Kiki Warren	Aliota's Restaurant, Wauwatosa
2003	Gary Anderson	Andy's Restaurant, Kenosha
2002	Joe DeRosa	DeRosa Corporation, Milwaukee
2001	Steve Allen	Pinewood Supper Club, Mosinee
2000	Dale Leffel	Belvedere Supper Club, Marshfield
1999	Bruce Wolf	Rock Garden Supper Club, Green Bay
1998	Jeff Steren	Steren Management (McDonald's), Cuda
1997	Ron Slaght	Kenosha Country Club, Kenosha
1996	Dick Kroening	Biz-Mark, Green Bay
1995	Mike Pitzo	Polecat & Lace, Minocqua
1994	Bernard Kurzawa	Bernard's, Stevens Point
1993	Bob Chuck	Chuck's Supper Club, Oconomowoc
1992	Alfred Peck	Alfred's, Green Lake
1991	John Kavanaugh	Esquire Club, Madison
1990	Karl Van Roy	River's Bend, Green Bay
1989	Rollin Natter	Janesville Oasis, Janesville
1988	Ron Heuser	Tailgate Restaurant & Motel, Mountain
1987	Fred Krautkramer	Boder's on the River, Mequon
1986	Chuck & Carol Roherty	Mr. Steak, Janesville
1985	John "Butch" Arps	Butch's Anchor Inn, Oshkosh
1984	Don Zarder	Zarder's Restaurant, New Berlin
1983	James Speth	Speth's Chalet, Brodhead
1982	Henry "Andy" Anderson	Andy's Restaurant, Kenosha
1981	Louis Bemis	Bemis' Restaurant, Crivitz
1980	George Pandl	Pandl's in Bayside, Milwaukee
1979	Dale Rudy	Rudy's A & W, LaCrosse
1978	Heinz Fischer	Holiday Inn Supper Club, Minocqua
1977	Bernard Schreiner	Schreiner's, Fond du Lac
1976	Karl Ratzsch, Jr.	Ratzch's, Milwaukee
1975	Cosmos Hoffman	Hoffman House Restaurants, Madison
1974	Joe LoCicero	LoCicero's, Milwaukee
1973	John Von Gnechten	Von's Dutch Oven, Wausau
1972	Lyle Poole	Poole's Restaurants, Madison



Chapter 2:

1940–1959: WWII & POST WAR WRA

[Modified from material written by Jan LaRue for the 50th Anniversary Issue of Wisconsin Restaurateur in 1983.]

As War Looms

WRA'S FIVE POINT PROGRAM FOR 1940

As WWII ravaged Europe, the WRA Board of Directors met to approve the Association's official agenda for 1940. Their program demonstrated their determination to "improve" as well as "promote" and "protect" the restaurant industry in Wisconsin. It included the following five points:

1. Secure legislation to increase the state restaurant permit fee from \$3 to \$25 per year.
2. Secure legislation to provide for a state restaurant board composed of restaurant operators.
3. Secure an amendment to present rules and regulations to require that all applicants for restaurant permits submit to a written and oral examination to determine whether they are capable of operating a restaurant before a permit is granted.
4. Establish an apprenticeship for restaurant employees.
5. Develop an advertising program which will direct patrons to the restaurants that are members of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association.

PAST PRESIDENTS AS AN ADVISORY BOARD

Early in 1940, the WRA Board of Directors decided to establish an Advisory Board made up of past presidents (chairmen) of the Association.



State Association and Milwaukee Chapter President Harry J. Ziegler, left, issues a few orders. His listeners are Karl Ratzsch, Sr., treasurer, and George Mader, secretary, of the Milwaukee Chapter.

TARGETING CUSTOMERS BY INCOME

In April 1940, a government survey showed that the average income of the greatest number of Americans was between \$1,000 and \$1,500 per year. Many forward thinking Wisconsin restaurateurs revised their menus in light of this new information, realizing that most customers were not quite as well-off as they had previously assumed.

INCREASING NUMBER OF WOMEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN INDUSTRY

The 8th Annual WRA Convention saw more ladies on the scene. Wednesday of convention week was designated "Women's Day" with numerous successful women speaking on a variety of topics of interest to both women and men.

UNIFORM GRADING OF MEATS

The Milwaukee Chapter Board of Trustees began a campaign to require wholesale markets to adopt a plan for uniform grading of meats. Uniform grading would allow restaurant operators to know they were getting the grade of meat they paid for and likewise their customers. They believed printing meat grade on menus would enhance their sales of higher quality meats.

WAGE AND HOUR BATTLES

In April 1941, the Wisconsin Legislature was debating bills to establish a 44 hour work week and a minimum wage of 44 cents per hour. The legislation would also require this wage to be paid to handicapped workers, which the WRA argued would make it necessary for restaurant operators to discharge handicapped employees and replace them with people who could perform at a higher level.

DEPARTMENT STORE LUNCHROOM LAW DECLARED UNCONSTITUTIONAL

On May 20, 1941, the Wisconsin Supreme Court declared unconstitutional the 1935 law requiring department stores to partition lunchrooms/cafeterias from the rest of the store and ordered the state Board of Health to issue a restaurant license to F.W. Woolworth Company for its store at 1000 West Mitchell Street in Milwaukee.

WWII and the Wisconsin Restaurant Association

World War II had far-reaching effects on the restaurant industry in Wisconsin.

RESTAURANT INDUSTRY BACKS WAR BOND SALES

WRA appointed a committee to ensure that restaurant owners and operators would help support US Armed Forces by investing in war savings bonds and encouraging their employees to do the same.

Let's Give the Bum's Rush to Benito!

Listen, Benito, your boys in Africa have gotten an inkling of what American fighting spirit means. But maybe you didn't know that back home we're in this war, too. Why were we paying for all those tanks and planes and guns 10% of our pay every payday? And we won't stop buying Bonds, until you and your sneak-thief buddies are stopped once and for all!

Everybody . . . Every Payday . . . 10%!



US ARMED FORCES LOOK TO WRA FOR HELP

In 1941, the armed forces of the United States needed cooks and the restaurant industry was called on to help provide them. George Mader of Mader's German Restaurant in Milwaukee, a member of both the Wisconsin and National Restaurant Associations' boards of directors, was appointed chairman of the Wisconsin committee of the Advisory Commission to the Council of National Defense. The plan was to interview those restaurant employees who were draft age and "sell" them on volunteering when drafted, for intense training in the service bakers and cooks schools of various corps areas.

WRA AND RED CROSS TEAM UP ON EMERGENCY FEEDING PLAN

In January 1942, Wisconsin mobilized for civilian defense and plans were made for restaurateurs throughout the state to take over mass feeding operations in the event of bombing or other military disasters. Classes for restaurant employees and American Red Cross volunteers were set up to teach various phases of the program.



When disaster strikes, Red Cross volunteers pitch in to aid the needy.

NUMEROUS PRODUCTS BECOME SCARCE AND/OR RESTRICTED IN WARTIME USA

Fresh Vegetables and Fruit

As fresh vegetables and fruit become scarce due to transport restrictions, restaurant use of frozen foods increased dramatically. The US Department of Agriculture reported the average cost of fresh peas was then \$2.30 per bushel. Distributors of frozen peas were charging \$1.50 per bushel. Restaurateurs had decisions to make. In many cases, fresh produce had to travel as long as 72 hours to reach Wisconsin and was no longer very "fresh," while new quick-freeze methods helped to preserve garden freshness and eliminated the spoilage factor.

Sugar

On December 13, 1941, the US Office of Production Management (OPM) issued regulations to restrict the consumption of sugar to 1940 levels. The wholesale receivers were required to report amounts they received from importers or refiners month by month compared to prior year and restaurants purchased sugar with "sugar purchase certificates." As most restaurants had increased business in the last year, this was an additional challenge.

CONSERVE SUGAR

and Serve Your Country

We believe restaurant PATRONS are PATRIOTIC and will ration the SUGAR they CONSUME by USING LESS SUGAR and STIRRING their BEVERAGES, CEREALS and FRUITS WELL.

WISCONSIN RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION

"Keep 'Em Flying"

Sugar Table Cards Now Ready for Distribution



Coffee

Initially coffee was restricted to 70% of prior year consumption, and then to only 50% of prior year.

Use of Drums as Containers

Use of drums for packing and shipping lards, oils, grease, gelatin and other restaurant staples was prohibited as of November 1942. As the industry struggled to find substitutes, significant shortages developed.

Meat

Rationing of meat was announced by the US Department of Agriculture in October of 1942, effective within three months. Restaurateurs were urged to reduce the number of meat entrees on their menus.

Every Restaurant Man Can Do a Job for Me



There is a SERIOUS SHORTAGE OF COFFEE, and the SUGAR that goes into it. NATIONAL RATIONING on these products is already here!

There is plenty of milk and dairy products! By inviting your customers to drink Milk you are doing a two-fold job.

1. Preventing critical shortage of rationed foods.
2. Building the health of your customer with the product known today as "The Victory Food!"

A SUGGESTION

If your waitresses will just suggest "Milk Today?" what an important job your restaurant can do in promoting this great Victory Program.

WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Butter

Severe rationing of butter meant restaurateurs were forced to use butter substitutes, both at the table and in cooking.

Waitresses— HELP DEFENSE PROGRAM

The United States Government has asked all people to reduce waste so that more materials will be available for defense. You can do your part easily by following these suggestions.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <p>Do not give guests extra butter, bread, etc., without first asking if it is wanted, "would you like more butter?"</p> <p>Do not fill glasses so that water overflows on tablecloths.</p> <p>Take good care of your uniform to keep it free from tears and stains. Cover it when doing side work.</p> <p>Watch to see that lighted cigars and cigarettes are not left on tablecloths or table tops.</p> <p>Be sure to keep tops on condiment containers to keep foods from drying out. Also keep tops on granulated sugar containers.</p> <p>Keep doors of food warmers closed when not using.</p> <p>Keep menus clean and pick up all extra copies.</p> <p>Guard against a waste of ice. Place ice in glass first, two cubes usually sufficient, pour water over them allowing an inch for thawing.</p> <p>Be sure to take orders correctly so that food does not have to be returned. Also be sure that food is right when it is taken to customer.</p> <p>Do not serve coffee that has spilled over onto the saucer.</p> | <p>Guard against serving food in chipped glass-ware.</p> <p>Do not use napkins as cleaning cloths.</p> <p>Report immediately splintered chairs, broken equipment or bad stains.</p> <p>Guard against spilling food on patrons' clothing and against fallen overcoats hung carelessly over chairs.</p> <p>Be especially careful about breakage of china and glassware. Do not overload trays. In the dishwashing department follow instructions about sorting.</p> <p>Be careful in handling shades, blinds and draperies not to pull them out of line.</p> <p>Do not leave water running. Report leaky faucets.</p> <p>Follow instructions regarding turning off electric lights, fans, or other electric equipment. This also applies to steam heat and air conditioning controls.</p> <p>Be sure that windows are closed when sudden rain, snow or dust storms begin.</p> <p>Cooperate with cooks and checkers to insure food up to that ordered by the customer.</p> |
|---|---|

Reproductions of this page are available for posting in kitchens, pantries, storerooms, and other food departments. Write Wisconsin Restaurateur, 161 W. Wisconsin Avenue, Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Courtesy Ahrens Publishing Co., New York.



ANTI-INFLATION SALARY/WAGE CONTROLS

As part of the national anti-inflation program, the Director of Economic Stabilization issued regulations which, in effect prohibited wage increases after October 3, 1942 and salary increases after October 27, 1942, with some exceptions as determined by either the War Labor Board (in the case of wages) or the Bureau of Internal Revenue (in the case of salaries).

PRICE CONTROL ACT

On April 28, 1942, the Office of Price Administration (OPA) issued Bulletin No. 1 establishing maximum or "ceiling" prices on all commodities at the March 1942 level. The Price Control Act provided severe penalties for violation of the controls.

WARTIME CONFERENCE REPLACED RESTAURANT CONVENTIONS

Early in 1944 Wisconsin restaurateurs held a wartime conference at the Schroeder Hotel in Milwaukee to discuss the myriad of challenges confronting the restaurant industry. Included on the agenda were labor shortages, rationing, menu prices, wage freezing, repair and replacement of equipment, unemployment insurance and the Red Cross.

In view of the no money, no equipment, no supplies situation, WRA leaders had to announce to a harassed and weary industry that there would be no convention in 1944. The National Restaurant Association had already put its Convention and Exposition on hiatus. Between 1942 and 1946, the NRA instituted a program of limited attendance conferences designed to strike quickly at the heart of complex wartime issues.

DETERMINED RESTAURATEURS DID WHAT HAD TO BE DONE

Determined restaurateurs remained in business, worked harder and longer, and did what had to be done. Walter Ludwig, manager of the Green Room Restaurant, Milwaukee, with the aid of three cooks and six waitresses, served 143 Navy recruits every 20 minutes averaging over 600 men per meal, 1,200 daily, from June 17 to July 5, 1944.

THE WAR ENDS!

World War II ended on August 15, 1945. Although there was rejoicing in the streets, restaurant businesses would continue to feel the effects. Equipment was still unavailable and supplies still scarce. The average restaurant was badly in need of sprucing up. As rationing eased, restaurateurs breathed a sigh of relief and began planning for more prosperous times.

INDUSTRY SUPPLIERS FACED VEHICLE USE RESTRICTIONS

All truck operators, as of November 1942, were required to secure Certificates of Necessity for all rubber-tired commercial transport vehicles. Weekly records had to be kept and carried in every truck at all times.

MINIMUM AGE REQUIREMENT LOWERED

At the request of the Association, the Wisconsin Industrial Commission modified the minimum age requirement for working in hotels to 17, at the same time they permitted women to work in armament plants.

TIPS AS WAGES

In July 1942, on appeal by John Ernst of the Ogden Café in Milwaukee, the Industrial Commission of Milwaukee held the first hearing on the inclusion of tips as wages for the purpose of computing employer contributions to the Wisconsin Unemployment Compensation (UC) Fund.

It was not until 1945 that the Wisconsin Legislature passed legislation to exclude tips from payroll for the purpose of calculating required contributions to the UC Fund.

ADVENT OF INCOME TAX WITHHOLDING

In 1943, the much debated federal income tax withholding law went into effect. The Association determined that most restaurateurs found the requirement simple to implement.

Post War WRA

WRA ANNUAL CONVENTIONS BOOMED POST WAR

On November 28, 1945, WRA held the 11th Annual Convention, its first post-war convention, having cancelled events in 1944 and the spring of 1945. It was held at the Schroeder Hotel in Milwaukee, as was every annual convention and exposition until 1951, when the event had outgrown that venue.

At the time of the 15th Annual Convention in 1948, WRA was known throughout the country as the state association that puts on the "little national convention." The 16th Annual Convention in 1949 topped all records with over 6,000 attendees and just under ninety purveyors in 120 booths at the Schroeder Hotel in Milwaukee. In 1951 the Annual Convention was moved to the Milwaukee Auditorium due to lack of space at the Schroeder Hotel.

The first ever culinary contest was held at the 20th Annual Convention in 1953.



Climaxing its most successful convention in history, the WRA's Annual Banquet in the Crystal Ballroom of the Schroeder Hotel attracted many hundreds of restaurateurs and their supplier friends.

WRA AIDS VETERANS

WRA coordinated an apprenticeship program for veterans and employers in conjunction with the on-the-job training provisions of the GI Bill of Rights. The apprenticeship period was three years or 8,100 hours, with the first 700 hours being probationary.

100 NEW WRA MEMBERS

There was great pride at WRA when the new member figures for July 1945 to July 1946 showed 100 new members.

WRA EXPANDS MEMBER SERVICES

In January 1947, WRA opened a branch office in Madison to better serve members in that area, primarily providing employment services. From 25 to 50 orders seeking new employees were received each week, as the shortage of waitresses was still acute. By October that year, nearly 800 job applicant cards were on file. WRA, through the main office and branch office, were receiving approximately 2,400 requests per year from restaurant and hotel managers for capable employees. The main office in Milwaukee had over 7,500 job applications on file. The restaurant labor shortage continued into the 1950s. Some operators said it was more difficult to find good employees then than during the war.

New Tax and Accounting Department

In February 1947, the Board of Directors authorized the establishment of Tax and Accounting services for WRA members. The new department was housed in the Plankinton Building in Milwaukee. The creation of a uniform restaurant bookkeeping system and simplified payroll system were among the first assignments for this single employee department.

Short Course in Restaurant Management

The first George L. Wenzel restaurant management short course was held at the Wisconsin Hotel April 8-11, 1947.

WRA Education Committee Appointed

Educational activity increases with new committee and acquisition of visual education equipment. The Board approved \$1,100 for a thousand watt 16mm sound-on film movie projector and a film library to be shown throughout the state, along with a still camera.

New Operating Survey and Assistance Department

In 1948, new operating information services were added. The primary purpose was to act as a lightning rod for new operational methods and practices.

WRA Becomes Real Estate Broker

In August 1946, WRA began providing broker and facilitation services for the buying and selling of restaurant and hotel properties, handling all phases of the transaction.

Financial Guidance Services

In December 1957, the WRA Hotline concept got its real beginning when WRA announced new member services consisting of:

1. Analysis of monthly, quarterly, annual restaurant operation reports;
2. Telephone guidance relating to costs, wages, equipment, menu prices, etc.;
3. Surveys on geographic volume trends. For a fee, a consultant would go out to the restaurant.

WRA MEMBERS PARTICIPATE ON TV SHOW



Second over-all prize at the 1956 WRA Culinary show went to Chef Paul Goede, representing Mader's Restaurant, receiving his trophy from Mrs. Breta Griem of television station WTMJ.

In 1956 the Breta Griem cooking show on WTMJ began featuring one WRA member each month. This was a tremendous benefit for those who were chosen to participate. Griem wrote a column for *Wisconsin Restaurateur* in the early years of the Association.

WRA EXECUTIVE SECRETARY GETS PROMOTION

After 25 years of service, the WRA Board of Directors promoted Elmer Conforti to Executive Vice President in 1958.

NEW WRA LOGO

A new logo was designed in 1958 for the "Atomic Era."

LAWS AND REGULATIONS POST-WAR

Oleo: A Four Letter Word

Making the butter shortage even more difficult, the regulations on the use of oleomargarine for restaurants and hotels in Wisconsin were onerous. They included:

1. Requirement to obtain a special license to serve oleomargarine and display a copy of it on walls of every

- room in which it is served;
2. Either the retailer or licensed dealer must pay a 15 cent per pound tax to the Department of Agriculture on all oleomargarine served; Records of all wholesale margarine purchases must be kept for inspection;
3. Oleomargarine cannot be mixed with butter under any circumstances;
4. Margarine must be sold and served in its natural color: white.

Minimum Wage Battle

In 1946, legislation, referred to as the Pepper Bill, after its primary author, Senator Claude Pepper, was introduced to raise the minimum wage from the current 40 cents per hour to 65 cents for two years, 70 cents after two years and 75 cents after four years. As this threat was raising fear amongst Wisconsin restaurateurs, Executive Secretary Conforti traveled to Washington, DC. WRA members sent letters and made calls to their senators and congressmen. The legislation was amended to exclude employers when the greater part of their business was intrastate.

Office of Price Administration (OPA) Grants WRA Menu Relief

On June 4, 1946, a committee of 18 Wisconsin restaurateurs descended by chartered plane on the nation's capital to lobby their representatives to remove price ceilings which were preventing them from raising menu prices to cover their costs. They got results from the Senate Banking and Currency Committee which recommended amendments to the Emergency Price Control Act, which would allow restaurateurs some relief from price controls.

In December 1950, the *Wisconsin Restaurateur* bulletin indicated "price controls, wage stabilization, man-power, allocation of materials and rationing agencies are working at full steam ahead in Washington." The update further indicated: price controls for the restaurant industry were voluntary as of December 1, 1949; Defense Production Act of 1950 tied wage controls to price controls, both would be either frozen or increased simultaneously; food rationing possible in 60 to 90 days as shortages develop.



Employee Meals Ruled NOT TAXABLE

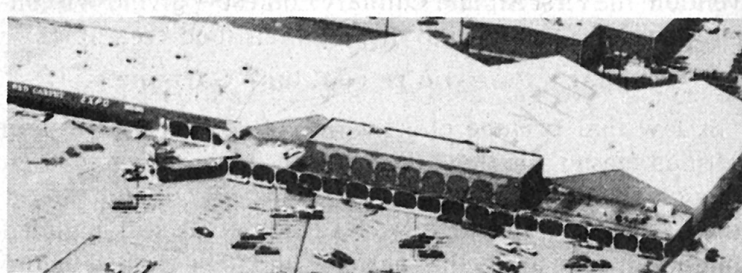
In 1957, the IRS clarified the long-standing question of whether the value of meals furnished to employees immediately before or after a work shift was considered wages for the purpose of the Federal Withholding Tax.

WRA Lobby Issues in 1959

Conforti appeared at the Wisconsin Capitol on average of twice a month in 1959. Issues included: minimum wage of \$1.00 to employees working over 20 hours per week; political contributions by labor unions; earlier payment of workmen's compensation; small business corporate income tax exemptions; age discrimination; chain store tax; credit restrictions on wholesale liquor sales; barring liquor wholesale licensees from owning Class B licenses; issuance of Class B licenses to bono fide clubs; collection of personal property taxes; and regulation of trading stamps.

WRA INSTRUMENTAL IN ESTABLISHING NEW EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES

During the post-war era, WRA worked with educators to establish training for restaurant personnel at Marquette University, the Milwaukee Vocational School, the Madison Vocational School and the Shorewood Opportunity School.



The convention moved to the Milwaukee Auditorium in 1951 and remained at that venue until 1972.

INTERESTING TIDBITS

NEWEST THING!—TV IN RESTAURANTS AND BARS!

Surveys in late 1947 said that operators could increase business 500% with by installing the “Finest Restaurant & Tavern Television Receivers Ever Designed. **BIG 15 inch screen** for only \$495.

Most people did not have television in their homes until the mid-1950s. Although the commercial sale of televisions began before the war, they were not manufactured during WWII.

Finest Restaurant & Tavern
TELEVISION RECEIVERS
EVER DESIGNED

TeleKing
SALUTES
Baseball and the Brewers

TeleKing Is the Set With the Big Screen You Have Been Waiting For
TeleKing Brings You the Whole Game Without Strain

- 1 "Big, Clear, Sharp Direct View Picture"
- 2 "Advanced automatic picture level — you can't miss getting the entire broadcast right on the beam — because it's all automatic. Just turn the knob."
- 3 "Natural tone-out as clear and true as an announcer's own voice — at any distance."
- 4 "Tuning is the set with the unique ACRO-COUPLED circuit which maintains lowest operating point... has two parts... gives less heat... has less possibility of any kind of trouble."

CONVENTIONS
\$495.00 Big 15-Inch Screen
Standard Set
\$10.00 EXTRA FOR THE DELUXE SET

Guaranteed Performance With a Written Warranty
Installed and Serviced by Factory Trained Personnel

Immediate Delivery Prompt Service
See Facilities and Qualified Personnel in Action
In Downtown Milwaukee's Restaurants and Cocktail Lounges... or call
DAILY 0997 FOR A FREE DEMONSTRATION

DICKER SALES COMPANY
Incorporated
215-219 WEST KILBOURN AVE., MILWAUKEE, WIS.

TIPS IN 1948

According to the US Department of Commerce, tips amounting to \$446,000,000 were handed out by the American public during 1948 in connection with the purchase of food—*hmmm... wonder if they squealed to the IRS?*

DIDN'T THE WINGLESS CHICKEN IDEA FLY...OR WHAT?

In 1949, after 12 years of selective breeding, Peter H. Bauman of Des Moines, Iowa was ready to market his flock of about 400 wingless chickens. He said his birds had **white meat where others had only bony wings** and the drumsticks were bigger because the upper legs had to work harder to hold the bird upright. Bauman also expected the birds to eventually start laying more eggs than normal chickens because they didn't waste as much energy uselessly flapping their wings.

1949 COFFEE PRICES ALARM RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

Coffee reached an all-time high in the 69 year history of the New York Coffee Exchange when in 1949 prices skyrocketed to **31.5 cents per pound!**

NATURAL GAS COMES TO WISCONSIN

The Milwaukee Gas Light Company announced in September 1949 that natural gas was due in Wisconsin in January of 1950.

OVEN MIRACLE—a little scary to some

In October 1955, Wisconsin restaurateurs learned about a remarkable electronic oven which used high frequency radio energy—**microwaves**—to create molecular friction which in turn created the heat to cook foods faster than any other method known. It took over a decade before the ovens became popular for home use.

MILLER BREWING COMPANY INNOVATION

In 1955, Miller came out with a new packaging option that was expected to increase profits for tavern keepers—**the Miller 12-pack!**

BIG MAC ATTACK

Notice in September 1957, *Wisconsin Restaurateur*: "Madison's newest drive-in, McDonalds, 2201 S. Park Street will feature **15-cent hamburgers**, according to owner, Ed Traisman." The first McDonalds opened in Des Plaines, Illinois, April 15, 1955.

INTRODUCTION OF NEW FRYING PROCESS

Flavor Fast Foods, Inc., Rockton, Illinois, introduced a new cooking method still popular in quickservice food operations. It could cook chicken in 5 minutes and fish in 3 minutes. This pressure-frying method was called "broasting" and done in a "Broaster." The term "broasted" continues to be used in the Midwest, but is seldom heard in other parts of the country.

Chapter 3:

1960s: TUMULTUOUS TIMES

[Modified from material written by Jan LaRue for the 50th Anniversary Issue of Wisconsin Restaurateur in 1983.]

WRA BUILDS NEW HOME IN MILWAUKEE

President Isaac Sader appointed a Building Committee in early 1960 to investigate the possibility of WRA owning its building instead of continuing to lease. The committee included Karl Ratzsch, Sr., George LaBracke and Gus Mader. Acting on a mandate from the membership, the Board of Directors developed a plan to construct a building on property which had been reserved on N. Van Buren Street in Milwaukee, just south of Wisconsin Avenue.

Members were urged to make contributions, or loans to the building fund. The loans were secured by promissory notes.

The first wave of replies to the appeal for money brought in \$8,605, along with several pledges that did not include dollar amounts.

In April 1963, ground was broken at 626 N. Van Buren Street. Two and a half months later the building was ready for occupancy and, on July 1, 1963, the WRA began moving operations to its new home. An open house reception was designed to acquaint the industry and the Wisconsin community with the new WRA image—one of prestige, power and increased stature. Approximately 600 guests toured the new office building and attended the ribbon-cutting performed by WRA President Clarence J. Petrie.

WRA DRIVE-IN CHAPTER

In 1960, a Drive-in Chapter with its own logo was created to address issues specific to that segment of the industry. The chapter was given a prominent place in the convention program.

NEW INTERSTATE HIGHWAY SYSTEM PROMISED TOURIST BOOM

Wisconsin restaurateurs, lodging operators and resort owners looked forward to a projected increase in tourist business in late 1961 due to the new interstate highway system that was being built.

ASAE KEY AWARD TO ELMER CONFORTI

In 1962, the American Society of Association Executives (ASAE) honored WRA EVP Elmer Conforti with their highest honor, the coveted ASAE Key Award.

WRA PROVIDES MAP FOR TRAVELERS

In 1965, WRA teamed up with the Motel Association and the Wisconsin-Michigan Steamship Lines to promote WRA member establishments. Travelers disembarking from the Milwaukee Clipper found that the new maps provided by the Clipper brought them into direct contact with the members of both associations. The maps were provided to the Clipper at WRA's expense, paid for by member dues.



WRA office at 626 N. Van Buren Street in Milwaukee.

WRA ANNUAL CONVENTION COUPLED WITH MOTEL ASSOCIATION EXPO

In 1966, the WRA Annual Convention was billed as the "Wisconsin Restaurant and Motelrama" as the two industry segments united for a record-breaking event.

A WRA CREDIT CARD PLAN

In response to the high cost of credit card processing (7%), WRA created its own credit card plan called Select Restaurants Inc. It was also expected that the plan would give patrons credit at a greater variety of dining establishments.

Initially 27 members joined. EVP Conforti expected the plan to cut credit costs to 4% or lower for operators.



Stout Incorporates Restaurant Management in curriculum—a conference was held at Stout Institute, in attendance were (l-r) Theron Ochs, Ed J. Doyle, E.A. Conforti, Harry Purchase and John Bryson.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS IN FULL OPERATION

By 1967, WRA had made solid progress in its efforts to alleviate the cook shortage. The programs then operating and those scheduled to begin shortly could make Wisconsin the largest source of cooks in the country.

1. Stout University had instituted a four-year course for Restaurant and Hotel Management.
2. Vocational Training Act two-year training courses were operating at Madison Institute of Technology, Eau Claire Technical Institute and the Milwaukee Institute of Technology and plans were in place for courses at seven more strategically located campuses throughout the state by 1971. It was planned that each program would graduate 25 cooks and 260 apprentice cooks per year.
3. A three-year internship program for on-the-job training had also been initiated, with three programs in Eau Claire, Milwaukee and Wausau. Additional programs were planned in Madison, Racine/Kenosha, Beloit/Janesville, La Crosse, Superior and Oshkosh/Green Bay.



1966-67 WRA Board – Standing (l-r) E. A. Conforti, Allen Krok, Bernard Schreiner, Bruce Stumbras, George Lipinski, Anthony Fazio and William Heckel. Sitting (l-r) Roy Schmelzer, Gustave Mader, George LaBracke, Karl Ratzsch, Sr. and Jay Reader.

1967 WAS A VERY BUSY YEAR

- WRA installed its own in-house, off-set printing facilities.
- Membership increased 15%.
- Gus Mader was appointed to the newly created post of Vice President of National and International Affairs.
- WRA processed 12,552 phone requests.

- WRA published and distributed 50,000 Dine and Rest Guides in six states.
- WRA appeared and spoke on 63 bills and amendments before the Wisconsin Legislature.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS BATTLES IN THE 1960s

TOURISM BUSINESS AND HIGHWAY BEAUTIFICATION

Wisconsin's Billboard and Sign Control Law

In 1960, it was called "one of the worst pieces of legislation in many years," as restaurants along Highway 41 in Racine and Kenosha were engaged in a battle for their very existence. Restaurants also feared that Governor Nelson's law would eventually be expanded into town and cities.



1966 – US Department of Commerce, Highway Beautification Act Hearing held in Madison by C.E. Aten, Chairman F.L. Anthony and Attorney Ruth Johnson.

Highway Beautification Act

In July 1966, the Highway Beautification Act was official, and WRA, along with the Wisconsin Motel Association, both led by EVP Conforti, were gearing up to play a major role in the administrative rule-making process to implement the law. At the administrative rules hearings, Conforti presented key facts regarding the likely effect on the \$600 million dollar tourist industry and the \$450 million dollar outdoor advertising business. Conforti warned an estimated 85,000 jobs may be lost as restaurants and resorts went out of business. In addition, newspaper stories covered restaurateurs like Steve Savas of Star Restaurant in Kenosha, trying to protect his property from state agents who forcibly removed his neon sign from the restaurant roof.

In September 1966, the final draft of the Highway Beautification Act administrative rules permitted businesses in resort areas to keep their signs and billboards. WRA was the hero of the tourism industry.

Decades later, WRA CEO Ed Lump continued WRA's involvement in negotiations over Wisconsin sign laws in an effort to balance the need for businesses to make themselves visible to the public with the state's environmental concerns. WRA was instrumental in passing the Specific Information Signs (SIS) and Tourist Oriented Directional Signs (TODS) program in Wisconsin while protecting the right to use arrow boards in the 1990s.

MINIMUM WAGE AND OTHER LEGISLATIVE BATTLES

MARCH ON WASHINGTON . . .

WRA Listens and Speaks its Piece . . .



Federal Minimum Wage

When the Kennedy Administration proposed raising the minimum wage to \$1.25 per hour, and included some previously excluded segments of the foodservice industry, EVP Conforti led a group of WRA members to Washington, DC in 1961 to help defeat the measure by one vote in the House of Representatives. The lobbying group included Clarence Miller of The Antlers, Mosinee; Tom Wilbern of Wilbern's, Wisconsin Rapids; Cos Hoffman of the Hoffman House, Madison; Irving Hartson of Vita-Hi, Milwaukee and Virginia Haack Smith of Smith Brothers, Port Washington.



Wisconsin Minimum Wage

WRA successfully negotiated moderate increases to the state's minimum wage in 1968. It increased from \$1.25 to \$1.30, instead of the proposed \$1.45, and the tip credit for gratuity personnel increased from 10% to 15% to help offset the wage increase. In addition, there was also language tying the wage to increases or decreases in the cost-of-living index.

Business Travel Tax Deductions

In 1961, WRA was fighting a Kennedy Administration proposal to tighten allowable business travel deductions. WRA seriously feared the detrimental effect this could have on conventions and trade shows.

Beer Tax

WRA assisted the brewing industry in defeating a proposal to increase the tax on beer.

Uniformity of Regulations

In 1969, WRA was building its reputation as a buffer between members and the bureaucracy when it helped to facilitate

DID YOU KNOW?

WHO WAS GHULAM MOHAMMED?

In 1961, Ghulam Mohammed was named Honorary Consul of Pakistan by that nation's president, Mohammed Ayub Khan, who visited the US in July of that year to confer with President Kennedy and address Congress.

Why was this important to the Wisconsin foodservice industry? In restaurant circles, Ghulam Mohammed was better known as Gus Mader, WRA leader and owner of Mader's German Restaurant in Milwaukee (far right).



HOW LONG HAVE RESTAURANTS BEEN REQUIRED TO ASK "IS PEPSI OK?"

When you order a Coke, the waitstaff often asks if Pepsi is okay. Did you know they are not just worried that you can tell the difference between the two colas?

In 1964, Judge Andrew Parnell of Appleton decided that the customer had to be told in advance that he was not getting a "Coca-Cola" when he had ordered a "Coke."

uniformity of building plan requirements between the Wisconsin Fire Rating Bureau and the Wisconsin Industrial Commission.

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION CELEBRATES 50 YEARS

In 1969, the NRA celebrated its 50th anniversary serving the foodservice industry. It was founded in Kansas City, Missouri on March 13, 1919. The first NRA Convention and Educational Exposition was held at Coates House, Kansas City, under the guidance of John Welch, Omaha, Nebraska, who became the first president of the Association.

CONFORTI PREDICTS FOODSERVICE WILL BE 2ND LARGEST INDUSTRY

In his acceptance remarks after receiving an appreciation award from the Chairman of Stout University's Hotel and Restaurant Management Department in 1969, EVP Conforti predicted that foodservice would be the second largest industry in the nation by 1971. The industry was third-ranking in 1969.



Elmer Conforti



WHEN DINING OUT,
LOOK FOR THIS EMBLEM



SERVING
★ FOR ★
VICTORY



Serving the Food,
and Beverage Service
Industries



Some of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association Logos Through the Years



Chapter 4:

1970s: BABY BOOMERS COME OF AGE

[Modified from material written by Jan LaRue for the 50th Anniversary Issue of *Wisconsin Restaurateur* in 1983.]

NEW DECADE BRINGS MORE “PAY THE PIPER” FOR RESTAURATEURS

ASCAP, BMI and SESAC had come to Wisconsin. The idea of copyrighted music was news to many foodservice operators, although the copyright laws were definitely not new. The US Constitution gave Congress the power to provide for copyrights and the very first Congress did so—in 1790! The law on the books in 1970 had been passed in 1909. It included several exemptions for music in a place of business—exemptions that music licensing agents often seemed unfamiliar with. This was a clear sign of legislative battles to come.

WRA DABBLES IN AUTO INSURANCE

An ad in the April 1970, *Wisconsin Restaurateur* urged members to save money on their auto insurance while maintaining the best protection by insuring their personal cars under WRA's new plan with Omaha Indemnity. No indication was found as to how long this program lasted.

ANNUAL AWARDS BANQUET AND AWARDS ON THE WAY OUT?

In May of 1970, EVP Conforti warned members that with Annual Awards Banquet attendance steadily declining, it may be time to eliminate the banquet from convention activities along with presentation of the Awards of Merit.

The Awards of Merit were eliminated in 1971 and the banquet was replaced with the President's Annual Awards Luncheon. At the luncheon, awards were made honoring all past presidents of WRA for their contributions to WRA and this recognition officially ended the Award of Merit program (for the time being) and paved the way for the Restaurateur of the Year (ROY) award.

NRA HONORS WRA

In 1970, the National Restaurant Association recognized the WRA as one of two states associations which did an outstanding job of promoting National Restaurant Month. The other state association to be recognized was Texas.

October is Wisconsin Restaurant Month

**Dine where you
see this sign.**

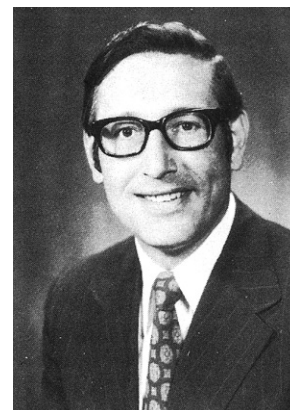


EVP CONFORTI RETIRED AFTER 39 YEARS

December 31, 1970 marked the completion of 39 years of service as WRA's executive leader. EVP Conforti had been a founder of the Wisconsin Restaurant Association and was involved in its organization even prior to its official incorporation in 1933. For over four decades he continued to devote himself to furthering the industry's interests. He was recognized nationally as one of the outstanding trade association executives in the nation. He was a past president of the International Society of Restaurant Association Executives and much sought after as a member of national advisory committees as well as local and state planning groups.

KOLBET SCHRICHTE NAMED NEW EVP

In January 1971, Indiana's loss was Wisconsin's gain when A. Kolbet (Kolby) Schrichte left his position with the Indiana Multiple Trade Association to become WRA's second EVP since its incorporation in 1933. Prior to accepting the position with WRA, Schrichte was active in some thirteen societies and councils and had owned and operated The Fondue House, The Bier Stube and the Nordic Inn in Colorado.



Schrichte would lead the WRA until August 1977. After WRA, he moved to Washington, DC to work as executive

secretary of the National Restaurant Association. In the mid 1980s he became chief executive of the American Logistics Association until he retired in 1990. Sadly, he passed away in June of 2013.

39TH ANNUAL CONVENTION SEES MANY CHANGES

1972 was a year of changes for WRA's convention activities. The event moved to larger facilities at the Red Carpet Inn, Milwaukee and the first Awards Night party featuring the first Restaurateur of the Year (ROY), was held at the Performing Arts Center.

Behind many of the changes was EVP Schrichte's leadership. He intended to rouse the troops when he stated "It's time we pull ourselves together as an industry—as an organization—as a profession—and supply recognition to those from our ranks who have been willing to assume responsibilities of leadership. While the motion picture industry has the Oscar, the medical profession has its Academy, the legal profession its Bar association, we have somehow failed to focus our attention at the state level on those from our ranks who furnish leadership, talent and exemplary conduct—who both literally and figuratively symbolize the goals that students in our technical colleges and in our 4-year universities might set for themselves to attain."



(l-r) Lyle Poole accepts congratulations from John Von Gnechten, past President of WRA.

FIRST STATE ROY WINNER

On March 28, 1972, at the Milwaukee Performing Arts Center, Lyle Poole of Madison was presented with the first WRA Restaurateur of the Year (ROY) award.

Poole was well known for his contributions to and accomplishments in the industry. He began operating the Cuba Club in 1946 and opened Poole's Northgate in 1966. It was under his guidance and with his hard work that the WRA Madison Chapter grew into one of the most active and

successful in the state.

Poole was further recognized in 1973 by Florida State University for his leadership in the hospitality industry.



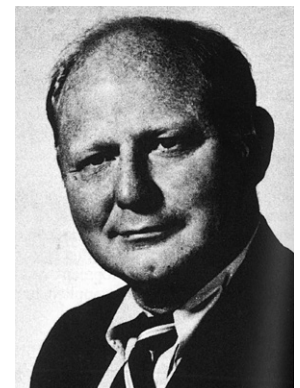
Bernie and Regina Schreiner outside the Fond du Lac restaurant.

SCHREINER'S RECEIVES THE RARELY GIVEN GOLDEN BUTTER KNIFE AWARD

In 1972, Schreiner's Restaurant of Fond du Lac, owned by then WRA Vice President Bernie Schreiner, received the American Dairy Association's Golden Butter Knife award. Schreiner was also honored in 1974 by the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry for significant contributions to foodservice education.

CHAPTER PRESIDENTS' IDEA EXCHANGE

In January 1973, WRA President, Karl Ratzsch, Jr. asked all chapter presidents to participate in an idea exchange for the purpose of increasing chapter meeting attendance. The exchange was a first for WRA.



Karl Ratzsch, Jr.

WRA GOALS FOR 1973/74

Under the presidency of Henry "Andy" Anderson, Kenosha, new primary goals were set:

1. Support statewide health and sanitation code, applicable in all foodservice facilities, equally applied and equally enforced around the state.
2. Work to see that unfair competition from uninspected, unlicensed facilities of government, churches, or fraternal organizations selling their uninspected products to the public is not permitted.
3. Continue an all-out effort to work with the Department of Public Instruction, Vocational Technical System

and State University System to achieve maximum benefit from institutions of learning for students in the foodservice field.



Vocational, Technical and Adult Education (VTAE) students in classes prepare food for special functions and groups.

WRA MOVES TO MADISON

Although there had not been a single vote to do so when suggested in 1938, by 1973 the lure of being close to state government action won out and WRA made the move to the State Capital. The office was temporarily located in the Hovde Building at 122 West Washington Avenue. Convention staff remained in Milwaukee at 700 Water Street.

PERSON FRIDAY

Fran Rocki, Elmer Conforti's "person Friday" and manager of the WRA's employment department, was beloved for her sense of humor and revered for her attention to detail. She became convention manager at the Milwaukee office after the WRA office moved to Madison. After leaving WRA she worked for S.J. Casper Co and Casper Marketing Group. Rocki passed away at the age of 97 in 2013.

TRUTH-IN-MENU OMEN

Although Wisconsin restaurateurs were not properly alarmed yet, truth-in-menu woes had, by 1975, already taken on more significance than just talk. Oregon courts had awarded \$10,000 to a customer who claimed that the menu stated "toast covered with melted butter" but he was served a pat of frozen butter. He refused to pay and the restaurateur had him arrested. The customer sued. The customer won.

NEW BUSINESS GROUP FORMED FOR COOPERATIVE LOBBY EFFORTS: CORA

Along with the Wisconsin Merchants Federation, WRA was instrumental in organizing the Conference of Retail Associations (CORA) to pool lobbying resources and give a louder voice to the concerns of small business in Wisconsin. Other CORA

members include the Hardware Association, the Auto and Truck Dealers and other hospitality-related organizations.

CORA held its first Legislative event in June 1975 to honor senators and representatives from the La Crosse area.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY EDUCATION CONTINUES TO EXPAND

Stout Hotel and Restaurant Major Very Successful

By 1971, Hotel and Restaurant Management was the fastest growing academic major at Stout State University with 250 students enrolled.

NIFI Sanitation Course

WRA made Wisconsin the first state to adopt the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry Applied Sanitation course in July 1974. It was taught by WRA's Program Director, Lois Gaines, the first certified NIFI instructor in Wisconsin (NIFI preceded the current ServSafe course). She went on to do pilot programs in other states.

In 1977, when state health departments were seeking mandatory sanitation certification, the WRA Executive Committee met with key sanitarians to revise their proposal to include the NIFI sanitation course and grandfathering for those who had taken it.

WRA Management School

The new WRA Management School had served over 800 restaurateur enrollees by July 1975. The first program was the Applied Foodservice Sanitation course, followed by the Wage and Hour Clinic. In August of 1975, the pilot course on Employee Handbooks was scheduled in the Southeast Chapter, with material for the course written by WRA staff.



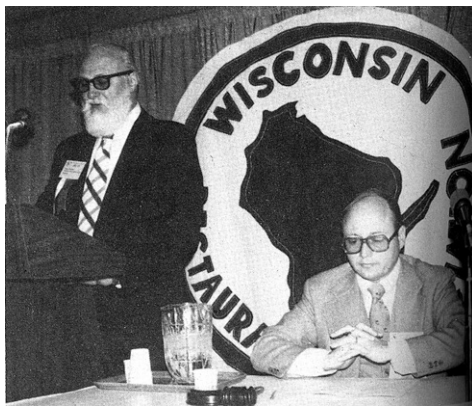
WRA's Management School seminars on "Writing Your Employee Handbook" held in cities around the state were a huge success.

WRA Endorses Heimlich Maneuver

Posters and color films showing the technique to aid choking victims were made available in 1976 by WRA. WRA and its members found this method more acceptable than other devices proposed for choking emergencies. However, statewide promoting of the Heimlich was postponed until the Good Samaritan Act was finally passed in acceptable form in 1977.

WRA Scholarship Committee Formed

Spearheaded by Heinz Fischer of the Holiday Inn Supper Club in Minocqua, in June 1979, the committee made its first report to the Board of Directors. It was determined that the scholarship nominee should be a restaurant member or employee rather than a school, and need should not be the major factor but should be weighed along with grades and summer work in the industry.



WRA's Annual Meeting of Members in 1978 (l-r) Heinz Fischer and Outgoing Board President Ed Lump.

EQUAL EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITY ACT STRENGTHENED

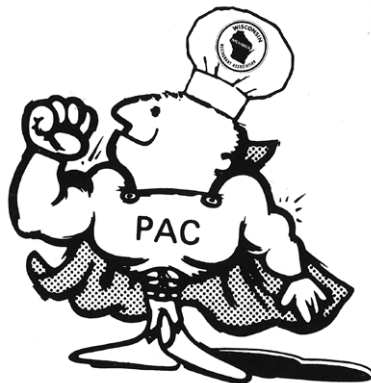
Wisconsin restaurateurs had to amend their approach to avoid employment ad discrimination when the Equal Employment Opportunity act was strengthened in 1976. Instead of advertising for a "counter girl," "barmaid," "salad girl," or "maintenance man," for example, they needed to use terms such as counter worker, bartender, salad prep person and custodian.

ANNUAL CONVENTION AND EXPO MOVED TO MECCA

The new Milwaukee convention facility provided much more of everything needed for WRA's rapidly growing trade show. The convention was held at the Red Carpet Inn after the Milwaukee Arena venue, but prior to the move to MECCA.

HOSPITALITY INDUSTRY ALARMED BY INCREASE IN UNION ACTIVITY

There was a sharp increase in union activity reported, particularly in southeastern Wisconsin in 1976. The Hotel-Restaurant Employees and Bartender International-Local 116, Basic Processors Union-Local 44 and Industrial Workers Union-Local 196, all based in Chicago, were becoming active in Wisconsin.



WRA POLITICAL ACTION COMMITTEE FORMED

In May 1976, WRA announced formation of the WRA PAC

Fund to raise money and make contributions to political candidates who support WRA on issues that affect restaurants. EVP Schrichte noted that during Wisconsin's last state elections the unions had 176 PACs registered to raise money and contribute to candidates while business had only four. By September 1976, 95 restaurants had contributed a total of \$4,055 to the new WRA PAC.

LAWS AND REGULATIONS BATTLES OF THE 1970s

Tip Credit

In 1975, the Wisconsin Department of Industry, Labor and Human Relations (DILHR) had a bill introduced to abolish the tip credit in Wisconsin. WRA members spoke out to help defeat the proposal.

40 Hour Work Week and Overtime

WRA and other business organizations were successful in getting the legislature to reject DILHR's proposed rules to require time and one-half be paid for hours in excess of 40 per week without exempting some job categories which were exempt under federal law at that time. The overtime requirement was then for over 48 hours per week. However, soon after the state legislative success, the US Congress eliminated the overtime exemption for hotel and restaurant employees.

Minimum Wage

In Wisconsin, WRA was successful in maintaining the youth differential at 80% of the adult minimum for employers under \$250,000 gross volume and in defeating a proposal for a \$2.30 minimum wage in 1975.

WRA fought numerous bills to raise the minimum wage at the federal level. However, 1974 legislation raised the minimum to \$2.00 /hr., with a 1975 increase to \$2.10, and a 1976 increase to \$2.30.

In 1977, Congress eased the differential for student employees; eliminated overtime exemptions for hotel, motel, and restaurants employees; raised the gross volume test in stages from \$250,000 to \$362,500 after December 31, 1981; and increased the minimum to \$2.65/hr in 1978, \$2.90 in 1979, \$3.10 in 1980, and \$3.35 in 1981.

Employee Uniform Maintenance Costs

Federal law was amended to require employers to cover or reimburse required uniform maintenance costs which took employee net gross earnings below the minimum wage.

Smoking Bans

Proponents of Wisconsin's first city-wide no smoking ordinance failed in their attempts to include restaurants in Madison, but it was only the beginning.

IRS Tax Reform Act

This so-called tax reform threatened to tax publications and trade shows of tax exempt organizations. Ultimately, only the publication's advertising revenue was taxed.

Proposed Cut Backs In State Sanitation Inspectors

WRA was successful in defeating a proposal to cut the number of state restaurant inspectors, which would have meant many rural restaurants would not have an inspection for years.

UC Victory

After three years of lobbying, WRA's UC bill was finally passed. The new law experience-rated the UC solvency tax so stable employers with low base rates would no longer pay the freight for industries that abuse the system.

NRA BOARD CALLS ON SCHRICHTE

In 1976, EVP Schrichte was appointed to participate in NRA Board meetings in a non-voting capacity for the purpose of establishing closer relations with state association executives and associations.

SCHRICHTE NAMED TO UC ADVISORY COUNCIL

In May 1977, EVP Schrichte was appointed to the UC Advisory Council, finally giving small business representation.

EVP SCHRICHTE RESIGNS/GAINES APPOINTED NEW EVP

August 1977, Kolbet Schrichte resigned as Executive Vice President to take the position of executive secretary with the NRA in Chicago. The Board, under the leadership of then restaurateur and President of WRA Ed Lump, ratified Lois Gaines to serve as the new Executive Vice President at the Board meeting in October. She had been appointed interim EVP when Schrichte resigned.



Lois Gaines

A farewell party was thrown for Schrichte by legislators and CORA members and he was again honored by WRA at a "roast" held during the WRA Convention at the MECCA in the spring of 1978.

During his six years as WRA EVP, Schrichte had tripled WRA membership. Schrichte described his most valuable talents to be his ability to operate a grill, a mop and a cash register.



NRA President Thad Eure presents Teamwork Award to Lois M. Gaines, WRA Executive Vice President, for effort put forth in promoting October as Restaurant Month.

EVP GAINES NAMED TO LABOR STANDARDS ADVISORY COUNCIL

In late 1977, EVP Lois Gaines was named to the state's Labor Standards Advisory Council which was responsible for recommending changes to Wisconsin's labor laws.

WRA BYLAWS AMENDED

In 1979 the bylaws were changed to allow greater continued participation by past presidents of the association. Heinz Fischer of the Holiday Inn Supper Club in Minocqua, proposed the amendment to designate past presidents as Honorary Directors for the remainder of their lives or residency in Wisconsin, with voting privileges for three years after their presidency and a voice, but no vote thereafter.



WRA offers training: Mrs. Marcelle Richardson discusses the program with Matire d' and observes a waitress's table setting technique during a two day professional waitress workshop held in partnership with Milwaukee Area Technical College.

Chapter 5:

1980s: NEW ERA IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP BEGINS

CHANGE IN EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP

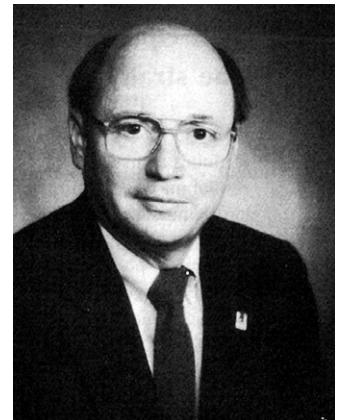
EVP Lois Gaines Resigns

After seven years with WRA and four years as Executive Vice President, in April 1981 Lois Gaines (who went back to using her maiden name of Kostroski) left the WRA to join the staff of the National Institute for the Foodservice Industry (NIFI) in Chicago. EVP Gaines' last WRA Convention & Exposition in March of 1981 was the largest Expo held in Milwaukee, making WRA "Number One in Convention City!" Over 13,000 attendees and 270 exhibitors participated in the 48th Annual WRA Convention and Exposition. She also helped to expand WRA's educational programs.

Edward J. Lump of Hartland Became WRA's New Executive Vice President on June 1, 1981

Lump was board president of WRA in 1977-78. He came to WRA with extensive management and restaurant experience. After graduating from UW-Madison in 1964 with a BA degree in Political Science, he worked for Proctor & Gamble as a salesman and as an area sales manager in Milwaukee and Chicago. In 1969, he left P&G and moved back to Madison where he and two partners opened a restaurant called the Brat und Brau (he was the managing partner). Over the next seven years, they opened four additional locations: another in Madison, Oshkosh, Menasha and Janesville. Almost from the beginning, the Brat und Brau was a member of WRA.

In 1978, Lump sold his interest in Brat und Brau and became Restaurant Division Manager for a Milwaukee company. In this capacity, he had responsibility for four buffet restaurants called Chef America; two Nino's Steakhouses in Illinois and an upscale hotel restaurant which he renamed E.J. Lump's. Prior to joining WRA, he started a consulting business where he worked with clients like the American Dairy Association.



Ed Lump

NEW EVP FACED WITH IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES

In spring of 1981, a bill was introduced by the President of the Wisconsin Senate, Fred Risser (D-Madison), to regulate smoking. If it became law, all restaurants would have to set aside at least 50% of their seating for non-smokers. The bill, SB-80, was passed by the Assembly in the Fall session, but in Spring of 1982 WRA succeeded in defeating it in the Senate on the last day of the session. During this session, WRA succeeded in passing a bill that repealed the law passed in the 1930's, at WRA's request, that banned taverns from giving away free meals and prevented restaurants from giving away free alcoholic beverages. Industries and boards do change their positions from time to time.

From 1983 to 1986, alcohol issues were high on the legislative agenda. Led by WRA Past-president Butch Arps, WRA supported a bill to raise the drinking age from 18

to 19. The idea was to get drinking out of high schools because there were a lot of 18 year olds still attending high school. This effort was successful. Along with this, WRA got a bill passed, with the help of Rep. Dick Shoemaker (D-Menomonie) that allowed 18 year olds to still serve alcohol as waitstaff or bartenders if they were supervised by a licensed bartender. WRA worked with the Tavern League of Wisconsin (TLW) to pass a bill establishing uniform closing hours for the entire state. WRA again worked hard to support a TLW initiative to eliminate third party liability (Dram Shop) in Wisconsin. This saved restaurant and tavern businesses thousands of dollars. However, not all the news was good. In Spring of 1986, despite strong opposition from WRA, TLW and others, a law was passed raising the drinking age to 21. WRA did succeed in adding amendments to the bill that allowed 18-20 year olds to continue to serve alcohol in licensed establishments. The amendment also allowed children of any age to drink alcohol beverages when their parents or legal

guardians were present.

Smoking regulation continued to be an issue. WRA continued to oppose attempts to mandate no smoking sections in restaurants. At the same time, WRA worked with Senator Risser on educating the industry on the issue. In 1984, WRA agreed to support a law requiring businesses serving food to post signs indicating where smoking was allowed. Signs could be displayed on the front door or entrance to the bar area or anywhere in the restaurant. Many restaurants responded by creating no smoking dining rooms. In the late 1980s, WRA reached a compromise with Senator Risser for a statewide law in which every restaurant that served more food than alcohol had to have a no smoking section (which could be one table) with proper signage. The trend to non-smoking dining rooms accelerated.

NEW MEMBERSHIP SALES PROGRAM IMPLEMENTED

Another task facing new EVP Lump was the implementation of a new membership sales program, for which the groundwork had been laid in 1979. The WRA Board of Directors had decided it was time to try using on-the-road salesmen to sell WRA membership. A new position of Director of Membership, Promotion and Chapter Services had been created to manage the program and was filled by a veteran WRA staffer Joe Wisniewski who successfully created an impressive increase in membership numbers (Wisniewski, who was nicknamed "Mr. WRA" had previously served as advertising manager and managing editor for *Wisconsin Restaurateur* and in other key roles on staff). By 1982, WRA had two sales representatives in the field both selling and acting as liaisons with WRA members.

"THE TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGIN' "

The dynamics of the foodservice market was changing quickly during the 1980s.

Expanding Restaurant Chains and "Pizza Mania"

There was a proliferation of expanding restaurant chains, while a fascinating new "pizza mania" swept the country cutting into the burger market. Pizza restaurants were the fastest growing segment of the industry and many traditional restaurants were adding pizza to their menus, some creatively experimenting with gourmet toppings. In 1988, a new foodservice expo format devoted entirely to pizza was introduced, cutting into the expo business of some state restaurant association trade shows.

New Consumer Interest in Healthy, Nutritional Choices

More consumers were looking for healthy choices on restaurant menus and a few restaurants began using the American Heart Association's "heart healthy" program. To follow—an ever stronger push for **menu labeling mandates** was also on the horizon.

Brew Pubs

Another market-changer, the era of the "brew pub" was beginning in 1989 with plans for the first Madison "brew pub" in the newly renovated old Wilson Hotel building.

WRA'S WORK WITH SMALL BUSINESS COALITIONS PAYS OFF FOR MEMBERS

Sales and Use Tax on Disposables Discontinued

In January 1982, WRA along with the Merchants Federation and the Conference of Retail Associations (CORA) won a major victory in getting a ruling from the Wisconsin Tax Commission which required the state to discontinue charging sales and use tax on disposables not for resale. Many members also got a refund due to a two-year lookback period.

UW Campuses Must Start After September 1

In 1983 EVP Lump was named President of the newly reorganized Tourism Federation of Wisconsin (known as the Wisconsin Tourism Federation at that time). Under his leadership, the coalition won a hard-fought battle with the UW System and the September 1 start date became a reality. Strong grassroots activity from WRA members was a key component to this success.



The theme was "Growing With You!" at the ribbon cutting ceremonies and part of the brand new membership booth at the 51st Annual Wisconsin Restaurant Association Convention and Trade Show in 1984.

WRA LEADERS DIVE INTO THE COMPUTER AGE

In July of 1982, the WRA Board approved the purchase of an office computer system for WRA headquarters. It was felt that the computer system would "improve the accuracy of membership lists", eliminate typesetting costs for the *Wisconsin Restaurateur* magazine, as well as speed up clerical and "bookkeeping" tasks, thus improving the efficiency of office operations.

It would prove to be a long process to purchase, install and implement this new computer system. In 1988, the bookkeeper

was still maintaining hand-written records as well as the computer records. But, this was the first of many computer age technology upgrades to come for WRA.

EVP Lump recalls that it took WRA staff quite some time to overcome the feeling that WRA needed two complete sets of records. Ultimately considerable money was saved when labels began to be printed as opposed to stamped (as carbon paper went by the wayside).



WRA office at 125 S. Doty Street in Madison.

WRA BUYS A NEW HOME

With office rental prices increasing rapidly in downtown Madison, the WRA Board, at the tireless urging of board member Rollin Natter, decided it was time to own their Association headquarters. A building was purchased on Doty Street, just two blocks from the State Capitol building. After extensive renovations, WRA staff moved into their new offices and became landlords.

WRA LEADERSHIP REVS UP AND WRA INCREASES MEMBER EDUCATION AND POLITICAL GRASSROOTS EFFORTS

A Barrage of Government Mandates

With higher taxes, higher labor costs, higher drinking age and higher cost of doing business due to increased government mandates from all directions, WRA leaders decided it was time to get organized politically.

In 1982 restaurant businesses were hit with the Federal Tax Equity and Fiscal Responsibility Act requiring extensive new record keeping and reporting for employers of tipped employees. The Education Department of WRA stepped up and developed a very comprehensive Tip Reporting Seminar for restaurant owners, corporations, managers, employees and accountants. EVP Lump was the presenter of the seminar which was offered in over 25 locations and had over 10,000

attendees.

In 1984 Congress decided to withhold highway funds from any state that did not raise their drinking age to comply with federal standards (resulting in an epic legislative battle)—the Wisconsin drinking age went up to age 19 in 1984 and to 21 in 1986 in order to comply.

The Reagan Immigration Reform Act of 1986 required employers to be responsible for establishing employment eligibility for every employee hired and keeping records with new fines for each violation and up to \$10,000 in punitive damages. It was time to get very serious about fighting back. WRA again developed a seminar on how to comply with the complicated requirements of this law.

Need for Another Professional Lobbyist/Public Policy Assistant

In 1986, the WRA Board approved the hiring of Gail Parr, the chief of staff for a state senator and former key staffer of an Assembly Majority Leader. As a result WRA now had two registered lobbyists with extensive knowledge of government operations, regulations and public policy.

PURPOSE AND GOALS OF WRA'S LEGISLATIVE EDUCATION COUNCIL



WRA's Legislative Education Council was established as a permanent standing committee at the Association's Annual Meeting in March, 1987.

The goals of the new committee are to:
 (1) increase the visibility and positive image of the food service industry to the public and government;
 (2) increase education and awareness of members, the public and government on industry issues;
 (3) increase accessibility to public policy decision makers; and
 (4) increase industry input into public policy decision making.

**For more information
 phone: (608) 251-3663**

Political Education Committee

A new standing committee called the Political Education Committee was formed in 1987 promoting the concept that "a strong WRA is your best protection." The committee organized fundraisers for politicians who supported the industry and grassroots legislative events at the chapter, state and national level to educate elected officials about the restaurant business and explain WRA's position on current issues. In 1988, the committee was renamed the "Legislative Education Council" to work more closely with the NRA's committee by the same name.



Gail Parr (far left), WRA operations director and lobbyist, looks on as Governor Tommy Thompson signs the license transfer bill into law. This permitted the transfer of restaurant licenses between immediate family members without pre-inspection by sanitation authorities. This law was overwrote in 2019.



Governor Tommy Thompson opened the 1987 Wisconsin Foodservice and Lodging Trade Show with an official ribbon cutting. He also addressed the WRA Annual Meeting of Members and thanked them for their support.

Candidate Endorsements

At the Summer Board meeting in 1986, the WRA Board voted to begin endorsing candidates for political office. They started in a big way by endorsing Tommy Thompson for Governor in the primary. WRA was the first statewide organization to do so. Thompson won the primary election and the Association continued to endorse him in the general election which he won, becoming governor. This paid a big dividend for WRA. Alfred Peck from Alfred's in Green Lake was appointed to the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council to represent small business;

Gary Roberts from Piggy's in La Crosse was appointed to the Tourism Council and Bernard Kurzawa from Bernard's in Stevens Point was appointed to the Apprenticeship Council.

Governor Thompson appointed a "Tourism Task Force" to make recommendations on marketing funding needs. EVP Lump was appointed to this task force. A recommendation was made to provide \$1 million in emergency funding to be followed up by an additional \$7 million appropriation in the state budget.

Governor Thompson also wished to reform the Unemployment Insurance System. WRA lobbyist Gail Parr was appointed to the UI Task Force. This Task Force recommended establishing an experienced rated system with graduated tax schedules that were very favorable and helped stabilize small business employers.

FIRST NORTHEAST FOODSERVICE TRADESHOW

To benefit operations in northeastern Wisconsin, WRA established a trade show in Green Bay in 1988.



Lt. Governor Scott McCallum cuts the ribbon to open the first NorthEast Foodservice Trade Show.

START OF LONG RELATIONSHIP

In the summer of 1983 the WRA Board voted to endorse Threshermen's Mutual Insurance Company for worker's comp and property/casualty insurance. That company changed names in 1995 to Society Insurance which has continued to be WRA's endorsed insurance provider, dedicated supporter of the Association and ally to the restaurant industry.



COWS ON THE CONCOURSE

WRA, with its Madison Chapter, continued the tradition of supporting Wisconsin's June Dairy Month Kickoff event, Cows on the Concourse. WRA volunteers constructed a 500 ft. submarine sandwich made with Wisconsin cheese. The sandwich sold for 25 cents a slice and was consumed in less than two hours. In 1985, EVP Lump served as The American Dairy Association's June Dairy Month Chair.



WRA President Karl Van Roy, River's Bend in Green Bay, assists 1987 Alice in Dairyland Liz Henry in cutting the first slice of the giant sandwich.



WRA and the Madison Chapter support June Dairy Month in 1982. Noel Zak, WRA Education Director, Lucky Lewis from Lewis' Prime Rib and Nira Johnson from Coachmen's Inn serving the giant 500 foot sub.

Chapter 6:

1990s: CHALLENGES FOR WRA LEADERS AND STAFF

RECESSION AND DROUGHT

The decade opens with economic recession and skyrocketing food prices due to an extensive period of drought—a double whammy for the restaurant industry.

In addition, Wisconsin's restaurateurs and WRA were facing an onslaught of new government mandates, restaurant-linked Hepatitis A and Salmonella outbreaks along with the AIDS virus scare and a virtual army of IRS and US Department of Labor agents descending on Wisconsin restaurants to thresh out more tax revenue and labor law violators.

GOVERNMENT MANDATE MANIA

Wisconsin restaurateurs were caught in a whirlwind of new government mandates during the 1990s. As they attempted to adapt operations to the new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), effective July 1992, and two new (but different) Parental Leave Laws from the state and the feds, small businesses were engaged in major battles fighting additional mandates throughout the decade. Health insurance mandates requiring employers to cover all employees working 17 hours or more, menu labeling, smoking bans in restaurants and lowering maximum legal blood alcohol content (BAC) for driving.

NRA/WRA LEADERS FIGHT BACK

Political action expanded greatly during the 1990s. Statewide Lobby Days and Washington, DC lobbying trips became much more necessary and frequent. The National Restaurant Association began sponsoring an annual fly-in called the Public Affairs Conference in the early 1980s and WRA was an early participant. As we moved into the 1990s, attendance skyrocketed and WRA became one of the largest delegations. The most important victory early on was the defeat of the proposed Clinton Health Care Mandate. WRA members played a key role in modifying music licensing law (Fairness in Music Licensing Act). The effort was led by Wisconsin Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner and the modifications provided more reasonable use requirements and protected small business from harassment from the performing rights organizations (PROs). Other successes included the defeat of a value added tax (VAT) on disposables and establishing a FICA tip tax credit to offset FICA taxes restaurants were paying on tips.

WRA began to sponsor annual Lobby Days. It was more important than ever that relationships be built between



Longtime friend of Wisconsin's restaurant industry, Rep. Jim Sensenbrenner (fourth from left), with members of the Wisconsin delegation at the 1999 Public Affairs Conference. (l-r) Joe Bartolotta, Mark Dillon, WRA President Tom Warren and Renee and Brian Shecterle.

“real people” and their legislators. Elected officials needed to know that WRA lobbyists had the support of members in the various districts. Lobby Day contacts helped pass a new type of Alcohol Beverage License—Class “C” wine license. This helped business development in rural/tourism areas where there were no full liquor



John Kavanaugh, Esquire Club in Madison, testified before Congress in 1996 about the important role of political action committees (PACs).



Ed Lump, Division of Tourism Administrator "Moose" Speros and Tom Diehl announce survey results at a press conference on school start K-12 after September 1st on Wisconsin Tourism Federation Day in 1993.

licenses available. The Class "C" license allowed restaurant owners to take advantage of a new trend—the wine bar. Lobby Days were critical in maintaining the Tip Credit and passing needed tort reform that made property/casualty insurance more affordable. With strong "grassroots" support, WRA could pass a law that allowed municipalities to grant Class "B Combination" licenses to boats with over 40 seats that sold food.

In 1995, WRA got a law passed that mandated that at least one manager per restaurant pass a state approved test and become a certified food protection manager. This was done to protect the integrity of the foodservice industry and public safety. This was especially important because there were significant outbreaks of foodborne illnesses linked to restaurants. WRA also secured legislation that allowed brewers, winemakers and distillers to sample product at trade shows and other events sponsored by statewide associations.

REGULATOR RAMPAGE

While the IRS turned its spotlight on tipped employee income and payroll taxes, the US Department of Labor was preparing to deploy its troops throughout the country on a search and destroy mission for labor law violators. The small business owner who didn't know the differences between federal and state wage and hour laws or which one applied to them was very likely to get burned with multiple \$10,000 - \$20,000 fines. And, how does a business owner make employees report their tips when the law says the employer has no authority over the tips?

WRA RESPONDS WITH EXPANDED MEMBER SERVICES

As federal agents made their way around the country and Wisconsin, restaurateurs awaited their turn to be in the federal regulatory spotlight. WRA professional staff quickly developed new wage and hour seminars, with specific focus on restaurant operations and tipped employees along with printed material on the new ADA and Parental Leave regulations. In the Spring of 1991, three WRA professionals hit the road to instruct restaurateurs and their accountants around the state. The rampage of federal audits continued for several years. Thanks

to the foresight of the WRA Board of Directors in supporting the expansion of WRA's professional staff of experts, the association was able to provide professional help and support for members in stressful times.

WRA leadership's emphasis on professional help services for members led to the formation of the **Hotline Team**, as the WRA Hotline Service was expanded with additional staff being assigned areas of specific expertise.

This expanded focus provided rapid response to member requests for information and guidance regarding laws and regulations, personnel issues, mediation with inspectors, etc.

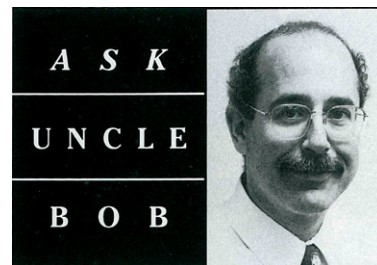
In 1995, a statewide Restaurant Operations Survey was conducted by WRA professionally trained research staff, to provide not only geographic operations data to members, but to provide solid, factual information to educate lawmakers and government officials about the restaurant business in Wisconsin. The survey, for example, indicated that the average profit margin for Wisconsin independent restaurants was only 2.5%. While the project was extremely time intensive and required professionally trained research staff, this information was used successfully numerous times by WRA lobbyists and members when talking to lawmakers.

The technology and internet explosion challenged WRA to help its small business members keep up with new operating and marketing tools. WRA used its flagship publication, the *Wisconsin Restaurateur*, to inform members of the latest trends and provide free tech information and advice for small operators. How to embrace change became a recurring theme of the publication and EVP Lump in his regular column.

WRA SCRAMBLES TO FIND NEW HOME AND FINANCIAL STABILITY

While WRA leaders and staff were busy fighting government mandates at the state and federal level, local government decided it was a good time for them to get into the act. As they were intending to expand jail facilities, Dane County decided it needed the Doty Street property that WRA offices occupied in downtown Madison.

In 1991, WRA was issued an eminent domain condemnation notice and professional staff spent the next eight months fighting legal battles to get a "fair" price for the property it had remodeled and occupied only a couple years



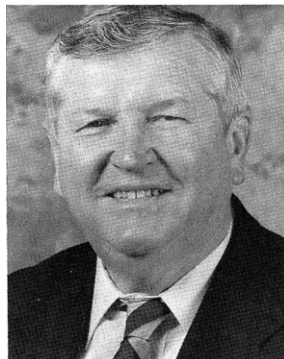


The WRA office at 2801 Fish Hatchery Road in Madison (left). Former WRA office at 31 S. Henry Street in Madison (right).

earlier. In 1992, the courts finally granted WRA considerably more than originally proposed by Dane County, however, because it did not recoup the cost of extensive renovations, the Association suffered a significant financial setback.

Office space was leased two blocks from the Wisconsin Capitol for quick access by staff lobbyists. WRA leaders instructed staff to develop a fundraising plan and began their search for property which would suit WRA's needs.

Through determined leadership, WRA raised over half a million dollars in contributions from the industry to purchase a new home. In 1997, with renewed financial stability, WRA purchased and renovated a new home at 2801 Fish Hatchery Road near the Madison Beltline. Past Board President and Building Committee Chair John Kavanaugh said "It's special that the industry has stepped up and made this possible. It's really a credit to our industry people." Self-styled champion of WRA building ownership, Past Board President Rollin Natter, was at last beaming with satisfaction when he said "From the beginning I have thought that renting a facility was a losing proposition. Building ownership is necessary for a stable association."



Rollin Natter

WORKING WITH GOVERNMENT AND KEY COALITIONS TO PROMOTE, PROTECT, IMPROVE

Leaders who know how to form mutually beneficial, positive relationships are strong leaders with clout. During the 1990s, EVP Lump carried on and significantly expanded the tradition of prior executive officers, with himself or WRA directors participating as members on numerous government boards and councils. Participation on these boards and councils gave WRA clout and the opportunity to have key input in areas of government regulation affecting the foodservice industry. Participation on the Tourism Council helped to expand state promotional funds for tourism; on Minimum Wage Council provided the clout to maintain a Wisconsin tip credit; on Child Labor Advisory Task Force helped develop reasonable child

labor regulations that the industry could work with; on the Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council protected Wisconsin restaurant businesses from unfair treatment in the UC system.

WRA worked with Governor Tommy Thompson and his administration to pass Wisconsin's trailblazing Welfare to Work program in 1997, demonstrating that the foodservice industry had good jobs to be filled which provided training and career paths. Working with Wisconsin Attorney General James Doyle, WRA helped to develop and pass the Good Samaritan Law in 1990, to allow foodservice businesses to donate food to charities without fear of liability. In addition, WRA staff maintained a strong positive relationship with government regulators in order to get up-to-date information on implementation and enforcement policies, as well as provide liaison and mediation services to member businesses.

Working with small business and industry coalitions like Council of Retail Associations (CORA), Wisconsin Tourism Federation and International Society of Restaurant Association Executives provided key industry resources and added to WRA's clout in the public policy arena. Perhaps the most valuable business partner for WRA was the National Restaurant Association (NRA), providing national lobbying services and industry resources. A member of the WRA served on the NRA Board to act as liaison and keep WRA apprised of national industry leader activities.



GOVERNOR SIGNS UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION BILL

Governor signs unemployment compensation bill in 1990. Both the Assembly and Senate passed a bill providing a UC Tax break for positive balance employers in the recent legislative session and Governor Thompson is shown here signing the bill into law. Small business has benefited from the presence on the Unemployment Compensation Advisory Council of restaurateur and WRA member Alfred Peck (second from right). He worked with WRA lobbyist Ed Lump to make UC Law changes that are favorable to small business.

WRA EDUCATION FOUNDATION: NEW ERA OF EXPANDED PROGRAMS

Entering the 1990s as a recently formed official 501(c)(3) charitable organization, with its own Board of Directors and expanded staff, the Education Foundation was ready to expand programs to serve and train the foodservice industry.

In a period of numerous foodborne illness outbreaks, the AIDS virus scare and the new state requirement for restaurant manager sanitation certification, it was time to significantly expand WRA's sanitation training program. Working with the NRA Educational Foundation and their ServSafe program, WRA's Foundation staff increased classes and testing around the state to provide both state and national certification for Wisconsin restaurateurs. Professional staff also helped to educate the press and public regarding foodborne illness and good sanitation practices, in addition to advising restaurateurs whose businesses were facing an outbreak and resulting negative media frenzy.

In 1991, the Education First program, developed by the NRA Educational Foundation was implemented in Wisconsin. The WRA Education Foundation developed Wisconsin specific restaurant operator tools for working successfully with high school employees, their parents and teachers. The program was essentially an agreement signed by student employees, their parents and the restaurant operator. The agreement stated that a student's education came first and



The 1997 Salute to Excellence at Grenadier's Restaurant in Milwaukee. Past and present Grenadier's chefs who prepared the fantastic meal were: Charles Weber, executive chef, Grenadier's; Scott Shully, chef/owner, Shully's Catering; Paul Jansen, executive chef, Bradley Center; Tom Sterle, sous chef, Bradley Center; Knut Apitz, chef/owner, Grenadier's and host for the Salute to Excellence; Jeff Slough, executive chef, North Hills Country Club, and Joseph Meunch, executive chef, Eddie Martini's.

communication forms provided by the program were used to share scheduling information among all parties. School administrators, teachers and government officials were very supportive of the program. Restaurateurs who participated received significant positive public relations value and often publicity for program participation.

ProStart Was to Become the Flagship Program of the WRA Education Foundation

ProStart was designed by the NRA Educational Foundation to provide trained professionals for the future of the foodservice industry, as well as develop a new professional image for foodservice as a career. Wisconsin ProStart began in 1995 as a one year program, then expanded in 1997 to a more comprehensive two year program providing national industry certification for students who completed the course work and passed the certification exam. Recognizing the potential of this program for the industry, the WRA Education Foundation Board encouraged increasing staff focus on the program to expand the number of school districts offering ProStart. Leaders in the Green Bay Chapter raised funds to buy equipment for the Preble High School program and were joined in their efforts by Superior Coffee. Chapter leader, Lois Ludwig went shopping with teachers to find good deals on appropriate equipment.

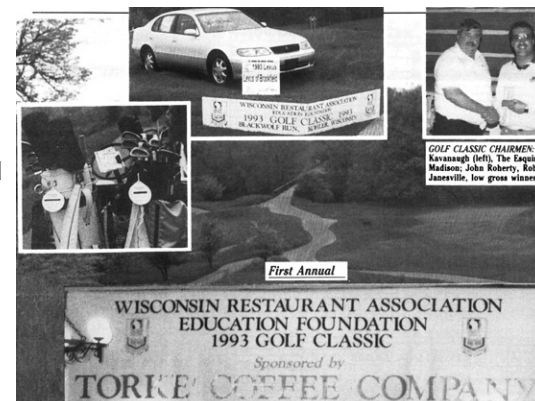


Salute to Excellence Awards began a tradition in 1993, at the famous Grenadier's restaurant in Milwaukee and hosted by Chef Knut Apitz. Each year since, these awards have honored a restaurateur, a chef, an industry supplier and an educator for excellence in going beyond the call of duty to support quality education in the restaurant industry. The event has received a high level of financial support from WRA supplier members.

The Foundation Endowment Fund was created to provide increased scholarship support for worthy students in foodservice related college programs. Championed by Chef Knut Apitz, the fund began to grow as he tirelessly gave fundraising his personal touch ... when Chef Apitz reached out to you, it was very difficult to say no.

The Golf Classic began in 1993. A key developer of this golf fundraiser was Ward Torke, from longtime WRA supplier partner Torke Coffee Roasting Company. Torke maintained that better educated and better trained young people would lead to a more promising future for our industry and wanted to raise funds for the WRA EF which supports this goal.

Since its inception, this has been the WRA Education





NRA Treasurer and future chairwoman Denise Fugo spoke to WRA board members at the October 1998 board meeting. Fugo thanked WRA for support in becoming dual members and talked about industry issues. (l-r) Tom Warren, Bernard Kurzawa, John Kavanaugh, Fugo, Lois Zingsheim and Joe DeRosa.

Foundation's premiere annual fundraising event. The event was re-named the ProStart Classic in 2016.

NRA DUAL MEMBERSHIP

Following a long courtship by the NRA Board of Directors, in the Fall of 1998 the WRA Board voted to embrace the NRA proposal for dual membership. Beginning January 1999, approximately 2,900 WRA business members automatically became NRA members with no dues required to the NRA because WRA was required to pay the NRA annually for member services. Approximately 175 Wisconsin NRA members automatically became WRA members, if they were not members prior to the agreement.

WRA members had new industry resources available to them and the NRA, which had been providing lobbying services for the entire industry could now claim 2,900 additional members when trying to flex its muscles with lawmakers in Washington, DC. Joe DeRosa, NRA Board Member representing Wisconsin, and John Kavanaugh worked along with EVP Lump in negotiating the agreement.

HERO: HANDBOOK FOR EXCELLENT RESTAURANT OPERATIONS

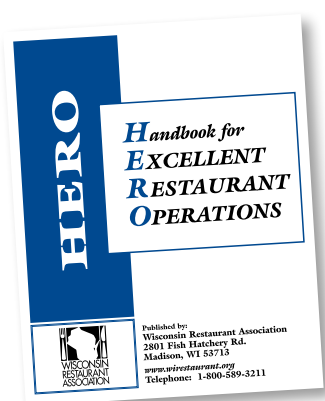
The need for a significant new benefit to offset the stiff dual membership related dues increase provided staff with the opportunity to develop a tool they had been thinking about for years, but had been unable to find time and resources for development. The WRA Board loved the concept and approved the diversion of staff resources and material costs to produce the new benefit as a "bonus" when members paid their dues or joined the Association at the higher dues rate. Production costs were partially offset by sponsorship donations from two WRA endorsed service providers, Society Insurance and Heartland Payment Systems.

The HERO was a hit. Full of up-to-date information on both federal and state laws and regulations along with practical examples of how to apply them in various Wisconsin restaurant operations, WRA members seemed to feel that the handbook, along with dual membership, was worth the dues

increase. Members particularly loved the practical examples, such as how to calculate overtime wages for an employee working in more than one job position and how to determine which employees can be legally considered "tipped" employees. The handbook was published in a loose leaf binder and updates of significant law or regulation changes were sent out regularly.

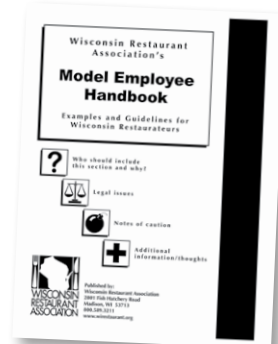
WRA did not experience a significant drop-off in members with the large dues increase. Both the HERO and dual membership continued to be great selling tools for restaurants to join the WRA.

Once again, WRA was leading the industry nationally, as other state restaurant associations across the country attempted to copy the HERO and called on WRA staff to assist them in adapting it to their state laws for their members.



MODEL EMPLOYEE HANBOOK: A 1999 MEMBER BONUS

The era of major member benefits development continued into 1999, with a new Model Employee Handbook that members could use to create their own handbook for employees. Many examples and clear advice on what not to include made the model user-friendly. The original was reviewed by experienced labor law attorney, Barry Chaet, and human resources consultant Jayne Aliota. Subsequent versions have been reviewed by Chaet and this helpful benefit is available electronically in the Members Only section of the WRA website.



FOODSERVICE SUPPLIER MERGERS, DISTRIBUTOR SHOWS AND E-COMMERCE

Throughout the 1990s, the big food distributors became bigger and many smaller suppliers went out of business. A proliferation of distributor shows gave restaurateurs an opportunity to sample and buy in quantity at show discounts in a fun setting. Distributors used the shows and the convenience of new e-buying software to tie customers to them in the long term.

The distributor shows presented a new challenge for the WRA Expo. Unlike numerous other state restaurant association trade shows, the WRA show did continue to thrive, because it was about more than seeing products and sampling. The WRA trade show, which moved to its current location in downtown Milwaukee in 1999, was about comparing suppliers as well as products, educational opportunities, industry unity on public policy issues and industry camaraderie and pride.

Past WRA Education Foundation Salute to Excellence Award Winners

Chef

2019 Bill Pilgrim
2018 Derek Small
2017 Chris Roderique
2016 Mike Buckarma
2015 David Ross
2014 Brian Frakes
2013 Peter Gebauer
2012 John Balistriero
2011 Fred Griesbach
2010 Joe Muench
2009 Stefano Viglietti
2008 Paul Smitala
2007 Chuck Meitner
2006 James Nowak
2005 RC Schroeder, Jr.
2004 Larry London
2003 Dennis Stukel
2002 Gregg Wozniak
2001 Greg Abbate
2000 Rhys Lewis
1999 Brian Moran
1998 Jeff Slough
1997 David Davidson
1996 LeRoy Bochler
1995 Bernard Kurzawa
1994 Axel Dietrich
1993 Knut Apitz

Restaurateur

2019 Linda Wendt
2018 Kris Larson
2017 Trey Hester
2016 Glenda Woosley
2015 Michael Tsuchihashi
2014 Chico Pope
2013 Mark & Jean Landreman
2012 Bruce Wolf
2011 Susie Patterson
2010 Steve Davis
2009 Steve Schilling
2008 Joe Bartolotta
2007 Mark Dougherty & Rhoda Steffel
2006 Jim Marks
2005 Dorothy Klemmer
2004 Jeff & Jane Wimmer
2003 Steve Sazama
2002 John Roherty

2001 Paul Cunningham
2000 Craig & Lea Culver
1999 Joe DeRosa
1998 Mike Pitzo
1997 John Kavanaugh
1996 Ron & Lillian Heuser
1995 James Webb
1994 Sandy D'Amato
1994 Walt Mazur (*special posthumous award*)
1993 Heinz Fischer

College Educator

2019 Mike Balistriero
2018 Paul Carrier
2017 R.C. Schroeder, Jr.
2016 Katie Koel, CEPC
2015 Vicki Mendham
2014 Kevin McGuinnis
2013 Dr. Richard Busalacchi
2012 John Johnson
2011 Gary Lyons
2010 Bill Griesemer
2009 Brian Bergquist, Ph.D.
2008 Jenn Solloway-Malvitz
2007 Jack Hart
2006 Mic Pietrykowski
2005 Jeff Igel
2004 Joe Wollinger
2003 Ron Speich
2002 Tim Graham
2001 Mary Hill
2000 Linda Wilke
1999 Ziggy Thron (*special lifetime achievement award*)

1999 John Reiss
1997 Kyle Gruening
1996 Albert Exenberger
1995 Dr. James Buergermeister
1994 Kathleen Cullen
1993 Ginny Atkins

Supplier

2019 Wisconsin Bakers Association
2018 Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin
2017 Gordon Food Service

2016 Jones Dairy Farm
2015 Woolsey Associates
2014 EWH Small Business Accounting, S.C.
2013 New Era Marketing
2012 Heartland Payment Systems
2011 Badger Liquor
2010 LoDuca Bros., Inc.
2009 U.S. Foodservice
2008 Reinhart FoodService
2007 UW Provision Company
2006 Boelter Company
2005 Bob & Deb Davis
2004 Brakebush Brothers, Inc.
2003 Edward Don & Company
2002 The Vollrath Company
2001 Sysco Food Services of Eastern Wisconsin
2000 Wisconsin Beef Council
1999 Society Insurance
1998 Becker Foods
1997 Superior Coffee & Foods
1996 George Krug, Elan Financial Services
1995 Ward Torke, Torke Coffee
1994 Dan Kennedy, Kennedy Insurance
1993 Jerry Malcore, Miller Brewing

High School Educator

2019 Ryan Demers
2018 Deb Garbe
2017 Glee Brechler
2016 Kayla Correll
2015 Laura Cronan and Sally Heuer
2014 Diane McKenzie
2013 Liz Moehr
2012 Glenda McCracken
2011 Barb Bruesewitz
2010 Gerry Fritsch
2009 Paulette Emberson
2008 Russ Tronsen
2007 Linda Valiga
2006 Jolene Goeden-Massuch
2005 Diane Ryberg
2004 Karen Sullivan

2003 Betty Price
2002 Laurie Spence
2001 Trude Mihalovich
2000 Jan Schwarz
1998 Kari Schraufnagel, Cate Gasser and Dori Vollmer

Mentor of the Year

2019 Josh Swanson and Zac Ladubec
2018 Brian Taborski
2017 Brian Frakes and Tom Surwillo
2016 Michael Althen
2015 Don Thompson
2014 Ryan & Amy Scheide
2013 Marie Collins
2012 Ed Klinger
2011 Jason Tofte
2010 Abbey Steffen
2009 Jim Doak
2008 David Ross
2007 Richard & Sandra Rupp
2006 Joe Rodriguez
2005 Heather Brinker
2004 Ken Horkan

The Salute to Excellence Award program was discontinued in 2020.

Chapter 7: INTO THE NEW MILLENNIUM

“MILLENNIUM BUG” SCARE

As the year 2000 approached, the world became fearful of losing everything we know and own in a black cyber hole somewhere between the old and new millennium. It was said that software databases everywhere, containing all the vital information in the world, would not be able to make the leap from 1999 to 2000. Fortunately, the software geek heroes of the world, had in fact figured out how to “patch” the future into financial and vital statistics database software.

CHANGE TO EXECUTIVE JOB TITLES

At the WRA Annual Meeting in April, 2001 the WRA bylaws were amended to call the chief elected officer by the title of Chairperson of the Board and chief executive officer by the title of Chief Executive Officer and/or President. This move to mirror a more recognizable corporate structure was led by 2000 Chairman Gary Anderson of Andy’s Restaurant in Kenosha.

“9/11” SHAKES THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

WRA’s 2001 Chairman, Bob Otto, of Cousins Submarines, pointed out in his *Wisconsin Restaurateur* column: “As the cornerstone of the community, the restaurant industry once again stood at the forefront of the relief effort.” The WRA joined forces with the New York Restaurant Association to raise money for the families of Windows of the World restaurant and other World Trade Center restaurant employees who lost their lives in the September 11 attack. The estimate of restaurant employees killed was over 300 from more 40 restaurants located in the Center. WRA, Wisconsin restaurants, their employees and patrons together contributed more than \$135,000 to the New York Restaurant Association Restaurant Employee Relief Fund. Representatives from WRA flew to New York City to present the check at a lunch meeting with NYSRA Board of Directors.

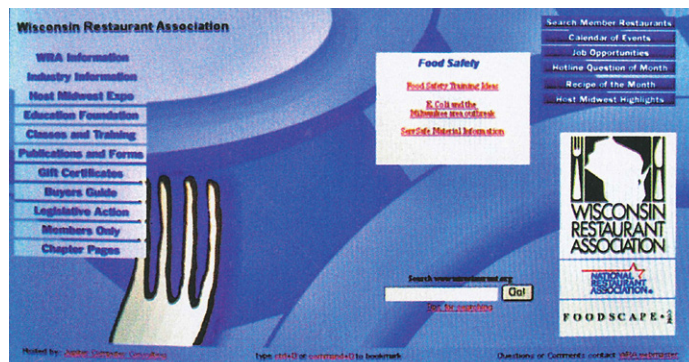


WRA AND WISCONSIN RESTAURATEURS DO EVER-INCREASING BUSINESS ONLINE

In September of 2000, a survey released by American Express



WRA Chairman Bob Otto, Cousins Submarines of Menomonee Falls, (right) presents the New York State Restaurant Association Chairman, Francis D’Orazi, with Wisconsin’s contributions to the NYRED Fund in November, 2011.



An early version of WRA’s website.

and Thomas Food Industry Register indicated that only 23% sourced products online a year earlier compared to 52% in 2000. Restaurateurs buying electronically went from 22% in 1999 to 49% in 2000. And, 80% of those surveyed expected their use of electronic purchasing to increase over the next two years.

By 2000, the WRA’s newly expanded website featured a buying guide with links to supplier members’ websites, a searchable member restaurant listing, an interactive legislative action center, member bulletin boards and job postings, along with secure forms for WRA events, ServSafe courses and purchasing gift certificates.

WRA professional staff became educated in Internet business, website development and hosting in order to assist members in getting their businesses online with a website of their own. At the outset of the decade, many WRA members were not online and many of those who were had only a page on some other business' portal and thus did not own their business name as a domain and did not have their own website. Helping members keep up with technology became an ongoing responsibility for WRA staff.

INTERNET AND SOCIAL MEDIA CHANGE WRA'S APPROACH TO MARKETING AND MEMBER SERVICES

By the end of the first decade of the new millennium, Internet marketing had become WRA's primary promotional tool. As costs for printing and mailing promotional material were reduced dramatically, freeing up operational funds to continue upgrading WRA's technology and equipment—an expense which continued to climb as a portion of the Association's budget.

The internet became the preferred way to communicate and interact with members. The Hotline Team was responding to emails, as well as phone calls and by 2011 the *WRA NEWS*, as well as Member Alerts were delivered electronically to members, with the exception of a few members who did not yet use the Internet.

INTERNET SECURITY BECOMES A NEW CHALLENGE FOR WRA AND MEMBERS

As financial business is increasingly done on the Internet, credit card data security becomes the responsibility of all businesses that accept credit cards, as well as credit card processors and banks. Many restaurateurs were being required to make expensive investments in new POS systems because the old ones could not keep customer credit card information secure. Over time, Mastercard and Visa began to require ever increasing security measures. Businesses whose systems were hacked and customer information stolen were being held liable in lawsuits for hundreds of thousands of dollars. Mastercard and Visa continued to add more and more rules and require higher standards of security for merchants.

SOME LEGISLATIVE BATTLES NEVER SEEM TO END

September 1st School Start—The Battle Over Local Opt-outs

After 15 years of lobbying, in 1999 the tourism industry finally succeeded in passing legislation to require Wisconsin's K-12 public schools to start classes after September 1. But, the battle continued



at the local level because an "opt-out" clause, which Governor Thompson declined to veto, had been inserted during last minute negotiations. WRA members and staff fought the battle in communities

around the state to persuade school boards to consider local economic effects and listen to what parents and voters in their district had to say. The Wisconsin Tourism Federation had commissioned a survey of Wisconsin parents, the results of which overwhelmingly favored starting school after September 1. WRA staff prepared packets of information with economic data and survey results for members to use at school district hearings.

WRA leaders in some high tourism districts were victorious in the local opt-out battles. Ron Hollnagel of the White Spruce Inn, Eagle River, and Lars Johnson of Al Johnson's Swedish Restaurant and Butik in Sister Bay, led the charge and convinced their local school boards to reverse previous opt-out decisions. Both of those key districts started classes after September 1.

In part, because of powerful lobbying efforts like this, WRA would be successful later, in 2002, in establishing as permanent the September 1st start date for all K-12 public schools.

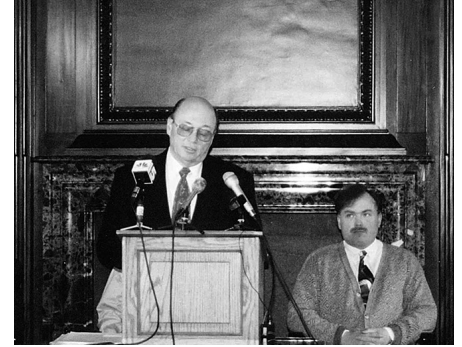
.08 Blood Alcohol Content (BAC) Limit for Operating a Motor Vehicle

Congressional proponents of this policy decided to revert to the same "blackmailing" technique they had used to force states to raise the drinking age to 21. Starting in 2004 the federal government would withhold millions of dollars in highway funds from states that did not have a blood alcohol content (BAC) limit of .08 or lower for operating a motor vehicle. WRA continued to fight on for a couple years, but the writing was on the wall—Wisconsin could not afford to lose the highway funds. Wisconsin's new .08 BAC limit went into effect on September 30, 2003.

Smoking Bans—The Reframing of an Issue

In 1999, anti-smoking groups took their fight to ban smoking in restaurants to the local level, proposing ordinances from city to city around Wisconsin. By May, 2003, nine Wisconsin cities had passed some version of a ban, while similar proposals had been defeated in only three cities. Restaurateurs in cities with a ban typically and understandably became proponents of "leveling the playing field" with a statewide ban.

As local smoking battles waged around Wisconsin, employee health issues were beginning to overlap the issue of smoking in restaurants, reframing the issue of smoking bans



EVP Ed Lump speaking at the January 1999 press conference at the state capitol introducing the school start bill.



WRA Board Member Tom Saxe, Saxe's Dining & Banquets in Delafield, testified in support of the "Breathe Free Wisconsin Act" during a public hearing at the capitol in May 2007.

in legislative arenas around the country. California had totally banned smoking in the workplace in 1998 and in 2002, the New York State Restaurant Association, after years of fighting restaurant smoking bans, decided that a uniform statewide

workplace smoking ban was better than several different bans in cities around the state. Over the next few years, states around the country passed workplace smoking bans, including neighboring Minnesota and Illinois in 2007.

WRA Board Votes to Support Statewide Workplace Smoking Ban

After years of agonizing debate, in February 2007, the WRA Board of Directors changed WRA's official position to support a uniform statewide ban on smoking in the workplace. Finally in May 2009, a statewide workplace smoking ban was signed into law to level the playing field for Wisconsin restaurants. This effort was strongly opposed by the Tavern League of Wisconsin. The new law was phased in, effective July 2010.



(l-r) Sen. Fred Risser (D-26), Rep. Mark Gottlieb (R-60), WRA member and former Chairman Mark Dougherty, Mark's East Side in Appleton, Rep. Jon Richards (D-19), Rep Steve Wieckert (R-57) and Sen. Carol Roessler (R-18) at an April 2007 press conference announcing the new workplace smoking ban.

Indexed Minimum Wage by Local Ordinance

Following the lead of minimum wage activists around the country, Wisconsin activists got local minimum wage ordinances passed in Madison, Milwaukee, La Crosse and several other cities before WRA and the Main Street Coalition of small business organizations, succeeded in getting the state legislature to pass and Governor Doyle to sign a new law prohibiting local governments from regulating minimum wage.



(l-r) WRA Director of Government Relations Pete Hanson, WRA President & CEO Ed Lump, Governor Jim Doyle and Marsh Shapiro, the Nitty Gritty in Madison, immediately after Governor Doyle signed the statewide smoking ban law on May 18, 2009.

Immigration Reform Proposals Put Restaurateurs Between a Rock and a Hard Place

So-called reform efforts in 2006, raised both the responsibilities placed on employers and dramatically increased penalties if an employee's I-9 information and Social Security ID did not match. And yet, the chief administrator of the Social Security Administration admitted to a US Senate Committee that there were an estimated 8.1 million errors in the Social Security Administration's database. The NRA was a party to a court action requesting an injunction to halt the "No Match Letters" process until a fairer, more accurate system could be implemented. The injunction was granted, at least temporarily saving law abiding businesses from the ill effects of bureaucratic chaos. They'd be back...

WRA MEMBERS DEMAND TO BE HEARD

Lobby Day, the NRA Public Affairs Conference and WRA's Online Legislative Action Center were all opportunities for industry leaders to educate lawmakers about how various and proposed laws and regulations affect restaurant businesses and restaurant employees.

In February 2001, 150 WRA members stormed the state capitol in Madison. The extraordinary diversity of the restaurant industry was on display to Governor Scott McCallum and legislators from around the state during WRA's Lobby Day event. Restaurateurs from all types of restaurants,



Lobby Day 2001 attendees gathered in the Capitol rotunda for a group shot.

independents and chains, white tablecloth and fast food, hotel banquet facilities and mom n' pops, participated along with many industry supplier partners. These industry leaders, male and female, young and old, from various ethnic backgrounds came marching into the 21st century with pride and determination, intent on making a difference, because they believed they could. WRA members met with 90 state legislators and their public policy staff that day.

In years to come, increasing numbers of members decided to "take action" by attending Lobby Day, participating in the NRA Public Affairs Conference in Washington, DC, or using WRA's online Legislative Action Center to contact legislators about issues that affected the industry. In 2010, Wisconsin's gubernatorial election campaigns got their kick-off at WRA's Lobby Day when the leading democratic candidate, Tom Barrett, and two leading republican candidates, Scott Walker and Mark Neumann all spoke to a wall to wall audience and numerous TV cameras. Lobby Day participants were so forceful that day, they demolished a property tax hike before it was even introduced as a bill, by convincing the author to withdraw it.



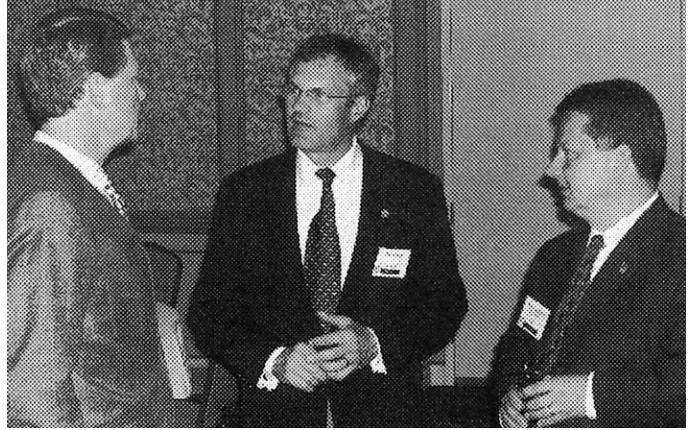
Press covering the speeches by the three gubernatorial candidates at Lobby Day 2011.

Restaurateurs Run for Election to the Wisconsin Legislature ... and Win!

Some restaurant owners decided to do more than just contact their legislators—they decided to become legislators. In 2002, four WRA members were elected to the Wisconsin Assembly, doubling the number of legislators with industry experience already serving (Rep. Jean Hundertmark, Rep. Judy Krawczyk, Rep. Dan Vrakas and Sen. Roger Breske). They were: Karl Van Roy of Green Bay who had served as President of the WRA Board of Directors and ran the River's Bend Supper Club for 25 years.



Rep. Judy Krawczyk (R-Green Bay) (left) co-owner of the Sky Top Supper Club in Green Bay accepted an invitation to the WRA's Legislative Reception.



2003 (l-r) Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Tourism, Jim Holperin, Rep. Dan Vrakas (R-Hartland) and WRA Chairman Mark Dougherty discuss the issues at Lobby Day, May 7th 2003.

Becky Weber of Green Bay who owned Blimpies Subs and Salads Development Company; Mary Williams of Medford, who owned Happy Joe's Pizza and Ice Cream Parlor along with five Hardees; Jeff Wood of Eau Claire, who was former owner of Fireside restaurant in Thorp and had worked for both SYSCO and Indianhead Foodservice distributors.

In coming years, WRA encouraged many more restaurant industry members to run for public office. By 2009, the "Restaurant Caucus," as WRA had named it, had 18 members who helped other state legislators better understand issues concerning the restaurant industry. In 2003 WRA leaders began holding an annual dinner to get restaurant operators together with the "Restaurant Caucus" where they could discuss industry concerns and upcoming legislation. The well-attended Restaurant Caucus Dinners held at the Esquire Club in Madison also raised money to support WRA's government relations activities and Political Action Committee contributions.

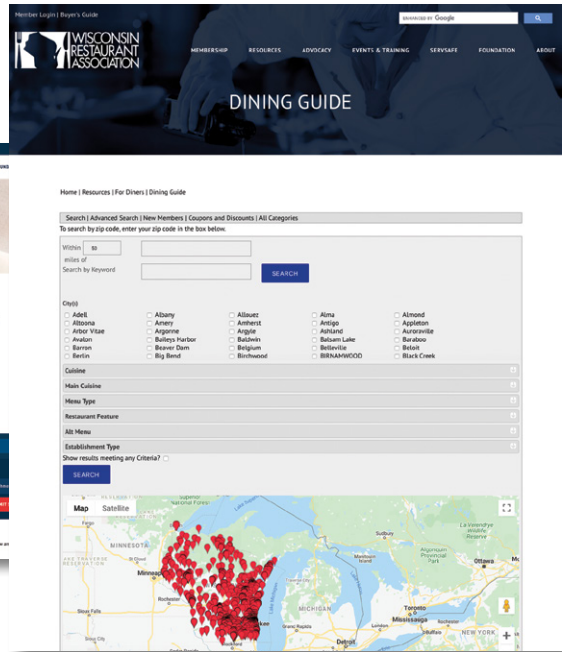
LUMP APPOINTED TO UI ADVISORY COUNCIL

In 2002 CEO Lump was appointed by Governor McCallum to represent small business on the Unemployment Advisory Council. He was reappointed in 2005 by Governor Doyle and again in 2011 by Governor Walker. Lump plans to serve in this capacity until his retirement from WRA.

BLAMING RESTAURANTS FOR OBESITY

As the public interest in healthy food continued to grow, the same health-related interest groups that organized the crusade for smoking bans decided somebody needed to be blamed for America's struggle with obesity. The finger of blame was, once again, pointed at the restaurant industry.





Unfair Lawsuits, Menu Labeling Mandates, “Fat Taxes” and Government Funded Anti-Restaurant Propaganda:

These were the weapons of choice for those seeking to blame the restaurant industry for overweight Americans. Restaurateurs everywhere feared they would be the next business sued by an obese person who ate in their establishment. Michael Jacobson, president of Center for Science in the Public Interest, was quoted as saying “We could envision taxes on butter, potato chips, whole milk, cheeses, [and] meat.”

The Industry Fights Back with “Healthy Lifestyle Initiative” and “Personal Responsibility” Legislation

In response to the attacks on the industry, WRA developed a program to go on the offensive in the battle against obesity. The “Healthy Lifestyles Initiative” created an opportunity for restaurants to adopt a visible program demonstrating their commitment to offering “healthy lifestyle” menu options, which were identified with icons. The program also provided program logos for the restaurant door and table top information with tips for a healthy lifestyle. WRA identified member participants in the searchable member list on its website. Demonstrating that the industry would make changes voluntarily would be a positive defense against government mandates and punitive regulations.

The industry also decided to go on the offensive with legislation to establish that individuals have a personal responsibility in the food choices they make and restaurant businesses should not be held liable for their poor choices. WRA worked with the NRA to develop, and state legislators to pass the “Personal Responsibility in Food Consumption” bill in Wisconsin. Unfortunately, Governor Doyle vetoed the legislation the first time it was passed in 2005. But WRA leaders persisted and had the bill reintroduced in the next session. According to then WRA Chairman Bill von Rutenberg, WRA “members were tenacious in contacting the Governor and lawmakers. They convinced two-thirds of the legislature and Governor Doyle that this bill was the right thing to do.”



UPSCALE FAST CASUAL WAS HOT and GETTING HOTTER

The whole industry was scrambling to respond to the demand for healthy, upscale food served fast. The “quick-casual” restaurant segment was on the rise. It featured limited service, check averages from \$6 - \$9, fresh (or perceived fresh) ingredients prepared to order, innovative food for sophisticated tastes and upscale décor.

Successful independent restaurateurs used their experience to develop this concept opening new restaurants with great success. New chains with the “quick casual” approach soon followed. Repercussions of this successful concept were felt throughout the industry, as described by the CEO of Baja Fresh Grill as quoted in the *Wisconsin Restaurateur*. He said his direct competition was, “anyone who serves high-quality food in a convenient setting to people in a hurry.” Traditional fast food chains were trying to keep up by adding healthier options to their menus and grilling instead of frying.

DIVERSITY—RISING NUMBER OF MINORITY-OWNED MEMBER BUSINESSES

In 2002, minority-owned businesses were growing at six times the rate of businesses in general, according to the US Department of Commerce. WRA made a particular effort to welcome diversity and created a new seat on the WRA Board of Directors with the specific purpose of bringing greater ethnic diversity to the Association’s governing body. The WRA had a long tradition of seeking diversity geographically as well as diversity of industry segments in the make-up of its board.

WRA BOARD MEMBERS PLAY KEY ROLES AT STATE

The long history of WRA leaders being tapped to serve on state councils, boards and task forces continues. Steve Davis from Ardy & Ed's Drive-In in Oshkosh was appointed by Governor Walker in 2012 to serve on the Small Business Regulatory Review Board. Paul Cunningham from Schreiner's Restaurant in Fond du Lac was named to the Governor's Council on Tourism in 2011. Board members Dave Holtze and Greg Swanberg also served on the Council on Tourism prior to Cunningham.



Paul Cunningham with Tourism Secretary Stephanie Klett and Governor Scott Walker at the Wisconsin Governor's Conference on Tourism held at Monona Terrace in 2013.



Steve Davis testifies before the Wisconsin Assembly in 2015 on AB-17 which impacted the recertification process for food protection managers.

Over \$26,000 a Year in Scholarships

Through the Endowment Fund, the Education Foundation typically provided 25+ scholarships every year totaling over \$26,000 to students with strong academic records and were planning careers in the hospitality industry. The Endowment Fund continued to grow with the generous support of restaurateurs, industry suppliers, WRA chapters and other organizations.

Wisconsin's Leader in Food Safety Training and Sanitation Certification

With the ServSafe program, the WRA

Education Foundation continued to be the leading food safety trainer in the state. While WRA lobbied for a state required test in sanitation re-certification, that requirement would not come to fruition until 2014.



EVP PARR RETIRES

Executive Vice President Gail Parr retired in 2012 after 26 years of service. Originally hired as a lobbyist, she was quickly promoted to Director of Operations and was later named EVP. WRA Education Foundation Executive Director Susan Quam was promoted to succeed Parr as EVP.

WRA EDUCATION FOUNDATION FORGES THE INDUSTRY'S PATH TO A STRONG FUTURE



ProStart—Building Tomorrow's Workforce

By 2008, the ProStart program had proven to be a "formula for success" with 60 schools and more than 2,200 students participating each year. As of 2022, the program had over 115 participating

schools and 6,300 students. The turnkey curriculum for high school students combines classroom learning with hands-on restaurant and hospitality experience to give both students and their future employers a strong base to build on. Successful hospitality industry professionals volunteered their time as mentors for the program.



87 years of The Wisconsin Restaurateur magazine

Chapter 8:

UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES



ED LUMP RETIRES – KRISTINE HILLMER HIRED AS NEW WRA PRESIDENT & CEO

WRA's longtime President & CEO, Ed Lump, retired at the end of March, 2018. He inspired the respect of so many and leaves behind a remarkable legacy.

After an extensive nationwide search, Kristine Hillmer, with over 24 years of experience working with associations, was hired as the new President & CEO. Kristine assumed the President & CEO position full-time on April 1, 2018.



- WRA staff immediately adjusted to working virtually and didn't miss a beat to find new ways to communicate with each other and serve the members and



- the restaurant industry during this trying time.
- A COVID-19 website was created and updated daily – the website received 509,637 views from mid-March through mid-August, 2020
- A statewide restaurant listing was developed to share with diners so they could continue to support restaurants open for delivery, carryout and curbside services
- WRA staff proactively called over 2,000 restaurant operator members and non-members to check in and see how we could help – we heard it all: tears, frustration, confusion, but mostly the mindset of “What do I need to do to get through this?”
- The Ask WRA Team answered a broad range of questions from restaurant operators via phone and email – over 2,000 calls and 1,000 emails were logged from mid-March to mid-August, 2020
- WRA sent daily email communications to members and non-members giving them the latest information

COVID-19 PANDEMIC DEVASTATES THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY

The COVID-19 pandemic hit in full force in March, 2020. Lockdown orders came just as the WRA was wrapping up another successful Midwest Foodservice Expo in Milwaukee.

The effect of the pandemic on the restaurant industry in Wisconsin was devastating. The uncertainty of the pandemic brought so much angst, sorrow and fear, especially to those who call the restaurant industry home. Restaurant owners, employees, industry suppliers and Wisconsin Restaurant Association staff faced unprecedented challenges.

In the midst of all the adversity, restaurants demonstrated inspiring acts of kindness, amazing courage, creativity, resilience and above all, the enduring spirit of hospitality that runs through the veins of those who work in the restaurant industry.

WRA PIVOTS TO SERVE THE NEEDS OF RESTAURANTS DURING THE PANDEMIC

As soon as the first stay at home orders came through, WRA staff immediately adapted to focus on how they could best help members.

Priorities were determined, initiatives outlined and teams were assembled on several fronts:



on regulations, resources and best practices – WRA sent over 100 different email communications to a list of approximately 20,000 restaurant operators from mid-March to mid-August, 2020

- Alerts, information and other helpful resources were posted on WRA's Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and LinkedIn pages
- A separate web resource page was created specifically for restaurant employees which included tips on filing for unemployment, a job board of temporary positions and a listing of available assistance services
- WRA's executive team communicated daily with local and state officials to advocate for restaurant support and receive updates on fluctuating regulations targeted to restaurants
- WRA developed and shared reopening resources for restaurants, including explanations of government requirements, best practices, posters, checklists and more
- Signs were created for restaurants to print out and post including customer thank you signs and posters regarding safety practices such as social distancing, mask use, hand washing and more



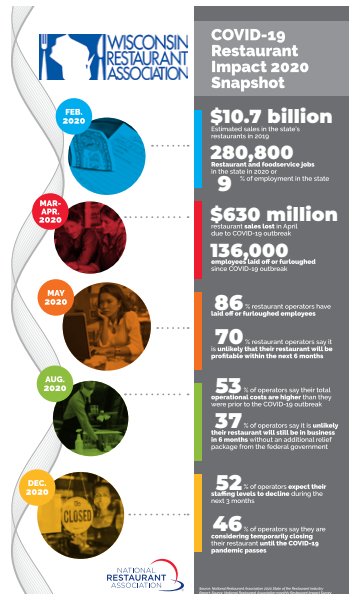
- WRA provided free masks to restaurant businesses. 42,000 masks were made available to WRA to distribute.
- A special web page was developed called What's Good in Your Neighborhood highlighting heartwarming stories of restaurants supporting their communities as well as shining a light on innovative and fun adaptations by restaurants to help spark ideas for other operators to use in their restaurants
- In November of 2020, WRA created a comprehensive, statewide marketing campaign to promote restaurants that are following best practices for COVID-19 mitigation. The goal was to showcase those restaurants who are committed to employee and customer safety and inspire confidence in restaurants among diners. A Ready to Serve Safely website was developed where diners could see a list of participating restaurants and know that those

restaurants have specific safety protocols in place. The campaign, funded by a Department of Tourism TRAVEL grant, included extensive radio, TV and digital advertising statewide as well as earned media.



Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, the Wisconsin Restaurant Association worked to protect restaurant businesses and champion important policies to provide financial relief and critical support for restaurants and their employees during a difficult and challenging time. WRA's lobbying efforts helped accomplish the following:

- Keep restaurants open in Wisconsin for takeout, drive-through, curbside and delivery as orders from the Governor came through
- Clarify with government entities and provide specifics to restaurant operators on what statewide and local restrictions mean for restaurants
- Require insurance companies to add insurance for delivery activities at no cost
- Prohibit any foreclosures or evictions of any licensee until



- 60 days after expiration of the Emergency Order
- Prohibit any insurance cancellations of any licensee until 60 days after expiration of the Emergency Order
- Suspend the one-week waiting period for unemployment insurance
- Waive certain parameters related to the Work-Share Program, specifically eliminating the current 20-employee minimum and 2-week waiting period

- Provide protections for businesses from Unemployment Insurance rate increases due to employee layoffs caused by the public health emergency
- Allow golf courses to re-open to golfers only
- Provide a 2-month moratorium on all state tax payments and include the opportunity to pay them back in installments to allow businesses to start to get back on their feet first
- Impose a freeze on Unemployment Insurance rates so that businesses needing to lay off a high amount of employees do not face insurmountable increases in their UI costs
- Temporarily suspend the 15 day beer credit law and 30 day alcohol credit law
- Allow restaurants to sell cocktails to go



On the federal level, lobbying by WRA and the National Restaurant Association helped get specific benefits for the restaurant and hospitality industry in the CARES Act and subsequent relief legislation.

WRA AND THE RESTAURANT COMMUNITY MOURNS THE LOSS OF ED LUMP

Ed Lump, former WRA president & CEO, passed away on October 11, 2021. Ed was a strong leader and a passionate advocate for the restaurant industry. He served as WRA's President & CEO for 36 years until he retired in 2018. Through it all, no one could mistake his love for the restaurant and hospitality industry, his love for his job and his love for his family.



WRA LEADERS ASSUME ESSENTIAL ROLES WITH KEY ORGANIZATIONS

WRA staff and WRA board members have often held leadership positions with many essential organizations over the years that help to support WRA's strategic goals objectives. The following appointments of WRA staff and board members to leadership positions in key organizations are of special note. In 2018 Susan Quam was appointed to the State of Wisconsin Unemployment Insurance Council. In 2022, Kristine Hillmer joined the National Restaurant Association Educational Foundation Board of Trustees and the Coalition of State Restaurant Associations Board in 2022. WRA Board Member and former WRA Board Chair and owner of the Packing House in Milwaukee, Chris Wiken, was appointed to the National Restaurant Association Board of Directors in 2022.

THE INDUSTRY IS RECOVERING, BUT RESTAURANTS AND SUPPLIERS ARE STILL STRUGGLING

As we move out of the throws of the pandemic there are still many challenges facing restaurants including a major labor shortage, supply chain issues and inflation. WRA continues to advocate for support for the restaurant industry and dispel the myth that things are back to normal for restaurants.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

As WRA celebrates its 90th Anniversary, the association and the restaurant industry look forward to the future. While the restaurant industry continues to evolve and change, resilience, commitment and the spirit of hospitality endures. The Wisconsin Association will also continue to adapt and change with new initiatives to meet the needs of the restaurant industry both today and into the future.

WRA STRATEGIC PLAN

VISION

Setting the Table for Wisconsin Hospitality Success

MISSION

Dedicated to the Success of the Foodservice and Hospitality Industry

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

The WRA uses these principles in how we act and conduct business.

Integrity • Accountable • Inclusive • Transparent • Innovative

PILLARS

The WRA focuses on these core pillars to advance our mission.

VALUE	VOICE	IMPACT	TRAINING	STRATEGY
<p style="font-size: x-small;">Member Value Delivering and demonstrating membership value through available programs, benefits and services.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Advocacy Monitoring and influencing industry regulation and public policy at the state and local levels.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Industry Impact Promoting the impact of the industry on the state's economy, jobs and the opportunities for a career.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Education and Workforce Offering programs that support worker training and retention as well as member professional development.</p>	<p style="font-size: x-small;">Strategic Sustainability Positioning WRA for strength through governance and management excellence.</p>

Endowment Fund Provides Scholarships and Support



The WRA Education Foundation awards scholarships each year based on future plans in foodservice, academic records and recommendations. Scholarship recipients are recognized at the annual Scholarship Reception.

Since 1983, the WRA Education Foundation has awarded over \$900,000 in scholarships to almost 1,000 students pursuing a career in foodservice and hospitality.

The Foundation's Endowment Fund was created in 1990 to fund named scholarships and support the general activities of the WRA Education Foundation.

Any individual, company or organization which desires to establish a permanent scholarship in their name or that of a special person, are encouraged to utilize the WRA Education Foundation Endowment Fund.

For each \$10,000 invested in the fund, a \$500 scholarship is typically generated to be awarded through the WRA Education Foundation scholarship program in the donor's name. At the \$15,000 level the scholarship awarded is typically \$750, at the \$20,000 level the scholarship is typically \$1,000 and at the \$30,000 level the scholarship is typically \$1,500.

Once the fund is established, the donor creates a legacy and an ongoing scholarship is awarded to a deserving student in their name each year.

Completed Endowment Funds

Aaron and Katie Guenther
ACF Chefs of Milwaukee
Aderis DeRosa
Adolf Brettschneider
Al Gagliano
Alfred Peck
American Institute of Wine and Food (AIWF) – Milwaukee
Apitz/Quinnies Family
Bernard & Maureen Schreiner
Chef Bill Dougherty
Chef Jeff Igel Family
Culver Family
Dick Kroening
Edward & Susan Lump
Ernst Florsheim – Chaine des Rotisseurs
Fred Boelter
Heinz and Lisette Fischer
Herbert & Nada Mahler
Herman Leis

Kristin Leffel/WRA Wisconsin River Valley Chapter
Magnificent 7 Chefs
Manufacturers' Agents for the Food
Service Industry (MAFSI) – Wisconsin
Miller Brewing Company
Ron & Lillian Heuser
Ryberg Family
Ryan von Rutenberg
Society Insurance
Steve Sazama
William & Otto Brakebush
WRA Big Four Chapter
WRA Eastern Shore Chapter
WRA Green Bay Chapter
WRA Madison Chapter
WRA Milwaukee Chapter
WRA South Central Chapter /
JoAnn O'Malley
WRA West Wisconsin Chapter



Lea Culver, Culver Franchising Systems, Inc., with a scholarship recipient.

Active Funds in Progress

ProStart Endowment Fund – Founding donors:
WRA West Wisconsin and
WRA Wisconsin River Valley Chapters

Alvin & Mary Hess
Cousins' Submarines
RC Schroeder, Jr.



Scholarship recipients at the 2016 Celebration of Excellence.

MAKING AN IMPACT IN OUR NATION'S CAPITAL

Delegations from Wisconsin have participated in National Restaurant Association lobbying trips to Washington, DC over the years and have been effective in letting their elected officials know how federal legislation impacts restaurants in Wisconsin.



WRA members in Washington, DC in 1959.



The Wisconsin delegation in 1977.



The group from Wisconsin in 1998.



Senator Herb Kohl meet with WRA members during the 2008 Public Affairs Conference.



Wisconsin delegates joined Speaker of the House Paul Ryan and his staffers in making the University of Wisconsin "W" hand sign in the Speaker's office in March 2017.

NRA BOARD SERVICE

Thanks to those WRA leaders who also served on the National Restaurant Association Board of Directors, devoting considerable time and treasure to make sure Wisconsin was well represented.

Note: WRA executives also served as NRA Directors representing the Association in a non-voting capacity. Herman Lehman, the first WRA President (prior to incorporation of WRA), served on the NRA Board of Directors.



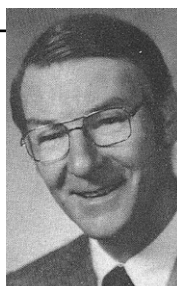
George Mader



Karl Ratzsch, Jr.



Don Kennedy



Bernie Schreiner



Joe DeRosa



John Kavanaugh



Trey Hester



Chris Wiken

FUN!

While WRA is often dealing with serious industry issues that impact members, that doesn't mean we don't kick up our heels sometimes.



Getting ready for a good old fashioned time... Selecting costumes for the "Old Time" Party in 1968: Bottom row (l-r) Larry LaRue, Ronnie Oxman, Gene Braun 2nd row Bob Marshall, Len Schmidt, George Petrow, Harry Kailas Top row Bob Hayden and Marv Sorenson.



At the Western Themed Awards Banquet in 1982 WRA Executive Vice President, Ed Lump, has some words of wisdom for outgoing and incoming presidents. Standing (l-r): Fred Krautkramer, new WRA president, Butch Arps, outgoing president, Lump, and seated Marsha Arps.



The King lives on... "Elvis" at the Purveyor Party during the 1992 Host Midwest Expo.



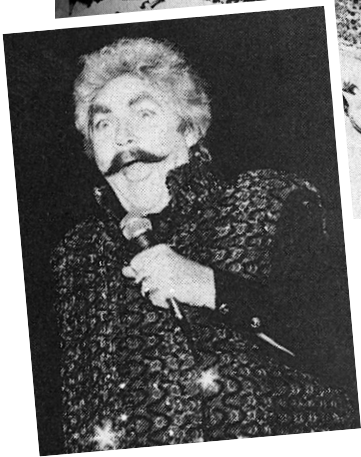
A Wisconsin National Guard Blackhawk helicopter landed at the June 2012 Board of Directors meeting at Heartwood Conference Center in Trego as part of WRA's partnership with the Employer Support of the Guard and Reserve (ESGR).



Heinz Fischer celebrating his ROY win on the dance floor in 1978.



Miss Verna J. Feight from Sneezers' Restaurant in Green Bay won a WRA hostess contest. Feight is pictured with Melvin Dykman and John Von Gnechten.



The 1984 Purveyor Hospitality Night at the Performing Arts Center was a huge success. 1,200 people feasted on a wonderful display of hor d'oeuvres prepared and served by 69 MATC foodservice students. To round out the evening, Rip Taylor was hysterically funny and bizarre.



Fred and Mary Krautkramer, President and First Lady of the WRA, presided over the Southeast Chapter's Annual Madrigal Dinner in 1983. They are pictured with Ron Slaght, "Lord of the Meats" who hosted the Olde English Feaste at the Elks Club.



Sorry We're Open... Lynn McDonough and Dave Schoonover at the June 2008 Board of Directors meeting in Ashland.



Green Bay Chapter brings in the new WRA president with a polished dance routine to the 1986 show theme song "Puttin on the Ritz."



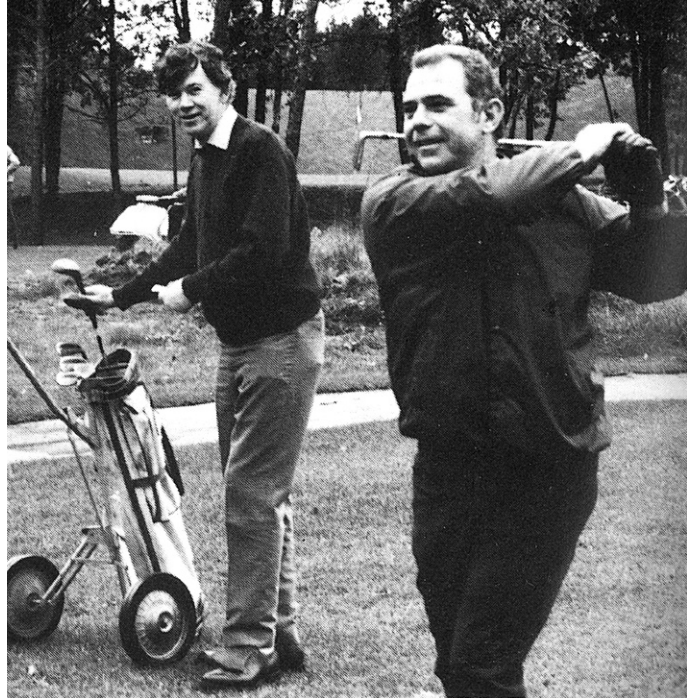
In response to an invitation from the Hawaii Restaurant Association to attend their first annual trade show in Honolulu, WRA President, Chuck Roherty and his wife Carol led a group of 48 Wisconsin restaurateurs on a trip to the island paradise in 1984.



(l-r) The "Three Amigos" Karl Van Roy, Dick Kroening and Bruce Wolf helped celebrate the 60th anniversary of the Association in 1993.



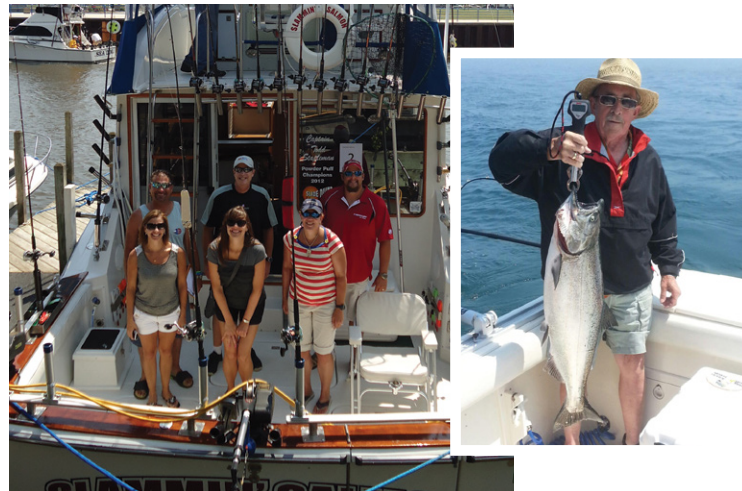
Members from the West Wisconsin Chapter at the Tempest Oyster Bar happy hour after the 2012 Restaurant Lobby Day in Madison. (l-r) Joanne Palzkill, Claudia Draganowski, Rose Hunt, Georgette Gust, Mike DeRosa and Carol Lien.



A couple of "pros," Bob Marshall, S.J Casper Co. and Gerry Mendelsohn, Superior Coffee Company in 1972 at the 1st Annual WRA Golf Outing.



(l-r) Sen. Jennifer Shilling (D-La Crosse), Julia and Tyson Koput from Ground Round Grill & Bar in Tomah and Gary Rudy from Rudy's Drive In in La Crosse at the 2015 Restaurant Caucus Dinner held at Kavanaugh's Esquire Club in Madison.



A team at the 2013 Slam-A-Salmon fishing fundraiser. Inset – Paul Patterson from Al & Al's Stein Haus in Sheboygan caught the largest salmon at the 2014 outing on Lake Michigan.



(l-r) Ann Cross, Scott Huck, Jean Landreman, Linda Wendt, Paul Cunningham and Christine Cohen at the Presidents Day Bowl in 2013.



Kurt Kimball (Rocky Rococo Restaurants, Larry Deutsch (The Vollrath Company), Trey Hester (Rocky Rococo Restaurants) and Steve Schilling (ZaZING!) at the 8th Annual Southern Shootout at Milford Hills in Johnson Creek.



The Management Team from Badger High School in Lake Geneva celebrates their victory at the 2013 National ProStart Invitational in Baltimore.

WRA & Foundation Events

WRA and Foundation events have provided education and training, valuable networking opportunities and helped to support a variety of association and foundation programs. Some events have come and gone, while others have evolved or new ones have been created to meet the changing needs of restaurant operators and the industry.

TRADE SHOW EVOLUTION

Since its beginning in 1933, the Association's annual trade show has been the premier event for the restaurant industry in Wisconsin. While trends come and go, some things remain constant: like the need for restaurant operators to learn new ways to adapt to the changing environment and the current wants and needs of their customers.



The convention was held at the Milwaukee Auditorium (above) from 1951 – 1972. In 1958, the auditorium halls were described as “bursting at the seams with colorful exhibits...erected by leading Wisconsin restaurant suppliers.”



In 1985 WRA joined forces with the Wisconsin Innkeepers Association for the 52nd Annual Convention & Trade Show. The show's theme was “We Are Hospitality” and the joint membership booth was an eye-catching double decker creation.

<p>Annual BANQUET</p> <p>Floor Show... Dancing... Prizes Music... Fun Crystal Ballroom \$2.50 Per Plate</p>	<p>Attend the 7th Annual CONVENTION Milwaukee April 18-19-20</p> <p>Exhibits</p> <p>Lectures, Meetings, Displays, Movies, Samples, Novelties</p>
<p>MONTE CARLO NIGHT</p> <p>Casino, Music, Features, Surprises 5th Fl. Schroeder Hotel 75c Per Person</p>	<p>GOLF Tournament at Merrill Hills Country Club</p>
<p>FASHION SHOW for WOMEN</p>	<p>CHEF'S NITE</p> <p>Music, Dancing, Food, Entertainment, Novelties, etc. Pewaukee Manor, Pewaukee 75c Per Person</p>
<p>STAG MEMBERS FREE</p>	<p>MENU CONTEST + CAKE CONTEST</p>



The 2017 Midwest Foodservice Expo drew large crowds despite Winter Storm Stella which dropped 15+ inches of snow on opening day.

Midwest Foodservice Expo

It's All About... **PASSION!**

Bring together all segments of the restaurant industry... networking... and a whole lot of fun!

So what should you expect?

New Products & Innovations... networking... and a whole lot of fun!

Part trade show. Part conference. Part networking. And a whole lot of fun!

2017's Sponsor Spotlight

Register Online... www.EverythingFoodservice.org

A 3-in-1 Experience

Midwest Foodservice Expo

March 22-24, 2017

Wisconsin Center • Milwaukee, Wisconsin

EVENTS ADAPT TO THE RESTAURANT INDUSTRY'S CHANGING NEEDS

The Wisconsin Restaurant Association was fortunate to have completed the 2020 Midwest foodservice Expo March 11th through the 13th - just days before lockdown orders came through in our state due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Association's approach to events changed in an instant. Never before was there a greater need to adapt and pivot. Association staff immediately created ways for restaurant industry folks to keep connected - virtually. Several online training programs were created to keep restaurant operators connected with the association and each other and have access to critical information to help them adapt and survive the unprecedented challenges they faced as a result of the pandemic.

Since 2021, WRA and the Education Foundation have slowly returned to in-person events. Restaurant industry folks have embraced these revived or new in-person events underscoring the strong need to interact and connect with each other, in-person.

FRESHEX



ADVOCACY DAY



CAUCUS DINNER



MILWAUKEE KITCHEN CABINET



RESTAURANT INSIGHTS SUMMIT



PROSTART CLASSIC



NORTHERN SHOOTOUT



SOUTHERN SHOOT



INDULGE MILWAUKEE



WIS PROSTART INVITATIONAL



PROSTART CAREER & INDUSTRY EXPO



SCHOLARSHIP RECEPTION



The Wisconsin Restaurant Association and WRA Education Foundation owe a debt of gratitude to the wonderful people who have supported WRA events through the years.

WRA events would not be successful without the leaders with big ideas for new events, organizers who tirelessly devote their time, generous sponsors, volunteers and of course, the WRA members who attend.

Events have changed over the years, but the tremendous support from every part of the restaurant industry has remained a constant.

WRA Staff List

Job title and year they joined the WRA Team

2018
Kristine Hillmer,
MBA, CAE
President
& CEO



1997
Susan Quam,
CAE, IOM
Executive Vice
President



2022
Brian Braun
Supplier
Service
Specialist



2022
Jenny Caiozzo
Events &
Membership
Experience
Manager




2002
Carrie Douglas
Member
Engagement
Manager



1988
Dawn Faris, CEM
VP
Membership
& Business
Development



2015
Connie Fedor
WRA Education
Foundation
Executive
Director



2012
Kathy Kiedrowski
Government
Relations Admin
Assistant



2020
Robert Klemm
Member
Engagement
Representative




2005
Tracy Kosbau
VP of
Marketing
& Public
Relations



2023
Patrick J. Montgomery,
CPA, CMA
Controller



2013
Traci Morovic
Membership
Representative



2020
Christina Nistler
Member
Retention
Specialist



1997/2007*
Neacia Pacheco
ServSafe
Coordinator

**denotes break in service*



2020
Karen Romadka
WRA EF Event
and Fundraising
Coordinator



2005
Shane Sanders
Graphic
Designer/
Webmaster



2011
Kris Seliger
Accounting
Assistant



2018
Alex Vernon
WRA Education
Foundation
ProStart®
Manager



As of December 31, 2022

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