In Memoriam: Charles E. Ares

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Charles E. Ares, former dean of the University of Arizona College of Law, is being remembered as a transformational leader who diversified the student body and encouraged law firms to do the same among their own ranks.

Ares, who died April 29 at the age of 93, embodied the great American success story, according to a tribute [1], written by Marc L. Miller, dean of the James E. Rogers College of Law [2], that appeared in the college's newsletter.

Born and raised in Southern Arizona, Ares graduated from Tucson High School and joined the U.S. Navy at 17.

At 20, he enrolled at the University of Arizona and majored in political science, then entered the College of Law in 1949. He graduated in 1952, having earned top marks, the admiration of his teachers, and local news acclaim for representing the University of Arizona in the 1951 National Trial Team Competition in New York City.

After graduation, Ares served as a clerk to U.S. Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas from 1952-1953, and recalled “sneaking” into the gallery to watch Thurgood Marshall argue in Brown v. Board of Education.

Returning to Tucson, he established a private practice and served as a deputy Pima County attorney.

In those early professional years, Ares practiced with legendary partners Morris K. Udall, College of Law Class of 1949, and Stewart Udall, College of Law Class of 1948.

As graduates of the state’s only law school during a time of rapid growth in Arizona, Ares and his colleagues expanded the state’s legal infrastructure and were prominent in the development of civic and cultural life.

In 1961, Ares and his family moved east when he accepted a position at New York University School of Law. They remained there until 1966, when Ares returned to the University of Arizona to become dean of the College of Law.

As dean, Ares recruited a cadre of young, energetic scholars to build the college’s academic reputation and created and expanded practice opportunities for students. He outpaced many of the nation’s law schools in diversifying the student body ? admitting more women and students of color ? and championed a more diverse profession with law firms and other employers.
J. Michael Hennigan, College of Law Class of 1970, recalled how it felt at the college at that time.

"When we arrived on campus, we had no idea that he had just transformed the school. It was a new world," Hennigan said in the tribute. "We were a much smaller class than those that preceded us. The faculty was now dominated by young, mostly first-time professors, all recruited by Dean Ares. Within days there was an excitement that started in the classrooms and moved to the halls and benches around the school. When questions were asked in class, there were typically no 'right' answers. Creative insights were welcome. For most of us, I believe the excitement and challenges have lasted a lifetime. Thank you, Charles Ares. You are my hero."

Ares returned to the faculty in 1973 but remained a central figure at the college, helping to guide the institution to national standing.

He discussed his life and career in detail in three days of interviews with Dale Danneman, College of Law Class of 1974. They were later published as the "Oral History of Charles E. Ares" and gifted to the college.

The Ares legacy remains strong on campus, with the Ares Fellows Writing Program, the Charles E. Ares Professorship, and the Charles and Jean Ares Scholarship, created in 2017 by friends, family, admirers and colleagues.

Ares is survived by his wife, Jean, and four children. A memorial will be planned when family, friends and colleagues can gather in person, Miller said.

Meanwhile, those who knew Ares are invited to share their memories online or send condolences to The Ares Family, c/o Megan O'Leary, University of Arizona, College of Law, 1201 E. Speedway Blvd., Tucson, AZ 85721-0176.

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[1] https://law2.arizona.edu/alumni/newsletters/may062020.htm
[2] https://law.arizona.edu/