

IN APPRECIATION:  
TALBOT “SANDY” D’ALEMBERTE

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One Saturday morning in 1972 I was in my apartment when I received an unexpected call asking me to come right down to the Florida State University (FSU) law school to meet with the Florida Law Revision Council about becoming the reporter for the drafting of the Florida Evidence Code. Fortunately, I went to the law school that morning where I agree to the project and also met Sandy for the first time. Later he always claimed that he made the motion to hire me for the project, and I have always hoped it was true. During the next two or three years we met regularly, and our friendship was formed.

After serving in the Florida House of Representatives from 1966–72,<sup>1</sup> Sandy remained active in state government serving in various positions including chair of the Constitution Revision Committee and being the driving force behind the modernization and streamlining of Florida’s judicial system as a result of the drafting and adoption of Article V of the Florida Constitution. In addition, he served as chief counsel to the House Select Committee on Impeachment which resulted in the removal of three members of the Florida Supreme Court.<sup>2</sup>

From 1984–1989, D’Alemberte was Dean of the FSU College of Law. At about that same time, the Florida legislature appropriated quality improvement funds to significantly increase the size of our faculty and raise the academic profile of the FSU law school. Sandy ensured that these funds were used wisely in expanding the faculty and adding a number of young established academics who published in leading journals. As a result, the national reputation of the school significantly increased. Sandy was also instrumental in obtaining legislative funds to expand the footprint of the school by adding to the law school campus both the Rotunda and the Village Green which became home to four historically significant houses.<sup>3</sup>

After going back to the private practice in Miami and serving as President of the American Bar Association, Sandy returned to Florida State this time as its twelfth president. In that role from 1994–2003 he spearheaded the drive to establish the first medical school at a public university in twenty-five years. Although initially

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1. When Sandy served as chair of the House Judiciary Committee, his staff director was Janet Reno who was later the United States Attorney General.

2. One of his aides in that role was John Thrasher who is currently the President of Florida State University.

3. The rotunda is now named the D’Alemberte Rotunda; the Village Green is now named the James Herald Thompson Green in honor of his role in securing the legislative funding for the Green as well as the Quality Improvement Funds.

there were some issues with accreditation, Sandy used his legal skill to successfully navigate that very sensitive and complex issue. The concept of the school was and continues to be ensuring the production primary care physicians. The medical school graduates are getting incredible residencies around the country and many a returning to Florida to practice.

Sandy loved the aesthetics of the University and preserved it with consistent architecture and beautiful grounds. He was the creator of our nationally recognized Opening Nights musical and arts events that just celebrated its twentieth year of bringing outstanding performers to Tallahassee.

After his presidency, Sandy stayed in Tallahassee where he was regularly in his office in the Cawthon House on the Green. He continued to teach classes every semester as well work on significant pro bono human rights and other legal issues with his wife Patsy Palmer. Shortly before he passed, he argued a case before Florida's Fourth District Court of Appeal involving an important First Amendment issue.

In 2018, Sandy's statute was fittingly moved from the College of Medicine to the law school where it faces the Center for the Advancement of Human Rights which he established during his presidency.

When Sandy ran successfully for the Florida House of Representative in the late 1960s, his campaign slogan was "Remember the Name that's Hard to Remember."<sup>4</sup> As a result of the tremendous impact he made on Florida State and the State of Florida, as well as the country and far beyond, that slogan foretold his life—Sandy D'Alemberte is a name that will be long-remembered.

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4. See Arthur J. England, Jr., *D'Alemberte; Remembering the Name That's Hard to Remember*, 16 FLA. ST. U. L. REV. 907 (1989).