

# Florida State University Law Review

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Volume 16 | Issue 4

Article 4

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Spring 1989

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### Recommended Citation

LeRoy Collins, *Talbot D'Alemberte*, 16 Fla. St. U. L. Rev. 903 (1989) .  
<https://ir.law.fsu.edu/lr/vol16/iss4/4>

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## TALBOT D'ALEMBERTE

LEROY COLLINS\*

**S**ANDY D'Alemberte and I share a common heritage in Tallahassee but I am one generation older than he. My wife Mary Call was a sorority sister (Alpha Delta Pi at Florida State College for Women in Tallahassee) of his mother Eleanor Whitfield, and was a bridesmaid in the Whitfield-D'Alemberte wedding in Tallahassee.

The Honorable J.B. Whitfield who served our state as Treasurer and Supreme Court Justice was Sandy's great-uncle. He was physically fragile but an extremely able justice, writing his opinions in a careful style as if the future of the state depended on the precedents he established, which in fact it did. He was gentle, gracious in manner, and kind to all. I think he wore a sweater under his coat regardless of the time of the year, when there was no air conditioning, impressing me truly as a "man for all seasons."

Sandy's grandfather, Mr. Talbot Whitfield, I remember equally well. He served for most of his natural life as Clerk of the Supreme Court of Florida. He was thin and very faithful in his job. He liked to help lawyers and a trip to his office always became a pleasant visit with wide ranging talk far beyond the immediate mission. As clerk he was ex-officio the principal officer of the Florida Bar examining authority. I shall never forget when I took the examination in 1931. When the results were announced Mr. Whitfield went out of his way to take me into his private office to tell me that I had done "extremely well" on the test. "In fact," he said, "you scored the next to highest grade ever made on our examination, and you will make a great lawyer." Now someone later cruelly suggested that this was not an uncommon experience—coming in second from the top—but I have always believed Mr. Whitfield told me the truth, and to this day I am stirred with pride by the compliment.

Sandy's father Dan D'Alemberte came to Tallahassee to work for the state. I knew him well. He was later admitted to the Bar, but I don't think he was ever in private practice. He was amiable and smiling, always walked briskly; went out of his way to be accommodating. He and his young family, including Sandy, moved to Chattahoochee where Sandy went through high school. Sandy then went to the Uni-

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\* Governor of the State of Florida, 1955-1961.

versity of the South at Sewanee, Tennessee, and earned his A.B. degree.

I think Tallahassee was always regarded as home and the family visited back and forth to Tallahassee often. Sandy and my son, LeRoy, Jr., were contemporaries and friends in their early growing up years, but their schooling separated them.

I have always been proud of Sandy. He has been superbly educated, has a keen mind, loves to advocate complicated legal and public issues. He has a fine sense of humor and loves to tell of humorous episodes in his life. He has a keen sense of right and wrong which permeates his thinking and conclusions. He has the Whitfield sense of strong public duty. He has eloquently argued in state and federal courts many questions dealing with public power and authority.

After he began his legal career in Miami he was elected to the Florida House of Representatives where he served with distinction along with Richard Pettigrew.

It was my privilege to serve as one of the members of the State Constitutional Revision Commission in 1978. Sandy was our chairman. He did a great job. He was considerate and helpful in countless ways, encouraging, fair as an arbiter of debate. He was always in charge but never arbitrary or unreasonable. He brought to that job a thorough knowledge of Florida history, including the total contents of the existing state constitution as well as other preceding constitutions. He directed and supervised the staff, insisting upon and achieving needed assistance to every commissioner to meet his or her needs.

He was an ideal choice of Florida State University and the Board of Regents for appointment to serve as Dean of the College of Law. Here his natural instincts and talents for interpreting the law, his great training in that field, and his keen sense of humor found not only a home but a laboratory and workshop.

Sandy is a leader and a teacher by instinct, learning, and disposition. He sets goals, attracts talented helpers, and steadfastly pursues his objectives. The College of Law has grown markedly under his leadership, in the quality of both new students and graduates. He has developed nationwide acceptance and a pride in the school based upon solid accomplishments. And more importantly, he has given it a vision of what it can become in the future.

He is now a candidate for President of the American Bar Association and, when elected, he will in my opinion serve with rare distinction, making milestones by which presidents coming after him will be measured.