

Honoring the Heroes Among Us – Roy G. Harrell, Jr., In Memoriam



The people of the State of Florida and this community will always be indebted to Roy for his many contributions to public service. When I think of the concept of community service, I think of Roy. He was the organized leader who always wanted to get things accomplished. He set the example and raised the bar in every instance with humility. His pledge to public service should be an example for all of us. For this reason, among others, Roy is my hero. And I know that he is a “Hero Among Us.”

I first met Roy G. Harrell, Jr. in 1975. I had the privilege of working with Roy in many different capacities for over thirty years in this community. Roy primarily worked as an attorney in banking, real estate and general commercial law. He was completely committed to his practice, and he reached levels of high excellence in the practice of law. Despite his time constraints with the practice of law, he became one of the most committed public servants I have ever known. The people of the State of Florida and this community will always be indebted to Roy for his many contributions to public service. When I think of the concept of community service, I think of Roy. He was the organized leader who always wanted to get things accomplished. He set the example and raised the bar in every instance with humility. His pledge to public service should be an example for all of us. For this reason, among others, Roy is my hero. And I know that he is a “Hero Among Us.”

On May 30, 2007, a bronze bas-relief memorial was installed at BayWalk in honor of Roy. On June 7, 2007, Southwest Florida Water Management District (“SWFWMD”) dedicated the Roy G. Harrell, Jr. Education Station at Spa Beach in St. Petersburg, Florida. In addition, Roy received a Legacy of Leadership Award from the Tampa Bay Partnership with a memorial dedication of a beautiful magnolia tree and plaque at the Bell Tower in Carillon Park in St. Petersburg, Florida. Roy often talked of leaving footprints in the sands of time. Those footprints started over 62 years ago when Roy was born in Norfolk, Virginia. He graduated from Boca Ceiga High School and then attended the Citadel, where he received his bachelor of arts degree with honors.

He attained the rank of captain in the Army and served his country overseas. He received his law degree, cum laude, from Washington & Lee University School of Law.

When I think about a hero, I think of such qualities as courage, selflessness, honesty, dedication and persistence. You must also have the idea that it is better to be a servant than be served. This is clearly evident in Roy’s life. In order to be the kind of servant that Roy was, you must love those whom you serve. Roy served on the Governing Board of the SWFWMD from November 1865 to February 1998. During that time, he served as Chair of the Finance Committee, Treasurer and Chair and Vice-Chair. He also served as Co-Chair of the Pinellas Anclote River Basin Board. By reason of his activities with SWFWMD, Roy served as Vice Chair of the Board of Directors of Weedon Island, Inc. and the Tampa Bay Water Coordinating Council. During Roy’s tenure on the Governing Board of SWFWMD, he is credited with (i) establishing an emphasis on conservation, including implementation of year-round water conservation measures, (ii) requiring water meters of all segments of the uses of the water source, and (iii) creating the Tampa Bay Partnership Agreement between SWFWMD and Tampa Bay Water (formerly West Coast Regional Water Supply Authority) and its six governmental members. The Tampa Bay Partnership Agreement was credited as being a significant factor in settling the decades old Tampa Bay water wars which was responsible for the formation of new rules and regulations affecting the environment, including the Environmental Resource Permit and the establishment of “water use caution” areas.



By Ernest L. Mascara

Roy's footprints in the sand followed many community affiliations and organizations. He served on the boards of directors of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation, Inc., the Tampa Bay Partnership, St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation, Pinellas County Environmental Foundation, the USF-Bayboro Campus Advisory Board, Oasis School, the Tampa Bay Chapter of the American Red Cross, the 1000 Friends of Florida, the Clearwater Chamber of Commerce, the Palladium Theatre, the Pinellas Marine Institute, Pinellas Cares, the Bayfront Medical Foundation, the St. Petersburg Charter Review Commission, and Friends of Weedon Isle School. Roy was also Chair of the boards of directors of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce, the United Way of Pinellas County, the Tampa Bay United Way Task Force, the Tampa Bay Partnership-Pinellas, Leadership St. Pete Alumni Association, the Anthonians, St. Anthony's Hospital Foundation, and the University of South Florida Bayboro Campus Advisory Board.

Roy's desire to serve the community extended to his love of children. He served as Guardian Ad Litem for two foster children in the last years of his life. He mentored young attorneys as well as students who aspired to being attorneys. He found them jobs and helped them enter law school. He was a man who could be trusted with anything. If you wanted something done absolutely, you either did it yourself or called Roy.

Roy was honored with many awards and he accepted them with great humility. Although he wanted to remain behind the scenes when credit was given, he received the Chamber Member of

the Year Award in 1980, the Community Service Award from the St. Petersburg Area Chamber of Commerce and the Leadership Award from Leadership St. Pete Alumni Association. He received the Annual Community Service Awards from the United Way of Pinellas County and from Pinellas Emergency Mental Health Services. He was named Mr. Sun in 2001 by the Suncoasters (Festival of States). Roy always emphasized that he was the youngest person to receive the Mr. Sun award.

Roy always wanted to serve and his commitment is clearly evidenced by his community service over the last thirty years. Benjamin Disraeli, a famous British politician and author said, "The legacy of heroes is the memory of a great name and the inheritance of a great example." Surely the name "Roy G. Harrell, Jr." will never be forgotten in this community, and his example is our great inheritance.

Ernest L. Mascara has practiced law in St. Petersburg, Florida since 1974. He received his J.D. degree from Stetson University College of Law in 1973. Ernie represents his clients concerning real estate law.