

Honoring the Heroes Among Us - William D. Slicker

By The Honorable Judge Jack Day



“Hard times don’t
create heroes. It
is during the hard
times when the
‘hero’ within us is
revealed.”

~ Bob Riley

Will Slicker and I were both born in St. Petersburg. We were kids in the same neighborhood. Our parents had gone to St. Pete High. Will’s older brother was my first friend. His mom used to drive us to Cub Scouts. As an Air Force pilot, his dad was kind of a hero to us.

You could say I have known him a long time.

Will’s leadership and engagement with the community are longstanding traits that are evidenced by a long chronology of well-deserved awards. That chronology starts with secondary school. Will became an Eagle Scout and was a member of the Order of the Arrow. He set a school record in his swimming event, breast stroke. He was president of the senior class. A telling incident occurred in his senior year, when Will intervened in a fight where one student had beaten another student unconscious. That is Will Slicker, following his conscience, stepping up to help someone in need.

After graduating law school at FSU, Will obtained law clerk positions, successively, at both the Second District Court of Appeal in Lakeland and, later, the Fifth District Court of Appeal in Daytona Beach. This period marks his involvement with the Jaycees: He was awarded the Spoke Award for District 63, the Spark Plug Award for District 12, and the statewide Jaycee Debate Award. He served as president of the Daytona Beach Jaycees and, after returning home to St. Petersburg, received the St. Petersburg Jaycee’s Key Man Award.

The Jaycee period was just the start of a career of meaningful work in multiple service clubs. Influenced by his ongoing love of scouting, Will was persuaded by some St. Petersburg lawyer friends to

join the Scout Sertoma Club, where he was honored with the Gem Award and later became club president. He is a life member of the National Eagle Scout Association.

Years later, wanting to spend more time with his father, who was in failing health, Will joined the Downtown Kiwanis of St. Petersburg so he could attend meetings with his dad. But Will, unable to just come along for the ride, eventually chaired a number of committees and was recognized as Lay Person of the Year by that organization.

Will either has served, or currently serves, on numerous boards in the community: the Suncoast Children’s Dream Fund, Pinellas County Historical Society, the Center Against Spouse Abuse, the Guardian Association of Pinellas County, and the Community Alliance. He is a member of the Better Living for Seniors Consortium. He has served for over five years on the board of Directions for Living (for which he has recruited yours truly). He has been a member of the St. Petersburg Chamber of Commerce and the Suncoasters, and is a graduate of the Leadership St. Pete program.

As the chronology so far suggests, Will has collected enough gavels to supply the courthouse. In roughly chronological order, and not counting legal organizations, he has also presided as chair of the Friends of Eckerd College Library, chair of the Historic Plaques Committee for the City of St. Petersburg’s Centennial, president of the PTA, president of the Shore Acres Civic Association, president of the Network Institute of Christian Counseling, and president of the Church Council of Lutheran Church of the Cross.



In the legal community, Will has chaired a number of committees as an active member of the St. Petersburg Bar Association. He served as president of the Christian Legal Society of St. Petersburg, has been active in the Canakaris Inn of Court, and was the second male member of the Pinellas County Chapter of the Florida Association of Women Lawyers.

Will Slicker's finest legal legacy, however, is his longtime contribution of pro bono services in our community. During the early '90s, Will worked to obtain clemency for Billie Jean Rains, a battered woman who had been convicted of murdering her husband. The husband had habitually abused the couple's son, physically and sexually. Will's pro bono work obtained her release from prison through a grant of clemency by Governor Lawton Chiles. (But Will did get paid: He recently received a note from Ms. Rains' daughter, saying, "Thank you for giving me another 17 years with my mother before she died.") He has continued to represent battered women in domestic violence court. (But Will does get paid: He showed me a card he got not long ago from a client, who thanked him for freeing her and her two young daughters from her violently abusive husband.)

As the result of Will's work with battered women, he received the Lighting the Way Award of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

In the early 2000s, Will began working as legal counsel for Habitat for Humanity of Pinellas County. He continues to work with Habitat today. He also helped form Ameri-Asian Charities, Inc.

Will has been recognized as both Volunteer of the Year and Family Law Volunteer of the Year by the Community Law Program. He is also a past president of that organization.

A married couple who were both clients and friends once approached Will to mentor their son, a Doorways Scholar. Will proceeded to mentor their son for three years. His mentee, Steven Tran, has gone on to complete his education through law school, and has become an attorney himself. Will has also tutored students at Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

In 2011, Will was one of the founding board members of Honor Flight of West Coast of Florida. He flew to Washington D.C. at his own expense to accompany a World War II veteran in honor of his own deceased father who was a veteran of WWII, Korea, and Vietnam.

Will is a man of many parts. His interests go beyond practicing law and doing good works. He has authored over 20 published articles. He used to ride his motorcycle in the Harley Davidson Christmas Toy Run. He has traveled extensively in some 30 countries. In preparation for this

article, I have learned for the first time of Will's artistic interests: He has painted a number of oil paintings and - more remarkably - has sewn and given away over 25 quilts.

Will's two lovely daughters, Vanessa and Rebecca, are his greatest legacy.

