



Mr. Walter T. Dartland

January 17, 1935 - March 1, 2018

A Celebration of Life will take place on April 6 2018, from 11:00 am to 1:00 pm at the FSU Alumni Center 1030 Tennessee Street, Tallahassee, FL 32304. The family is requesting that no flowers be sent. In lieu of flowers, please send contributions to Common Cause (a non-partisan grassroots organization dedicated to upholding the core values of American democracy) or you favorite charity.

<https://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2018/03/02/champion-consumers-and-underdogs-walt-dartland-dies-83/389517002/>

Walter Dartland, the consumer advocate who ran for Congress to give Big Bend voters a choice two years ago, has died of lymphoma. He was 83. “He was an icon, a fantastic guy,” said former Attorney General Bob Butterworth, who hired Dartland after edging him in the 1986 Democratic primary for the Cabinet post. “We became friends when we ran against each other for attorney general and spent a lot of time together on the campaign trail.”

Diana Dartland, his wife of 36 years, said he had been diagnosed with lymphoma about four months ago.

Previous coverage: Democrat Walt Dartland wages uphill battle in Republican leaning CD2

A former Marine major, Dartland got his degree in mechanical engineering at

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and earned his law degree at the University of Michigan. In addition to his work as a special counsel to Butterworth, he was an adjunct professor at Florida A&M, Florida Atlantic and the University of Miami law school.

Butterworth said Dartland established the Miami-Dade County consumer advocate office, one of the first in the country.

Tallahassee publicist Ron Sachs, who knew Dartland for decades, said “he took on the powerful almost single-handedly on behalf of Florida families” in the 1980s.

“Walt Dartland accomplished more to make Florida a better place than many government agencies and career elected officials combined,” Sachs said.

“Heroically, he was a champion for consumers and underdogs throughout his storied career, often persevering and prevailing against all odds.”

When the state redistricted its congressional map for the 2016 elections, splitting Leon County between a minority-access tract anchored in Tallahassee and Jacksonville and a 19-county district running from Panama City to near Ocala, Dartland took on the politically daunting challenge of running – as a Democrat – in the 2nd District. Republicans outnumber Democrats 204,440 to 183,134 in the sprawling district.

Dartland conceded the district was crafted to favor Republicans, but said it was important for his party to give voters an option. He won the Democratic nomination by 233 votes over Lake City tree grower Steve Crapps, in a hand recount, but lost the general election to U.S. Rep. Neal Dunn, a Panama City Republican, 231,163 to 102,801.

“I think it is my ultimate duty as a citizen to make this a real democracy,” Dartland said in a 2016 Tallahassee Democrat interview about his non-traditional campaign that saw the candidate crisscrossing a congressional district that is larger than New Jersey and eight other states. “I just couldn’t let there be an election and no Democratic candidate talking to people.”

---Bill Cotterell, Tallahassee Democrat correspondent

<http://floridapolitics.com/archives/257948-rest-peace-walt-dartland-modern-marvel-style-comic-book-hero-come-life>

We've lost a really great and humble hero in the passing of Walter Dartland, who died at his Tallahassee home on March 1 after a valiant battle against lymphoma. He was surely Florida's best-ever advocate for consumers and taxpayers — a mild-mannered gentle giant who was a living legend for most of his life because of his many victories for consumers.

Walt accomplished more to make Florida a better place than many government agencies and career elected officials combined. Heroically, he was a champion for consumers and underdogs throughout his storied career, often persevering and prevailing against all odds. In the 1980s, he was the official Consumer Advocate for Miami-Dade County government, and he took on the powerful almost single-handedly on behalf of Florida families, often making waves of reform and national news. Very competitive TV stations' news departments often fought over which would have him on the air for live interviews first, or most often. He was a naturally gifted communicator — always eloquently assailing the arrogance and abuse of any powerful interests whose products or services hurt or undermined the public interest.

As an attorney and advocate, he was one of those quietly elite ones who help to define the profession and practice of law as its very best. Typical of his impact and legacy, Walt was the singular guiding force because Florida's now decades-old landmark 'Lemon Law' that helped consumers whose new cars proved to be duds to have legal fuel to accelerate in a faster lane to justice. He spent so much of his career in public service that he never really retired. Whether leading groups as a dedicated volunteer to protect Lake Jackson or helping create a center for non-profits to gather, he was tireless in taking on so many challenges so effortlessly, though even one of his quests would exhaust a far younger person.

During many decades in Tallahassee, his gifts to all included creating a statewide consumer advocacy group in the late 1990s, that he led almost singlehandedly for more than 15 years, for no compensation. One of his noblest battles several years ago was on behalf of a neighborhood of poor black residents in Port. St. Joe, whose homes were actively deteriorating because of major flaws in the homesites and construction. Strictly pro bono, Walt took on this long-shot cause and ultimately led a protest to the front door and headquarters of the major corporation responsible — ultimately winning a settlement for the homeowners to be compensated and the problems corrected.

While he was not Don Quixote — because his battles were for real and his victories many — Walt's somewhat Quixotic decision at age 80 to run for U.S. Congress in 2016, as a lifetime Democrat in a district largely Republican district, confounded many friends and family. But to Walt, it was typical of his willingness to take on any long-odds effort — because no one should automatically win such an important and powerful job without a vigorous challenge. He actually had data and math to show a possible path to victory — and though the calculations would later prove to be wrong, his effort was so right.

As much as Walt loved his battles on behalf of good issues and the public, he was a devoted family man who would do anything for those he loved, including his children, grandchildren and dear friends. Though he seemed to have an inexhaustible supply of energy, it was his beloved wife and life partner, Diana, who was the real power pack source for most of his lifetime happiness and tenacity — and who inspired him as he inspired others.

If we could conceive a modern Marvel-style comic book hero to come to life and protect all of us in the things that matter most, Walt Dartland would be perfectly cast because it was the role he lived every day throughout his very distinguished life. We will likely never find another champion for consumers like him.

---Ron Sachs is CEO of Sachs Media Group

<http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/obituaries/article203245359.html>

The man behind Florida's Lemon Law — and champion of 'the little guy' — dies at 83

By Alex Harris aharris@miamiherald.com

March 02, 2018 09:29 PM

Walt Dartland was known for his dedication to championing “the little guy.” He did it in Miami-Dade County as its consumer advocate, as Florida Attorney General Bob Butterworth’s deputy for consumer affairs in the '70s and '80s and as founder and executive director of the Consumer Federation for the Southeast. He even made a late-in-life run for Congress in 2016.

After a more than four-decade career in consumer advocacy, Dartland died Thursday, succumbing to lymphoma. He was 83.

“He was just an amazing man. I think it’s unlikely we’ll ever see someone like Walt Dartland ever again,” said Tallahassee public relations executive Ron Sachs, who got to know Dartland as a Miami reporter in the '70s. “He was calm. He was earnest. He was never mad, and everybody knew he always spoke the truth.”

Dartland’s most well-known cause was Florida’s Lemon Law — the legislation he wrote that protects car buyers if their new car turns out to be defective in the first two years. He also fought (pro bono) to lead a protest and win a settlement for a poor, African-American neighborhood in a small Panhandle community whose homes were falling apart from construction defects.

“He was unwilling to let those people be unrepresented,” Sachs said. “And he won.”

Dartland and Butterworth met and became friends when the two ran against each other for attorney general in the 1986 Democratic primary.

“He was an icon, a fantastic guy,” Butterworth told the Tallahassee Democrat.

Dartland was a major in the Marines, and graduated with a degree in engineering from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York. He earned a law degree at the University of Michigan, and was a Fulbright Scholar.

Dartland's decision — at 81 — to run as a Democratic congressional candidate in a deeply red district was called “the longest of long-shot” by the Tallahassee Democrat. Yet he inspired dedicated volunteers who hand-painted yard signs with caricatures in his likeness.

“I think it is my ultimate duty as a citizen to make this a real democracy,” he told the paper. “I just couldn't let there be an election and no Democratic candidate talking to people.”

He is survived by his wife of 36 years, Diana Dartland, and children Mark, Chris and Dottie; grandchildren Victoria, Evan and Flynn; and sister Christina. Details on a memorial service have not been released.

Read more here: <http://www.miamiherald.com/news/local/obituaries/article203245359.html#storylink=cpy>

Tribute Wall

RS

“ 3 files added to the album Memories Album



Reydel Santos - November 14, 2020 at 01:55 PM

JB

“ In the 80's I was the General Counsel of the Florida Chamber of Commerce. Walter and I would often appear on panel discussions on the issues of the day. Sometimes we would be on the same side of an issue; on others we would oppose. In all casers, he was a fierce advocate of the issues he held dear, but could do so in a professional, and civil manner. He was tenacious and never gave up. He will be missed.

He lived up to our motto--SEMPER FI

*Jim Brainerd
Judge Advocate
Marine Corps League
Detachment 742*

Jim Brainerd - April 06, 2018 at 08:54 AM

MG

“ I became friends with Walt when he was Dade County Consumer Advocate after writing him a letter referencing Don Quixote. Don Quixote could never have filled Walt Dartland’s shoes.
A few tidbits from knowing a truly inspirational Man.
Walt was a real Marine, on top of all the things he accomplished in life. When Walt was Dade County Consumer Advocate, he publicly called his boss, Sergio Pereira, “a paid lackey”
What a wonderfully articulate and very appropriate insult. ;)
Walt was always there when I needed him. In my darkest moment, he made a phone call on my behalf to a beginning lawyer in Texas. She had been selected because she was a baby lawyer and considered weak. After one call from Walter she morphed into an independent
ferocious fighter who was instrumental in freeing my Mother from elder abuse in San Antonio.
I will miss Walter. He was a superman. Walt’s spirit lives on.

*Mark Glasser
Cutler Bay, Florida*

Mark Glasser - March 21, 2018 at 02:11 PM

RB

“ I was one of the many, many signers of the "we're staying at Walter's house" guest book at the Dartlands' door.

Truly, Marc and I have many stories about Walt, running for office, Walt fighting 'the good fight' about [pick one]:

- auto repair abuses;
- free speech;
- the ethics of public office; and
- most importantly, friendship.

I have known Walt since he moved to the Miami area. I am deeply saddened by his loss. I love his memory.

Richard Burton

Richard Burton - March 16, 2018 at 12:44 PM

PB

“ So glad we had a chance to meet him and the rest of the family. He was one of a kind! Can't believe all the things he accomplished in his life. Our prayers are with the family.

Peggy Bowen - March 16, 2018 at 09:59 AM

BS

“ Walter was a great person, always a joy to talk to at the gym. He will be remembered.

Blanca Schuknecht

Blanca Schuknecht - March 14, 2018 at 01:22 PM

JM

“ 3 files added to the album *New Album Name*



John P. McNicholas,Jr. - March 12, 2018 at 11:21 PM

RS

“ I first met Walt in the early to mid-1980's while working as a firefighter and paramedic at the Miami Dade Fire Department. Although I could fill this page with countless stories about why I loved Walter as a friend and mentor, as well as why I respected him so much,

I would like to quote a small portion of a previously published article in the Sun Sentinel, explain why Walt was loved by so many in Florida.

"Whether or not they have directly sought his help, most Floridians have benefited from it, directly or indirectly.

When he was appointed by the Dade County Commission in 1975, he was the first countywide consumer advocate in America. After 11 years in office, he has served the longest.

Dartland, 51, has developed a statewide and nationwide reputation as an aggressive, effective watchdog for consumer interests and a dangerous enemy of businesses that sell shoddy or unsafe products or engage in other customer ripoffs. With him around, the motto was, "Let the seller beware."

His record of success is admirable.

When 200,000 Ford cars owned by Floridians began to rust prematurely, Dartland filed a class-action suit against Ford Motor Co., winning \$80 million in cash and repairs for 200,000 Florida car owners. He also convinced the Federal Trade Commission to set standards for rusting of sheet metal, the start of an effort to require the auto industry to build cars with an extended lifespan.

When 60,000 utility customers couldn't get the Florida Water and Utilities Co. to stop supplying rust-colored water that smelled of gasoline and sewage, Dartland convinced the Water and Sewer Board to revoke its franchise -- something never before done in

Florida.

Dartland made thousands of Floridians better informed consumers by creating TEL-CONSUMER, an award-winning customer education telephone service with over 200 recorded messages.

He won approval of a law to ban unlicensed contractors from advertising, and a modification in water billing rates for condominiums that has saved customers hundreds of thousands of dollars.

In my opinion, Walt Dartland did more for consumers in the last half century than all of the State of Florida and locally elected officials combined.

But Walt was more than "his public persona". He was truly a loyal friend. You could count on Walter during the best of times and the worst of times. If Walter was your friend, "he was your friend", no matter what. Friends like Walt are rare in today's world and I will miss him dearly.

Godspeed my friend!

*Reydel "Sonny" Santos
Veteran Housing Corp
www.veteranhousingcorp.org*

Reydel Santos - March 12, 2018 at 07:24 AM

RS

“ 1 file added to the album New Album Name



Reydel Santos - March 12, 2018 at 06:50 AM

DJ

“ Walt was a giant in so many ways — in his many professional accomplishments and how he carried himself as a man — honestly, ethically and with a nice dose of humility. He helped to found my organization, the Coalition Against Insurance Fraud, 25 years ago. He served on our board for 23 of those years. I had the pleasure of traveling with him in the early years to build the organization. He had an uncanny ability to bring diverse people together, to help them set aside differences and focus on a common cause. I learned much from Walt, and he provided much needed counsel that helped me greatly.

I will miss his wisdom, his brilliance, his dedication, stories about his grandkids and the many funny tales he told about his life. I've never met anyone like Walt and don't think I every will.

Deep condolences to Diana and the rest of the family for this deep loss.

Dennis Jay - March 10, 2018 at 05:01 PM

HP

“Walt and I became close friends starting in my 6th grade and his 7th at St. Anthony Grade School in inner-city Detroit. Initially a shared interest in photography brought us together, but eventually included being altar boys (through 10th grade), and Boy Scouts, Junior Foresters, and some interesting driving trips through Michigan, the east coast, and, finally, California. In later college years we kind-of drifted apart although I did go to his graduation as a nuclear engineer from RPI. Military service as a Marine, including a period on Okinawa, changed his perspective. From the Marines he went to the University of Michigan Law School with a goal of a career in politics. Immediately after graduation he jumped right into it, running – as I recall – for the Detroit City Council. I came home from grad school to help in door-to-door canvassing. He lost and decided a re-start in a “smaller pond” than Detroit might work better and moved to Ontonagon on Lake Superior, U.P. Michigan. After several brutal winters and not a whole lot of political success he moved to Miami. From that point on things fell into place for him as a Consumer Advocate. Geography limited our contact over the last forty years so his many major accomplishments are known better by Floridians than by me. One thing I recall very well is the night in 2005 when he received the CFA Distinguished Service Award in Washington, DC. Walt shared the dais with Senator Richard Shelby and (now) Senator Richard Blumenthal, pretty impressive company.

Walt was a great man. He was a born leader which manifested itself in every endeavor he undertook. His work as a voice for the under-served is an example to all of us. This country needs many more like Walt Dartland. I am proud to have been his friend

Diana, Mark, Dottie, Christopher and Christina. We are very, very sorry.

Hank & Judy Prask

Hank Prask - March 08, 2018 at 11:28 AM



“ *What a awesome man God made just for us thank you for everything you did for us you surely will be missed. Love to the family*

Genoria Davis - March 06, 2018 at 01:36 PM

BW

“ *There is a lot to say about Walt Dartland, the tireless public servant who fought for all of us. I met Walt in the 80's when he was collaborating with Florida International University and the University of Miami to record hundreds of messages to educate and advise consumers. The project was called “Tel-Consumer”. It was pre-social media so the vehicle to reach his constituency (all of Miami/Dade County) was the telephone . . . not the mobile variety but the good old land line (before we needed to make a distinction). I was impressed from the start by his keen intelligence, his passion, and his energy but the thing that impressed me the most was his willingness to embrace everyone as a friend. Our friendship began with Tel-Consumer and has lasted for almost four decades.*

Walt was “Uncle Walt” to our children and Diana is “Mad Auntie Di” (MAD for short). My husband became part of the Dartland network; we were introduced to friends of theirs and introduced them to friends of ours from all over the world. Walt was the quintessential matchmaker! “Have I got a friend for you . . .” but he was the best friend of all. We will miss you, dear friend!

Beth Winter - March 06, 2018 at 12:11 PM



“ *Purple Rose with Carnations and Lilies (Silk Cemetery Flowers) was purchased for the family of Mr. Walter T. Dartland.*



March 06, 2018 at 11:55 AM



“ *1 file added to the tribute wall*



Dottie Dartland Zicklin - March 05, 2018 at 12:37 PM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Dottie Dartland Zicklin - March 05, 2018 at 11:39 AM



“ *2 files added to the album New Album Name*



Dottie Dartland Zicklin - March 05, 2018 at 11:33 AM