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THOUGHTS ON THE HONORABLE TALBOT D'ALEMBERTE

DR. CHARLES B. REED*

TO DESCRIBE Sandy D'Alemberte as the most complex person that I have ever met would truly be an understatement. Beyond complex, Sandy is in fact a contradiction. He is at once dreamer and doer, peacemaker and irritant, theoretician and practitioner, scholar and politician, and parent and child. Sandy can be simultaneously thoughtful and impulsive, cerebral and physical, egocentric and unselfish, traditional and rebellious, proud and humble.

That he remains a child at age 55 was demonstrated this summer by the crash of one of his toys, in this instance a seaplane that he piloted inadvertently into the earth. Of course, Sandy always dusts himself off and walks away from crashes of his own making, plane or otherwise.

In the course of our varied careers, Sandy and I have been both colleagues and adversaries in arenas ranging from the Legislature, the Supreme Court, and the Governor's Office to the racquetball court. I cannot say for certain whether I prefer having him on my side or not. Actually, it does not make much difference. Whatever the arena and whatever side you are on, if Sandy is in the contest he will cause you to work up a good sweat, for Sandy D'Alemberte's consistency is found in his intensity.

Sandy is incapable of halfheartedness. He brings to every enterprise a sense of vision and a burst of energy. He envelops those around him with these qualities, and he causes things to happen. Most of the time these things are good, above referenced crashes notwithstanding.

I will leave it to others to chronicle his achievements as lawyer, legislator, professor, dean and citizen. He will find these chronicles boring because he is constitutionally incapable of dwelling on his accomplishments. For one, it would require him to look back and he is totally preoccupied with the future. For another, his vision does not permit him to view any enterprise as finished. There is always the gnawing urge to "see if we can't make it a little better than we did."

* Chancellor, State University System of Florida, 1985-present.

And frankly, this essay is written for an audience of one. Sandy, whenever our paths have crossed, you have challenged me to greater achievements. Because you were on the Appropriations Committee, I was a better Budget Director. Because you were a trusted advisor to Governor Bob Graham, I was a better Chief-of-Staff. Because you are my friend, I am a better person. Because I am your friend, you are getting better at racquetball. Thank you and Godspeed.