

# Honoring The Heroes Among Us – ... William H. Walker Taking Leadership and Volunteerism to the Next Level

**W**illiam H. Walker is truly a hero among us when it comes to leadership and volunteerism in youth athletics. He is a third generation attorney who was born in Brattleboro, Vermont in 1945. He was President of the St. Petersburg Bar in 2004 – 2005. His emphasis during his term included improving public relations regarding public service attorneys performance outside their daily law practice, solidifying the financial basis of the organization, reaching out to non-members and focusing on increasing the professionalism among existing members.

Bill was raised in Ft. Pierce, Florida since the age of two, but returned to Vermont to complete his high school education at the Vermont Academy. He graduated from the University of Miami in 1968 and from Stetson Law School in 1973. He worked with attorney Rolff Duggar for about one year after law school, after which the State Attorney's Office hired him as a felony prosecutor. It was "a sink or swim" experience for him. He was thrust into the criminal felony prosecution world with only one week of training. After that one week of training, he immediately received a substantial caseload of felony prosecutions. He prosecuted many drug cases during his three-year stint with the State Attorney's Office. He then returned to practice with Mr. Duggar for two years. In February 1980, Bill opened his own office and he currently practices in the areas of commercial litigation, business torts, contract disputes, real property actions and family law matters. Bill is quick to acknowledge help from legal "coaches" or legal mentors. He credits Myron Mench with early guidance. Bill clerked for him while in law school. Also, Myron helped Bill get the job with the State Attorney's Office. Also, Rolff Duggar has been a consistent and outstanding mentor of his. Bill enjoys trial practice. The character quality of humility

is not always associated with trial lawyers. Along with Bill's entertaining humor, humility is evident in his life. Bill says that it is hard to remain proud as a trial lawyer because the next jury is like the very next hole in the game of golf. Each new hole presents water hazards, trees and sand traps.



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When entering Bill's office, numerous diving plaques and paraphernalia greet his visitors. His interest in diving started during his teen years and his love for the sport stimulated his desire to teach it. His mother, a piano teacher, encouraged him to participate in a number of

sports as a youth. When growing up in Ft. Pierce, he found that he was one of the better divers in the area. He also played football in high school. He thought about playing football for the University of Miami. However, when a University of Miami football coach asked him how fast he was, Bill candidly admitted that for his small stature he was not very fleet of foot. This rather burly coach warned Bill that if he went out for the team, he would truly be sacrificing his body to the larger, stronger and faster players. Accepting the wisdom of the college football coach, Bill turned to diving. His rise to prominence in diving soon met a terrible roadblock. Bill tried out for the University of Miami diving team and was cut. But Bill, with dogged determination and persistence, continued to train anyway. He soon found work at the Kings Bay Country Club in Miami where he worked for a pool manager, who just happened to be a two-time Olympic Gold Medalist in diving. After one year of private lessons from this over qualified pool manager he tried out for the team, and not only made the team, but also earned an athletic scholarship in the process.

Bill is the diving coach for St. Petersburg Catholic High School and an assistant coach at Northeast High School. He trains his divers five days a week. The rigorous routines include push-ups, sit-ups, stadium running, and trampoline work. He keeps himself in shape by working out with his trainees. He trains his divers from April to October in the pool but from November to March workouts are outside the pool. He believes in the "progressive" coaching philosophy that emphasizes attention to details and fundamentals.

Bill is also very involved with diving on the national and international levels. He was President of the U.S. Diving Team from 1998-



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2002 and continues on the Board of Directors. During his tenure, a centralized training program opened in Houston. The program consolidates the training of the athletes and strengthens the U.S. team. In 2000, Bill attended the Olympic games in Sydney.

He is also a national and international U.S. judge and is qualified to judge any diving competition worldwide. He has judged events in Moscow, Minsk, Soviet Georgia, Argentina, Canada, Germany, and the Dominican Republic. He also judged in Cuba, where he had dinner with Fidel Castro.

This year for the first time, the National College Athletic Association ("NCAA") now allows private judges to judge the national competition. Bill has been invited to judge the NCAA diving competition this coming March 2007 at the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis, Minnesota. "Do you see a man skilled in his work? He will stand before Kings; he will not stand before obscure men." Proverbs: 22:29. Bill is clearly a skilled man as a lawyer and as a diving coach. Bill is still amazed at the doors that have been opened for him and the opportunities that he has had just by volunteering as a diving coach.

Mr. Walker has not been without major support from his wife of 33 years, Joanne. She is a swimming teacher and is presently involved with teenage girls between the ages of 12 and 18 who participate in community projects. She has been President of the St. Petersburg Women's Club. Joanne and Bill have two children Mark, 24 and John, 21 who both attend college. When his boys were between the ages of 8 and 15 they wanted to play basketball, Bill volunteered to coach their basketball team in one of the most competitive youth basketball leagues in St.

Petersburg. Thus, his boys have personally benefited from Bill's volunteerism.

Bill's core message to the bar is that a lawyer has a need for something beyond working and money. This something beyond can be found in public service that contributes to the welfare of many. It is evident that Bill is a man of humor, personality, and competitiveness. He is not afraid to take on challenging leadership roles. But his real passion is public service. What a great mentor for us all. Bill credits the professionalism of the local bar for allowing him to take time off from his law practice to accommodate his diving volunteerism. Thank you Bill for being a hero among us, especially in the area of public service and volunteerism.

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