

YOUR LOCAL NEWSPAPER

Clearwater Sun

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A tall, proud way of life

RALPH RICHARDS died Friday, and it surely must have irked him to do so, because at 87 he had a great deal more of living left in him and he was looking forward with his customary zest to September and the 25th anniversary of the founding of Clearwater Federal Savings and Loan Association.

Clearwater Federal was Richards's baby. Back in the early 1950s, he looked around and saw that if Clearwater was to grow as it should the city would need more available capital.

So Richards set about organizing Clearwater Federal. He ended up having to fight hard for it, because some people thought one more financial institution in Clearwater would be one too many. As we now know, they were wrong.

Last Sunday this newspaper chronicled Richards's many awards and achievements. The black-and-white details and statistics are the easiest part of a man's life to put down on paper.

IT IS less simple to capture the personal touches and make them come alive.

With Ralph Richards perhaps we could begin with the miniature rosebud he wore in his lapel each day as he went

old friend, Eddie Schulte. In the final fortnight of his life, on the ship bound for Panama, Richards won the duplicate bridge tournament. He was up to his neck in action to the very end.

It is not sad that he died in Panama, because he had happy memories of his service there in 1923 as an Army captain. He had not returned to Panama in the intervening years, so in his last days he recaptured a longheld goal.

NOT EVERYONE in Clearwater loved Ralph Richards, especially in the 1950s when racial equality was making impressive strides. Richards had the guts to put equal opportunity into action in his own law firm and at Clearwater Federal. After the 1954 Brown vs. School Board decision, he pressured the Pinellas County school board not to drag its feet on desegregation. He used his own money to help educate young black persons. His friendships with blacks were many and deep.

Throughout his life his concern was not to do what was popular, but what was right. He was capable of great anger, especially at signs of racial and religious prejudice, or at any form of inhumanity.

Richards was a good law-

to work at his law offices and, just a few yards away, to the lobby of Clearwater Federal where he would circulate among customers and crew, chatting, helping out, staying on top of, and interested in, everything that was going on.

While most Clearwater movers and shakers took their leisurely luncheons at their clubs or in comfortable restaurants, Richards was just as happy to drop in at the Woolworth luncheonette in Cleveland Plaza.

He was not a backslapper, but he was warm and outgoing. He was an aggressive businessman who liked to listen, to talk, to tell anecdotes, and to swap jokes, many of them on himself.

He enjoyed golf and tennis, and late in the day he would relax with a Scotch and soda. One of his beloved traditions was his Thursday night bridge game at the apartment of his

yer, in terms of both ethics and competency. He wrote widely on wills, probate and what Floridians should do to protect their money. The royalties from one of his most successful books have always been turned over to the Clearwater YMCA.

THE GENEROSITY, courage, humanness, concern and large thinking of Ralph Richards cannot be reduced to words in ink, or to eulogies pronounced at a memorial service.

The real testimony to Ralph Richards is found in his long friendships, the causes he fought for, the institutions he helped to prosper and the many persons to whom he opened his hands, his pocket-book and his heart.

On the tombstone of Ralph Richards there need be no high-flown phrases. His most fitting epitaph is the tall, proud way he lived his life.

Goal for Gerus

THE LOCAL Scientologists are forming a new group called the Gerus Society whose purported goal is to fight mistreatment of old people.

One of their first steps might be to allow cult members to leave Clearwater long enough to visit the bedside of aged relatives who are sick and perhaps dying.

A case in point is the 84-year-old grandfather of Scientologist David Haigler, whose parents are trying to persuade him to leave the cult.

Young Haigler refuses. He also balks at traveling to Charlotte, N.C., to visit his grandfather, now recovering from spinal surgery.

Last Thursday, according to young Haiglers' parents, Donald said he would go to Charlotte to see his grandfather.

But two days later Haigler

was nowhere to be found. The Scientologists told his parents he was out shopping. Haigler himself later said he was sleeping in his room, but that he has changed his mind and will not travel to Charlotte.

In the morass of conflicting testimony, the point is this: one of the hallmarks of Scientology and most other cults is the wedge driven between the cult members and their families.

Families and close friends are the enemy; they are the cult's rivals; they must be dispelled, so that the cult can have sole claim to the member's mind.

The Scientologists seem to have achieved this goal with the Haigler family. In his heart, David Haigler may wish to see his ailing grandfather. But the cult says no.

Like the slavery of an earlier America, Scientology is a most peculiar institution.

BIBLE THOUGHT

He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house:
he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. Ps. 101:7.