

**MEMORIAL RESOLUTION FOR ROSS ALDERMAN**

Ross Alderman was proud to say "I am the Public Defender," and he came to epitomize all that the title can and should mean. With his signature cowboy boots, mustache, wicked sense of humor, and, in recent years, reading glasses perched low on his nose, Ross strode through Nashville's halls of justice and government, touching many lives along the way. We got a glimpse of how many people he had helped, inspired, taught, and taken care of in the outpouring of respect, affection, and deep felt loss that followed his tragic death on August 9, 2008.

In the days following Ross's death, we listened to and told our own Ross Alderman stories. We also heard from the homeless men who found a way to attend the service, from the woman who said Ross had saved her brother's life, from the young lawyer he never met but whose calls he always took, and from the people who spoke of his unfailing kindness. We saw the powerful and the powerless join together to honor this remarkable man.

Ross was born on September 2, 1951, and his parents, Gene and Betty, brought him home to the squad tent that served as their house while they built a home, board by board, in Bowling Green, Florida. He grew up in this small community, fishing and camping, became an Eagle Scout, and graduated from Hardee County High School. He graduated from St. Andrews Presbyterian College in North Carolina, where he grew to love the mountains. One day he drove across those mountains, stopped in at the University of Tennessee College of Law, and picked up an application.

He went to law school, where he met Patsy Cottrell, who became the enduring love of his life. Ross and Patsy graduated from the University of Tennessee College of Law in June of 1976. They married in 1979 in a ceremony at their log house, with Ross wearing no coat or tie and Patsy wearing flowers in her hair. They made private vows spoken only to each other. A year later, they were joined by their son, Noah. They built a life filled with laughter, friendships, travel, dogs, the Grateful Dead and Willie Nelson, books and ideas, respect, and love. It was also filled with hard and meaningful work. They walked hand in hand and kept those private vows.

In his professional life, Ross worked for Rural Legal Services, for the Department of Correction, as an Assistant United States Attorney, an Assistant Federal Public Defender, and, briefly, in private practice. But it was in the Metro Public Defender's Office that he found his true calling. Ross worked in the office for more than twenty years, serving as Deputy Public Defender for seven years before becoming Public Defender in November 1999.

Ross's work ethic was legendary. He was always the first person to arrive at the office each day, and was usually the last to leave. His door was always open, and he was never too busy to answer a question, talk about a case, or discuss a problem big or small. He always listened – to his clients, to his colleagues, and to his conscience. He was patient, thoughtful, and even-tempered, but fiercely committed to his clients and the principles of the Constitution. Above all, he was unselfish with his time and his talent and unsparing in his dedication to equal justice.

To his clients, Ross was a person who defended their rights, gave them a voice, and always treated them with respect. To his adversaries, he was a skilled advocate who

fought zealously but ethically. To the lawyers and staff of the Public Defender's office, he was a mentor, confidante, and problem solver. To everyone who knew him, he was a role model whose words and deeds encouraged us to be better people. As Ross's sister Sara put it, "Ross was the real deal."

Ross expanded the role of the Public Defender's Office within the criminal justice system in Nashville and raised its profile in the legal community and in the community at large. Among other professional accomplishments, he served as the President of the Tennessee Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers and was on the Board of the Nashville Bar Association, which recently honored him with a memorial edition of the Nashville Bar Journal. Through it all, he epitomized the dedicated public servant, the respected lawyer convinced of the rightness of his cause, and the tireless defender of the Constitution. He believed in the tenets of the Public Defender's Credo, which he had posted on the office website and which he read at staff meetings:

I am a Public Defender

I am the guardian of the presumption of innocence,  
due process and fair trial.

To me is entrusted the preservation of those  
sacred principles.

My clients are the indigent accused.

They are the lonely, the friendless.

My voice will be raised in their defense.

I will seek acclaim and approval only from

my own conscience.

And upon my death, if there are a few lonely people  
who have benefited,

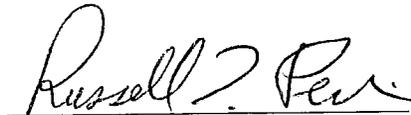
My efforts will not have been in vain.

Ross Alderman lived his professional life in furtherance of this Credo. His efforts were not in vain, and all of us are better from having known him.

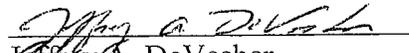
**THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** by the Nashville Bar Association, that we honor the life, work, and legacy of Ross Alderman and mourn in his passing the loss of his wisdom, perspective, and uncompromising dedication to defending the poor.

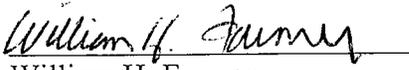
**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that this memorial resolution be placed in the permanent records of the association and entered in the "In Memoriam" minute book of the Chancery Court of Davidson County, Tennessee, and that copies thereof be furnished to his family.

This 20<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2008.

  
Chancellor

Approved for Entry:

  
Jeffrey A. DeVasher

  
William H. Farmer