

Dan Warren

Remembered as civil rights advocate

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BY JAMES HARPER

DAYTONA TIMES

Daytona Beach attorney Dan Warren played an integral role in the passing of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and up until his death on Sept. 18, he remained outspoken about discrimination.

"There is a happy amnesia on the part of Whites. We don't want to come to terms with what happened. It's a terrible blot on our character. Believe me, racism is not dead in this country. It has merely mutated to a different form," said Warren at one of his last speaking engagements at Florida Southern College in February 2010 as reported by the Lakeland Ledger.



Warren received the Trailblazer Award from the Daytona/Volusia County NAACP in 2008.

"We thought it would be fitting to present this award to Attorney Warren, especially with the Rev. Bernice King (daughter of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. serving as our speaker for the evening), NAACP president Cynthia Slater told the Times this week.

'Drum major for justice'

"Dan Warren was a drum major for justice during the civil rights movement and beyond. His work as an attorney during days of the segregated south put him in the middle of many historic events surrounding that era.

"From working with Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. during civil unrest in St. Augustine, to playing a major role in the investigation into the bombing of the home of Harry T. Moore (NAACP Field Secretary whose house was bombed on Christmas in 1951) and Harriet V. Moore in Mims, Fla.," said Slater.

"Dan Warren did not waver in his quest to seek justice for those who could not speak for themselves. He has certainly left a legacy for all of us to reflect on," concluded Slater about Warren.

Pivotal protests In in St. Augustine

"Dr. King and I understood each other" is one thing Ruth Warren remembers her father telling her when he recounted stories about his meeting with the civil rights leader in St. Augustine in 1964. King had gone to St. Augustine to help Blacks integrate the beach and participate in the 400 year-old celebration of the founding of what is called the oldest city in America.

The protests in St. Augustine are said to be "pivotal" in helping President Lyndon Johnson pass the Civil Rights Act.

Warren issued an order for state troopers to protect Blacks who wanted to swim at the city's public beach, which resulted in physical confrontations between troopers and Klansmen who arrived from all across America.

On June 11, 1964, King was arrested in St. Augustine on the steps of the Monson Motor Lodge Restaurant.

"Dr. King chose St. Augustine for the sole purpose of demonstrating to the world segregation in its worst form. It was an idea forum for passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964," said Warren during one of his last interviews recorded by "Florida Frontiers," the weekly radio magazine of the Florida Historical Society.

First meeting with King

Warren was appointed state attorney at the time and was also put in an awkward position to have to prosecute King for trespassing. It also was the first time Warren met King – when he face a grand jury for three hours.

He said King was given assurances through a reporter "that this wasn't a trap, and he would be received with dignity."

Warren received the Harry T. and Harriett V. Moore Award from the Florida Historical Society in Pensacola in May 2009.

Ruth Warren, one of Warren's five remaining children, told the Daytona Times on Sept. 22 at a social gathering of family and friends at the Sunset Harbor Yacht Club that her father more than anything else wanted to be remembered for his contribution to the civil rights movement.

"He was passionate about it," said Ruth, who now lives in Wisconsin.

Ruth also commented on the reason her father published "If It Takes All Summer" in 2008, about King's visit to St. Augustine.

Family afraid during struggle

Though she was born in 1967, three years after her father met with King, she recalls the many stories he shared with her.

Ruth remembers hearing about the threats her family received from the Ku Klux Klan during that time when Warren was the State Attorney for Volusia, St. John and Flagler counties.

"My mom had to pack up (the family). They were scared for their lives," Ruth recalled her mom telling her but added that her father knew helping King and other Blacks was the right thing to do.

About 200 of Warren's friends, mostly fellow lawyers, judges and others from the legal community were at the Yacht Club last Thursday, the day before his memorial, which took place at the Historic Volusia County Courthouse in DeLand.

"He was clear he did not want a funeral, nor a grave site," said Ruth.

Donations requested for museum

"People never talked about it. It was pivotal," said Ruth, adding that in lieu of flowers the family wanted people to make a donation to the Civil Rights Museum of St. Augustine, Inc. to help "perpetuate a legacy bigger than he was."

"We appreciate the generosity of Judge Stacia Warren with a heart warming gesture to have her friends, family and concerned citizens make a contribution to the Civil Rights Museum of St. Augustine, Inc. in lieu of flowers," said Gwendolyn Duncan, president of the 40th ACCORD, Inc., which oversees the museum.

ACCORD stands for The Anniversary to Commemorate the Civil Rights Demonstrations. The organization was formed just prior to the 40th year anniversary of King's visit to St. Augustine to lead a non-violent campaign against segregation and discrimination.

Long career in public service

Warren was born in Concord, N.C., on Oct. 10, 1925, to Robert and Ruth Warren. During World War II, he served as a B-24 nose gunner in the 449th Bombardment Group (Heavy) in Italy.

He attended Guilford College and graduated from Stetson University's College of Law.

Warren was elected in 1952 to the Daytona Beach City Commission. In 1953, he was appointed a charter board member of the Daytona Beach Racing & Recreational Facilities District, a position he held until 1996.

In 1962, he was appointed Assistant State Attorney to William W. "Billy" Judge, and became State Attorney upon Judge's retirement, until 1968. He resigned to form Judge & Warren, P.A., his law firm until his death.

Along with his wife, Judge Stacia Warren, he is survived by his children: Christine Warren, Dan Warren (Jill); Raymond Warren (Deborah); Joseph Warren (Julie); Dr. Ruth Warren, (Dr. Michael Hartmann); and Adam Warren. Warren was preceded in death by his sons, Robert and David. He also is survived by three siblings and other relatives.

Contributions in lieu of flowers may be donated to: The Civil Rights Museum of St. Augustine, Inc., c/o Mr. Richard P. Burton, Chairman, P.O. Box 3995, St. Augustine, FL 32085-3995.

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