



R. Forney Sandlin

January 20, 1934 - August 15, 2015

Robert Forney Sandlin was born January 20, 1934 in Ft. Smith, Arkansas the son of Elva Inez Davidson and Rev. James Lee Sandlin. His parents chose the name Forney from their mentor, the Rev. Dr. Forney Hutchison, a prominent Oklahoma Methodist minister. Shortly after he was born he moved to Muskogee, Oklahoma with his mother and sister where he has made his home ever since. Forney peacefully fell asleep in the Lord on Saturday, August 15th, 2015 at the age of 81.

He received his education in the Muskogee Public Schools attending Longfellow Elementary, West Junior High and graduating with the class of 1952 from Muskogee's Central High School. While in school he played the trumpet in the band under the late Anton "Tony" Goetz. He played at Mr. Goetz's funeral held at the Masonic Temple in 1948. During World War II and the Korean Conflict he was called upon to play "Taps" at graveside rites for many fallen soldiers and later he served for 8 years in the U.S. Army Reserves. He graduated from the University of Oklahoma in 1956 with a B.B.A. Degree in finance. He then graduated in 1958 with an L.L.B. degree from the University Of Oklahoma College of Law. While at the University of Oklahoma he was a member of the Phi Gamma Delta social fraternity as well as the Phi Alpha Delta legal fraternity.

Upon being admitted to the Oklahoma Bar in 1958 he entered a private law

practice in Muskogee. His practice began in the Barnes Building with the late Kay Wilson, Jr. and the late Mrs. Velma Landrum. From 1964 until 1969 he served as part-time City Prosecutor for the City of Muskogee. After the closing of the Barnes Building in 1973, he built his own office building at 330 N. 4th Street where he practiced up until two years ago. He was in partnership with James H. Payne for many years forming the firm of "Sandlin and Payne". Later after each partner sought other interests in the legal profession, he continued in private practice at the same location. His general practice focused on Corporate Law, Banking Law, Employment Law (labor relations), estates, trusts and Real Estate Law. Some of the highlights of his practice included being a part of the team who obtained the federal grant to develop the Muskogee Industrial Park as well as incorporating the Greater Muskogee Development Corporation (GMDC) for the purpose of promoting industry. He also worked on the legal team that negotiated with Ft. Howard Paper Company (now Georgia Pacific) to locate in Muskogee. He also worked on the team with the late Mayor Coleman B. Fite to obtain a federal grant to redevelop downtown Muskogee and later served as legal counsel to the Muskogee Urban Renewal Authority in developing the downtown Arrowhead Mall. Within the area of Banking Law he worked to obtain bank charters for a number of banks in Northeastern Oklahoma. He was an original stockholder and member of the Board of Directors of the City Bank of Muskogee (now BancFirst) from 1973 to 1983. He lectured at Labor Relations Seminars throughout the state on Employment Law.

He served as the municipal court judge for the City of Hulbert for 28 years. He also served as general counsel for the Oklahoma State Council on Judicial Complaints for one year.

He was an active member of the Muskogee County Bar association, the Oklahoma State Bar Association and the National Bar Association for 57 years.

He served as president of the Muskogee County Bar in 1977-78. He was an associate member, the Board of Bar Examiners, the State of Oklahoma from 1976 to 1984. He was a member of the Board of Governors of the Oklahoma State Bar Association from 1985-1992. He then was elected and served as President of the Oklahoma Bar Association in 1991 thanks to the encouragement of his friend Anthony M. "Tony" Massad. He was a charter member of the Labor Law Section of the Oklahoma Bar of which he was chairman (1981-1982). He was a member of the State Judicial Nominating Commission (1994-1999) serving as chairman in 1998-1999. He was a Fellow of the Oklahoma Bar Foundation, member of the Board of trustees of the Oklahoma Bar Foundation (1990-1992), Fellow of the American Bar Foundation and a member of the House of Delegates of the American Bar Association (1990-1991).

While president of the Oklahoma Bar Association he helped mentor the late Mona S. Lambird who would become the first female president of the Oklahoma Bar and took great pride in her as a bar president. It was his goal to visit as many of the County Bars in Oklahoma's 77 counties. His picture was taken in front of the many courthouses.

As an attorney, he was honored to be asked to travel to China and later Estonia to work on a panel to help develop their legal system.

As a young man, he was active in Boy Scouting having earned the rank of Eagle Scout. He attended Camp Fred Darby, the first National Scouting Jamboree which was held at Valley Forge, PA in 1950 and Philmont Scout Ranch in New Mexico. After law school, he served a Muskogee scout troop as an assistant scout master. He served as a District Commissioner for the Boy Scouts of America from 1965 to 1970. He carried a newspaper route for the

Muskogee Daily Phoenix while in Jr. High and High School and often talked of the various families he delivered to.

He was actively involved in many civic organizations having served on the following in past years: Board of Directors, Muskogee Chamber of Commerce (1966 to 1977); Board of Directors, Salvation Army (1968 to 1970); Board of Trustees, Bacone College (1973 to 1976); Board of Directors and past president of Muskogee Community Nursing Service; Board of Directors of Bone & Joint Hospital in Oklahoma City; and City Bank (now BancFirst); Board of Directors and President (2005-2006) of the Five Civilized Tribes Museum; and the Muskogee Regional Medical Center Board of Directors. After the sale of Muskogee Regional Medical Center he was instrumental in establishing the City of Muskogee Foundation.

Forney moved into semi-retirement when he sold his office building in 2013. He moved his office to his home where he continued his work for the City of Hulbert, City of Ft. Gibson, City of Warner, Love Bottling Company and examining abstracts.

He was a lifelong member of the St. Paul United Methodist Church where he was baptized and confirmed. He served several terms on the administrative board and taught several special Sunday School lessons.

Forney was an avid historian and a voracious reader of local, national and international history. In recent years he had given a number of historical presentations on his research on the following historical subjects: the late Alice Robertson, the late Grant and Carolyn (Thomas) Foreman, the late Anton "Tony" Goetz, the Trail of Tears, the Five Civilized Tribes of Eastern Oklahoma, the Civil War and World War II. During Forney's sons formative years the Sandlin family made many trips to historical points throughout the United States. Later he and his wife, Dorothy, made many trips throughout the

world to learn of other lands and cultures. Many of these trips were to “search for their ancestors.”

Throughout his life, law practice and many accomplishments, Forney never forgot his roots. He also never forgot the many teachers and mentors he had throughout his life. He was quick to speak of them with great admiration. Although he had a very accomplished legal career he always maintained that he simply was a “country lawyer”.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his step-father, W.G. VanArsdale, his beloved grandmother, Emma Davidson and his sister, Virginia Sandlin Bird.

He is survived by his wife of 34 years, Dorothy Ritter Sandlin whom he married December 24, 1981; his sons: Robert F. (Rob) Sandlin, Jr. of Oklahoma City and William Scot Sandlin and his wife Ilene of Dallas, TX; his grandson: Robert Peerson “Pierce” Sandlin; his step-daughter: Dru Johnson and her husband Bert of Tulsa, OK and grandchildren: Jared and his wife Sandra, Zachary and his wife Laura and Rachel Johnson; his step-son: Doug Deardorff and his wife Christy of Little Rock, AR; his sister: Connie (Sandlin) Follis and her husband Rodney of Greenville, TX. As well as a very special cousin, Pauline Poteet White. Also extended family, Jackie and Ray Chapman and family, Judy and Jim Payne and family and Barry Love.

The family will receive friends from 4:30 until 7:00 p.m. Tuesday, August 18th at the Cornerstone Funeral Home, 1830 N. York Street.

Services will be 3:00 p.m., Wednesday in the St. Paul United Methodist Church with the Rev. David Burris officiating. Members of the Oklahoma Bar Association will serve as honorary pallbearers. Private family committal will be in the Memorial Park Cemetery.

The family requests that memorials be made to the St. Paul United Methodist Church, 2130 W. Okmulgee, Muskogee, OK 74401.

With deep gratitude the family would like to acknowledge the physicians, nurses and respiratory therapists who provided exceptional care during his final illness. We acknowledge Susan Asquith for personally and professionally caring for Forney at nights. We also acknowledge Rev. David Burris and the pastoral staff of St. Paul Church whose daily presence provided strength and comfort to Forney and his family.

Cemetery Details

Memorial Park Cemetery

7600 Old Taft Rd.
Muskogee, OK 74401

Previous Events

Visitation

AUG 18. 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Cornerstone Funeral Home & Crematory
1830 North York Street
Muskogee, OK 74403
(918) 682-1500

Family Visitation

AUG 18. 4:30 PM - 7:00 PM (CT)

Cornerstone Funeral Home & Crematory
1830 North York Street
Muskogee, OK 74403
(918) 682-1500

Service

AUG 19. 3:00 PM (CT)

St. Paul United Methodist Church
2130 W Okmulgee
Muskogee, OK 74401

Tribute Wall



“ *R. Forney Sandlin*

October 23, 2023 at 09:38 AM



“ *We will not see his like again - Forney was such a spirit for good, a great mind, a hard worker, a man of such sound judgment. And what a sense of humor and that quick, irrepressible smile! I never talked with Forney without coming away better for it, and wondering why I didn't find more occasions to chat him up. He's always been a treasure in both his personal and professional lives, and he will be missed. Deepest sympathies for the loss of this special man.*
Jane Wiseman, Tulsa

Jane Wiseman - September 15, 2015 at 08:41 PM



“ *1 file added to the album New Album Name*



Robert Sandlin - September 01, 2015 at 08:57 AM



“ *1 file added to the album Forney Sandlin*



Robert Sandlin - September 01, 2015 at 08:56 AM

DC

“ Dorothy, I was so sorry to hear about Forney. You are in my prayers.
Dean Cousparis

Dean Cousparis - August 20, 2015 at 12:27 PM

MR

“ My condolences to Dorothy and the Sandlin family from Mike and Susannah Robinson, son of James L Robinson who passed last month. Many memorable stories from my father and Patsy Acers about Bob and Dorothy growing up in Muskogee were priceless. Our thoughts and prayers are with you during these trying times.

Mike Robinson - August 19, 2015 at 11:19 PM

DR

“ Forney was a mentor for so many of us. I followed Forney as the Congressional District 2 commissioner on the Judicial Nominating Commission in 1999 and then as Oklahoma Bar Association President in 2011. He was always available for a word of encouragement and, as Past President Sanders said, to take whatever problem you presented to him and give you a well-thought out solution. I always wanted to be like Forney. I am so proud to call him my friend.

Deborah A. Reheard, Eufaula

Deborah Reheard - August 19, 2015 at 12:13 PM

DC

“ Dear Dorothy and Family,

I am so sorry about Forney's passing. My thoughts and prayers will always be with you.

Debbie Cohea

Debbie Cohea - August 19, 2015 at 11:08 AM

PS

“ I was honored to work with Forney and respected him greatly as a wonderful gentleman, Christian, and professional. One of a kind man and what a life he had here and what the eternal life he has now! My prayers will remain with Dorothy and his family.

penny strohink - August 18, 2015 at 10:21 PM

SW

“ Dearest Sandlin family,

We are thinking of you. Forney was always such fun - even for us kids. You all know how he was there for us when Daddy died so suddenly 37 years ago. We are so grateful for the years of work he donated to our causes and for his loving friendship, dry wit and wise guidance through the years. We will miss him and pray that God sends the Holy Spirit to walk you through until your "mourning turns to dancing." Much love to you all, in Jesus' name.

Sharee (Stokes) Wells

Sharee Wells - August 18, 2015 at 06:49 PM

NA

“ Rob,
Very sorry to learn that your Dad passed away. I enjoyed reading about his well-lived life. You must be a proud son. may his memory be eternal

Nick Astorino - August 18, 2015 at 02:22 PM

BC

“ While never having met Forney, I felt that I knew him through the many stories from his son Scott. I always admired Forney's continued use of his legal talents through out his life entire and the memories he left with his grandson Pierce.

Continued Blessings

Bob Cooper, Dallas, Tex

Bob Cooper - August 18, 2015 at 12:28 PM

DD

“ Forney Sandlin = Great man!!! RIP! Tu amigo Dice

Dice Dawson - August 18, 2015 at 10:13 AM

SC

“ Dear Rob, I am unable to be with you today, but know that I will be praying for you. And my thoughts are with you. He must have been an incredible man. He raised a wonderful son.

Shirley Shadid Casey

Shirley Casey - August 18, 2015 at 07:48 AM

DJ

“ Forney was a mentor to me and was the guidance and support that got me involved in our State Bar Association matters as a young lawyer. I would not have been blessed to follow in his footsteps as a Past President of the Bar Association if not for Forney. I learned so much from doing Cases with him and against him and he had the most unique gift of taking all of the complicated, convoluted arguments and positions asserted in lawsuits and reducing them down to one reasonable, common sense solution almost always acceptable to everyone and where all of the other Lawyers in the Case ended up saying, "Why didn't I think of that". As Past President Baker noted, Forney and Dorothy were the 2 people you always wanted to see and catch up with each year at annual meeting. It seems to me that they quit making them like Forney Sandlin quite a while back and I cannot help but think of what a wonderful profession we would have if we all followed his example. Forney had a huge impact on my professional life and I will miss his wisdom and guidance. Thank you Forney for blessing me with your friendship.

Douglas W. "Dougal" Sanders, Jr.

Douglas W. "Dougal" Sanders, Jr. - August 18, 2015 at 06:39 AM

WB

“ Forney was a wonderful role model and mentor to many of us. He was an outstanding OBA President, who sacrificed many, many hours to making sure everything was done and done well. I always looked forward to seeing Forney at the OBA annual meetings, and to catch up on what had transpired since our last visit.

He will be greatly missed by Oklahoma lawyers, as well as all the clients that he so ably served over the years.

My most sincere condolences to Dorothy and family.

Willie Baker

Willie Baker - August 17, 2015 at 02:56 PM



My deepest sympathies to the family. Forney was a man I grew to admire. Serving on the city council at Warner I asked Forney a lot of questions and he always had the right answer. He will be missed by many.

Bill Gardner

Bill Gardner - August 17, 2015 at 10:02 PM

SM

Forney, I can't believe you left us. I expected you to be the last surviving member of the Class of '52. I used to wonder how you got away with so much stuff and never got into trouble. You really brightened up high school With all of your work on our Class Reunions and that was not mentioned. You did so much work to keep our classmates together. You really are going to be missed by all of us that you left behind. Thanks for everything from High School on, you totally amazed me in many ways.

Sylvia O. Bailey (Class of '52)

Sylvia Bailey Munoz - August 18, 2015 at 03:02 PM

BM

So sorry to hear. I learned a lot and had so much fun working with him on all our bank deals - the first was in 1968 in Ft. Gibson. He was better than all the big city lawyers I worked with. I always thought if I was in real trouble he is who I wanted on my side. Just a great human being.

Bo Monnot - August 22, 2015 at 07:58 PM