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EX-SOLICITOR LEAVES LEGACY OF SUCCESS

CLIF LeBLANC

Staff Writer

During 17 years in politics, he tutored many who became some of state's most influential officials

Jim Anders was a street-fighting prosecutor, a brawler in politics and a talent agent for a generation of accomplished lawyers. The former 5th Circuit solicitor who built a successful private practice died Saturday at 3:55 p.m. at Charleston's Medical University of South Carolina. He was 62.

Anders had been hospitalized about two weeks and died of cardiac/pulmonary arrest, said Charles Whetstone, managing partner in Anders' law firm.

Funeral services will be determined today, Whetstone said.

Anders was elected solicitor for Richland and Kershaw counties in 1974 and re-elected three times-grabbing headlines and controversy along the way.

He retired in 1991, pummeled but still pugnacious. "I take a hard line in every case and don't regret it," Anders said then.

Dick Harpootlian, who prosecuted cases with Anders for eight years, called him "one of the giants of the bar in this state.

"He revolutionized the way we prosecuted cases," Harpootlian said Saturday. "He brought 20th century investigative and forensic prosecution to this community."

Anders broke into the public spotlight in 1974 when he defeated five-term incumbent John Foard, riding into office as a reforming, baby-faced prosecutor.

"Jim saw an opportunity in 1974 when no one else did - when everyone else thought Foard was unbeatable," said Harpootlian, who started his legal and political careers as Anders' sidekick.

During a time when races were won in the Democratic primary, Anders told voters, "If I get into office, it's going to be crime-busters."

Anders won the bare-knuckle campaign against Foard - who was backed by the political machine of then-Richland County Treasurer Tom Elliott - with 58 percent of the vote. Anders flirted with other offices but never ran for anything else.

He remained active in politics with financial support for both Democratic and Republican candidates.

THE EARLY YEARS

Shared political views brought Anders and Harpootlian together.

In 1970, Foard offended liberal-minded college students like Harpootlian after he prosecuted operators of an antiwar gathering place called the UFO Coffeehouse.

Harpootlian, then in law school, decided to work for Anders' campaign. "We beat a 21-year incumbent. That's not bad for a long-haired hippie," Harpootlian recalled.

A nine-year professional, political and personal partnership was born. Harpootlian eventually succeeded Anders as solicitor and became chairman of the state Democratic Party.

Anders' first experience in politics came in 1966, when he worked for Columbia lawyer Alex Sanders in Sanders' maiden race for the state House of Representatives.

Sanders, who would win and later become a state senator, appeals court chief judge and president of the College of Charleston, said Anders was the only lawyer who backed his campaign.

Even then, Sanders saw a promising future for Anders.

"He had what every lawyer wishes he had. He had an affidavit face," said Sanders, who ran unsuccessfully for the U.S. Senate in 2002. "A jury could look at Jim Anders and believe whatever came out of his mouth."

In the courtroom, Anders was a counterpuncher, said noted defense attorney **Jack Swerling**.

"He wasn't a great master of the law," **Swerling** said. "But his reflexes were great. He was instinctive. Whatever you did, he responded quickly."

The current 5th Circuit solicitor, Barney Giese, started his legal career as a law clerk for Anders and rose to become Anders' deputy from 1985-91.

Anders was not physically imposing, but he commanded a courtroom, said Giese, a Republican. "He had great presence."

Anders would return Giese's loyalty by becoming Giese's only early significant backer when the pupil decided to run for solicitor in 1994, Giese said.

ROUGH AND TUMBLE YEARS

Anders went after serial killers, televangelists, legislators, politicians, Republicans, nude dancers and much more.

He indicted state Rep. Phil Bradley in 1986 after the Greenville GOP lawmaker said he had seen his colleagues using drugs in the House chamber, then refused to name them to grand jurors.

Four years later, federal prosecutors charged 18 legislators with drug use or corruption.

Also in '86, Anders offered to be a special prosecutor to investigate York County-based evangelist Jim Bakker, whose religious empire ultimately toppled under financial and sex scandals. No one took him up on the offer.

In 1987, Anders said he would put an accused rapist who had AIDS in a glass cage during his trial. The defendant had threatened to infect someone else.

Anders and Harpootlian convicted mass murderer Donald "Pee Wee" Gaskins, who was executed for rigging a bomb that killed a fellow inmate.

Giese called Anders an innovator. Anders is credited with:

- * Saving the state's first pretrial diversion program, making it financially self-sufficient and helping expand it statewide
- * Being first to give crime victims a bigger voice in prosecutions
- * Assigning prosecutors to work with police during investigations. Called "early legal assistance," the program, which still exists, helps make stronger cases.
- * Employing the FBI lab to analyze evidence
- * Creating a formidable staff of professional investigators by hiring police officers and former FBI agents
- * Converting himself and his assistants into full-time prosecutors. When Anders was first elected, solicitors were permitted to have private practices.

Toward the end of his terms, Anders was criticized for making charges disappear for influential colleagues and for grandstanding. Some defense attorneys grumbled he could be mean-spirited.

Anders' most public and bitter brawl was with Richland County Coroner Frank Barron.

The two clashed almost from the time Barron became coroner in 1978 over access to crime scenes by public defenders.

Their professional disagreements grew personal and bitter over a soured real estate deal.

In 1980, Barron would help derail Anders' attempt to become a state judge.

In a display of Anders' often biting wit, he once dismissed Barron's latest attack by telling a reporter, "Quote me as laughing."

Barron said they had worked out their differences.

FRIEND AND PROTECTOR

One of the lowest points in Anders' 16 years as chief prosecutor came in September 1985, when Deputy Solicitor Steve Brown developed a drug habit and committed suicide.

"I can't think of anything much darker than that," Giese said.

The tough prosecutor had a soft side for his staff and his friends.

Anders made a point of tutoring his young, brash stable of lawyers.

"He was very paternal, Jim was," said Andy Savage, an assistant solicitor from 1975 to '78 and now one of Charleston's most prominent criminal defense lawyers. "He treated me like a family member.

"Every day, before we went to court, it was mandatory to stop by Cogburn's to mix with the more experienced members of the bar," Savage recalled of the former down-home eatery on Sumter Street.

"I learned more at breakfast at Cogburn's than I did in three years of law school in terms of practical experience," Savage said.

Anders' cabin in the N.C. mountains became another training ground. Anders would invite veteran investigators and others in the law enforcement community to hobnob with his young prosecutors.

"We fished together. We hunted together," said Jake Knotts, now a state senator from Lexington County and a former Columbia police officer who became Anders' chief investigator. "We were like brothers."

After leaving public life in 1991, Anders' law practice grew steadily.

Former law partner Dave Fedor cites several million-dollar verdicts they won.

By 1996, Anders wanted his own name on a firm. Housed in a 3,800-square-foot building a block from the courthouse where he once reigned, Anders' firm grew to 15 lawyers. They handle primarily product liability, personal injury law and medical malpractice cases.

THE FAMILY BUSINESS

Anders' father, James C. Anders Sr., was a successful businessman.

When he died in July 1986, Anders Sr. left an estate valued at nearly \$900,000, records showed. Much of that was 20 residential properties and lots in some of Richland County's

poorest neighborhoods.

Anders' father also owned a number of liquor stores.

Anders learned his love of the outdoors from his father, Fedor said.

More outgoing than his father, Anders had curiosity about people, Fedor said. That spurred international travel later in life.

The Anderses and the Fedors vacationed in Italy, Spain, France and Ireland.

Anders married three times and had four children with his first wife.

THE IMPACT

His enduring effect was on the 5th Circuit solicitor's office and the legal community around the state.

The staff he hired produced a federal judge; a deputy S.C. attorney general; three current, elected solicitors; a former chief federal prosecutor; a former chief lobbyist for Gov. Carroll Campbell; a former chairman of the state Democratic Party; a former House majority leader; and countless successful lawyers.

Those proteges are, respectively: U.S. District Judge Terry Wooten; Deputy Attorney General John McIntosh; solicitors Giese in Columbia, Kelly Jackson in Sumter and Greg Hembree in Conway; ex-U.S. Attorney Bart Daniel; Graham Tew of Campbell's staff; Harpootlian; Tim Rogers; and a squad of private attorneys.

"When you look back at the legacy of the guy, he touched a lot of lives in 16 years," Giese said. "Someone that worked for Jim Anders has been solicitor for 30 years.

"That's a heck of a legacy."

Reach LeBlanc at (803) 771-8664 or cleblanc@thestate.com.

JAMES C. ANDERS

Anders, 62, was 5th Circuit solicitor for 16 years. He was widely known as a tough prosecutor who developed a talent bank of successful lawyers.

n College: A bachelor's in finance and banking from the University of South Carolina in 1963

* Law school: USC, 1967

* Career: S.C. assistant attorney general; private practice; solicitor from 1975-91; head of own firm specializing in product liability, medical malpractice and personal injury law

* Born: Dec. 13, 1941, in Greenwood