

6-1-1981

A Tribute to Dick Bothwell

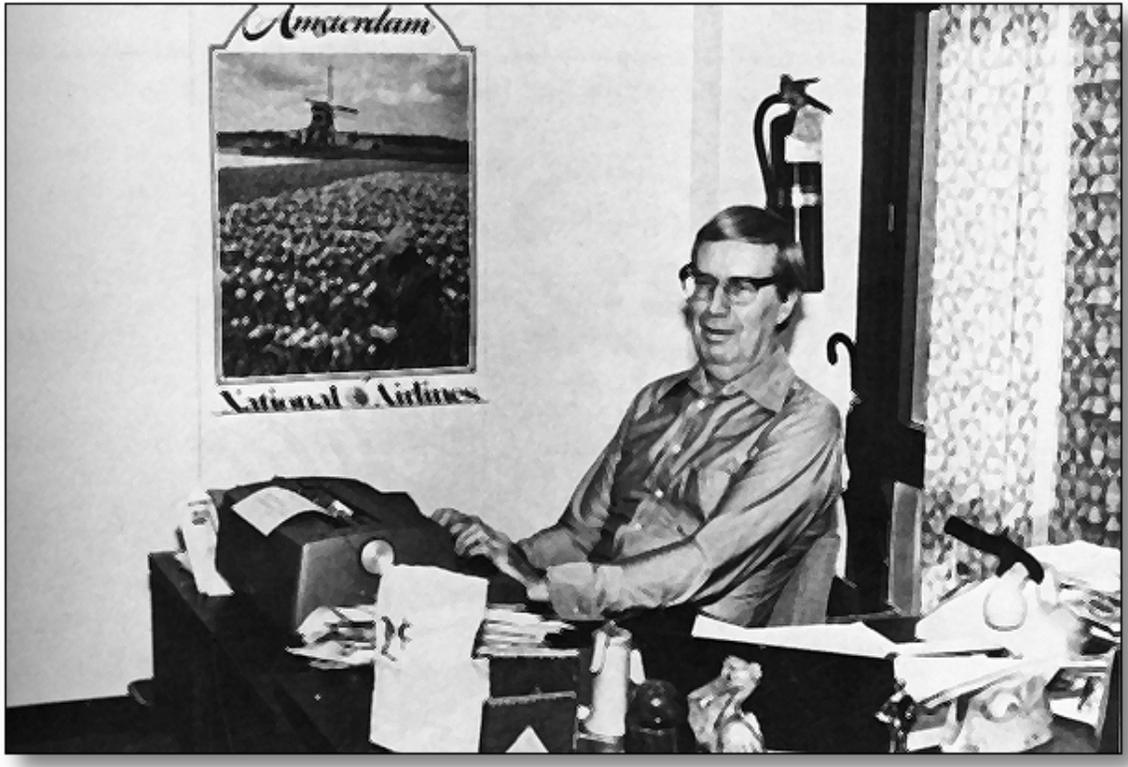
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Recommended Citation

Carr, David R. (1981) "A Tribute to Dick Bothwell," *Tampa Bay History*. Vol. 3 : Iss. 1 , Article 8.
Available at: <https://scholarcommons.usf.edu/tampabayhistory/vol3/iss1/8>

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Dick Bothwell seated at his desk at the *St. Petersburg Times*.

Photograph courtesy of the *St. Petersburg Times*.

DICK BOTHWELL: A TRIBUTE

by David R. Carr

John Richard “Dick” Bothwell, columnist for the *St. Petersburg Times*, died peacefully on the 30th of January, and *Tampa Bay History* lost a great supporter. He was best known throughout the area for his “O.A.T.” (Of All Things) column which was a marvelous mixture of humor and tales, research and reflection. Robert Haiman, Executive Editor of the *St. Petersburg Times*, said: “For most of our readers, Dick Bothwell was the *St. Petersburg Times*. His column wrapped them in a blanket of good humor, nostalgia and eternal optimism.” “O.A.T.” was a kaleidoscopic view of the community, ever-changing and ever-intriguing.

At root a humorist, Dick had a wonderful time with local history, most recently with the José Gaspar legend (see the *St. Petersburg Times*, 21 Dec. 1980 and *Tampa Bay History*, vol. 2 no. 2). Dick also published an entertaining collection of tales and cartoons during the Bicentennial, *Sunrise 200*. His volumes of *BUM Stories* were also full of wonderful recollections by Dick and his many correspondents. He could often be found plowing through the archives of the *St.*



Dick drew this cartoon for an O.A.T. column he did about a *Tampa Bay History* article on the Gasparilla legend.

Photograph courtesy of the St. Petersburg *Times*.

Petersburg Historical Museum researching his books and columns. Dick had a good time with genealogy too, claiming to be the descendant of Earl Bothwell, who became the husband of Mary, Queen of Scots, after murdering her previous husband. Dick did not shy away from the science of genealogy because of the indelicacies of his forebears.

His love of history went much beyond this. When a bit of publicity was needed by the Pinellas County Historical Commission, Society, or Museum, he was able to transform the chaff we handed him into something palatable. When a historian of note spoke at the University of South Florida's St. Petersburg Campus, he made sure the public was informed. Indeed, his lively questions from the floor often made the evening.

Dick was in constant demand as a speaker, regaling his audiences with his cartoons and jokes. He was one of the founders of “Gabbers,” a luncheon group infamous for its willingness to grapple with any topic. But if the subject turned lame or the discussion heated, Dick rescued us with humor and wisdom. Hubert Mizell’s tribute to him captured that characteristic: “Newspapering was Dick Bothwell’s business, goodness and mirth his avocation. Among his bones not one was downbeat . . . Bothwell was the Prince of Up.”

His death is a shocking loss to his community, friends and family. Dick’s concern for mankind was shown in the gentle, inexhaustible humor that was so particularly his. Keenly aware of the ironies of life and history, he never allowed that awareness to be tainted by cynicism or bitterness. Dick Bothwell was a man without guile, a man who never allowed his ego to displace his heart. He was a gem of a journalist, both responsible and responsive. We will sorely miss his friendship and good will.

EDITOR’S NOTE: Anyone interested in donating to a “living memorial” of trees to be placed in the park adjacent to the St. Petersburg Campus of the University of South Florida may send a check to The Memorial Tree Fund, c/o Florida National Bank, 700 Central Avenue, St. Petersburg, Florida 33701. Please indicate “Bothwell Memorial” on your check.