

SENIOR COUNSEL LUNCHEON FEATURED TOPFLIGHT SPEAKERS

Senior Counsel Section

Chairs: Thomas Newcomb Hyde, Thomas Newcomb Hyde – Attorney at Law & Don Smith, Smith, Tozian, Daniel and Davis, P.A.



We thank all these topflight speakers and hope you can join us for more interesting speakers at the Senior Counsel luncheons in the future.



Section Co-Chair Tom Hyde with 13th Circuit Judges Wendy DePaul, Thomas Palermo, and Cindy Oster, and luncheon speaker Ron Weaver.

A special thank you to all the judges and lawyers who joined us for this Bar year's Senior Counsel luncheons, especially for those of you who were clearly not old enough to attend. Here is a review of the topflight speakers who spoke at our luncheons this season.

Our first luncheon in September 2021 featured Eric Newman, President of the J.C. Newman Cigar Company, who chronicled the history of the cigar industry in Tampa and the role the J.C. Newman Cigar Company played in making Tampa Cigar City U.S.A. In 1885, Vicente Martinez Ybor moved his cigar factory from Key West to Tampa. By 1910, only twenty-five years later, there were over 150 cigar factories in Ybor City manufacturing five hundred million cigars each year. In 1954, J.C. Newman, a cigar manufacturer in Ohio relocated his business to the historic *El Reloj* cigar factory in Ybor City. Today, the J.C. Newman Cigar Company is a family-owned business now in its fourth generation of Newman ownership. Eric Newman is the grandson of J.C. Newman. Specialty cigars called "The American" are still hand rolled today in that factory, the oldest working cigar factory in America.

Our next speaker, Hillsborough Circuit Court Judge Thomas Palermo, discussed "The Opioid

Crisis in the United States." Judge Palermo was a federal prosecutor and served as the United States Attorney's Office's district opioid coordinator. He explained that the current opioid crisis began with pharmaceutical manufacturers, "pill mill" pain clinics, and overprescribing of opioids such as OxyContin. But as governments began stopping the incoming tide of prescription drugs, addicts turned to illicit drugs. Today, the illicit drug causing the most deaths is fentanyl, a strong narcotic that was first synthesized in Belgium in 1960. Much of the fentanyl comes from Mexico, either purchased from China or manufactured using chemicals from China.

Richard Gonzmart, who described himself as the fourth generation "caretaker" of the Columbia Restaurant, was an interesting and popular speaker at our luncheon in January 2022. He discussed the history of the Columbia Restaurant and its place in the history of Ybor City. Richard's great-grandfather, Casimiro Hernandez, started the Columbia Restaurant in Ybor City in 1904. It is still family-owned and is the oldest restaurant in Florida. There are seven Columbia

restaurants in Florida. Richard has served on dozens of non-profit boards and organizations. He is committed to maintaining the highest level of quality and excellence of service in all his restaurants.

Ron Weaver, a graduate of Harvard Law School and an eminent Florida historian, led us on a journey of Florida and Tampa's criminal history at our March 2022 luncheon. After the arrival of Ponce de Leon in 1513, Florida became a destination not only of explorers, but also of pirates and slavers who eradicated the original tribes. Ron told of 1565, when Pedro Menendez slaughtered the French soldiers at their fort near St. Augustine. He described vigilante hangings and gangland slayings in the early 1900s. He even speculated that there may have been a plot to kill President John F. Kennedy when he visited Tampa only four days before his assassination.

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