

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF FLORIDA

THE FLORIDA BAR,

Supreme Court Case  
No. SC-

IN RE:

THE PETITION FOR DISCIPLINARY  
REVOCATION OF  
RANDALL NORMAN THORNTON

The Florida Bar File  
No. 2013-30,804 (05B)

Petitioner.

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**PETITION FOR DISCIPLINARY REVOCATION WITH LEAVE TO  
REAPPLY FOR READMISSION**

COMES NOW the petitioner, Randall Norman Thornton, and files this  
Petition for Disciplinary Revocation pursuant to Rule Regulating Fla. Bar 3-7.12  
and states:

1. Petitioner knowingly and voluntarily files this petition with full knowledge of its effect.
2. Petitioner is 66 years old and has been a member of The Florida Bar since May 10, 1974, and is subject to the jurisdiction of the Supreme Court of Florida and the Rules Regulating The Florida Bar.
3. The petitioner has no discipline history with the Florida Bar and has never been the subject of criminal proceedings.

4. The following disciplinary charges are currently pending against the petitioner:

A. In contravention of a number of Bar Rules, over the last several years, I mishandled monies from a number of real estate closings under the mistaken belief that a separate "seed" account I set up to handle disbursements was sufficient. During the course of an audit from The Florida Bar I was made aware of \$6,228.64 in improper disbursements. I made refunds from personal funds for all but \$32.40 in March 2013 to the parties that were properly entitled to those funds. I should have made those reimbursements much earlier to the clients entitled to those funds. I sincerely regret these actions, and appreciate the importance of maintaining accurate trust account records. I now realize I was not in substantial compliance with the Bar's Rules governing trust accounts, and tender my disciplinary revocation. I have had no disciplinary record in my more than forty (40) years of practice. I am closing out all pending files so that no clients are adversely affected, and will withdraw from all active cases by the end of November, 2013. I am closing my practice and have taken no new cases since I learned of the final results of the Bar's audit in early October, 2013.

5. In mitigation and as evidence of my community pro bono service over the years, I would like to advise the court that I have served two terms as Trustee

of Lake Sumter Community College, served as Chairman of Board and President and Secretary of LSCC Foundation, served on Board and as President of SCARC, Inc. numerous times and as pro bono corporate attorney and attorney for developmentally disabled clients of SCARC. Additionally I have served on Boards of Hospice and Lake-Sumter Community Mental Health. I am a member of Wildwood Rotary Club, served as President twice, Secretary, Treasurer and past Assistant Governor for District 6980, Paul Harris Fellow plus 7. I have provided pro bono services in guardianship, estate planning, probate, marriage dissolution, boundary disputes and other legal matters to many people. Additionally, I have incorporated many charitable organizations, churches, cemeteries, and handled transfer of property for same without charge. I also enclose letters from a number of community representatives attesting to my service. Again, I am embarrassed by my failure to properly follow the Rules relating to my Trust Account, and hopefully have made it right as a result of the reimbursements.

6. This revocation will not adversely affect the public interest, the purity of the courts, nor hinder the administration of justice nor the confidence of the public in the legal profession.

7. The petitioner agrees to reimburse the Clients' Security Fund of The Florida Bar for any and all payments imposed as a result of his defalcations.

8. The petitioner agrees to reimburse The Florida Bar for the costs incurred in his disciplinary cases.

9. The petitioner agrees to permit the bar to audit any and all trust accounts and any other accounts over which has signatory as either an attorney-at-law, fiduciary, or trustee.

10. The petitioner has provided The Florida Bar with a sworn financial affidavit.

11. The petitioner shall notify the bar of any change of address during a two year period to be computed from the date of the entry of this court's order accepting this petition for disciplinary revocation. Further, the petitioner shall keep the bar advised as to the physical address of petitioner's home and/or business in the event the petitioner should utilize a post office box or other type of mail drop service.

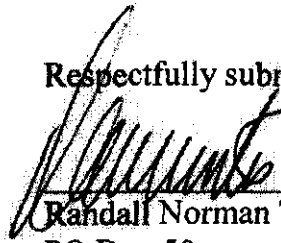
12. The petitioner understands that the granting of this petition by the Supreme Court of Florida shall serve to dismiss all pending disciplinary cases.

13. In order to provide time for petitioner to close his practice and protect his client, petitioner has ceased accepting clients and agrees to accept no new clients from date this petition is executed and further agrees to cease practicing law by on or before November 30, 2013.

WHEREFORE, the petitioner respectfully requests this Honorable Court to grant the petition herein as follows:

A. That the petitioner's membership in The Florida Bar be revoked, with revocation to take effect on November 30, 2013.

Respectfully submitted,



Randall Norman Thornton

PO Box 58

Lake Panasoffkee, FL 33538-0058

(352)793-4040

Florida Bar ID No.: 176505

rthornton@embarqmail.com

Dated this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 2013.



Bruce Beuford Blackwell

King Blackwell Zehnder & Wermuth PA

PO Box 1631

Orlando, FL 32802-1631

(407)422-2472

Florida Bar ID No.: 190808

bblackwell@kbzwlaw.com

Dated this 22<sup>nd</sup> day of November, 2013.

### **CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE**

I certify that this document has been E-filed with The Honorable John A. Tomasino, Clerk of the Supreme Court of Florida, using the E-Filing Portal and that a copy has been sent via first class mail to Jack F. Harkness, Executive

Director, The Florida Bar, 651 East Jefferson Street, Tallahassee, Florida 32399-2300; and by electronic mail to Staff Counsel at [kmarvin@flabar.org](mailto:kmarvin@flabar.org), and to JoAnn Marie Stalcup, Bar Counsel, [jstalcup@flabar.org](mailto:jstalcup@flabar.org), [orlandooffice@flabar.org](mailto:orlandooffice@flabar.org), on this 26<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2013.



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Bruce Beuford Blackwell,  
Counsel for Petitioner

**The Florida Bar**

**651 East Jefferson St.**

**Tallahassee, Florida 32399**

**October 23, 2013**

**Dear Sir:**

**I am writing on behalf of Randall Thornton to attest to the character of one of my best friends and a stalwart in our community. Mr. Thornton has demonstrated over the course of his career to be a shining example of what ever attorney should be. His is of the highest moral character and a superb citizen of Sumter County and the State of Florida. I have known him since we were in high school and he has never wavered in his convictions or moral character. He has represented his profession well and I am proud to call Mr. Thornton my friend, business associate, attorney and most of all a great citizen.**

**Mr. Thornton was instrumental in bringing a college to our county when it was very rural and we would not have this institution of higher learning without his tireless efforts. I have served on several boards with him and always appreciated his insight. One of the things that I most appreciate about is his tireless efforts with SCARC ( Sumter County Association of Retarded Citizens) which serves our developmental disabled. I think there will be a special place for him when the role is called for his efforts that went way beyond what was expected of him.**

**I have also watch him when he was our county attorney lead our county out of a very rural agricultural based economy to a very vibrant economy with one of the lowest unemployment rates in the state. He has always been at the forefront of trying to make our county one of the best counties in the state.**

**Randall is also one of our most active Rotarians and a six time Paul Harris Fellow and gives so much to Rotary that all of us wish that we could only be as good a Rotarian as Randall. He has led many fundraisers for us that would not have been as successful without his insight and hard work.**

**Professionally, I think Randall Thornton is one of the best attorneys I have ever used and I have used numerous attorneys. His is always fair, always honest and very professional and most of all is always available which means a lot to me when I need to talk with an attorney. I know that he has done a lot of work for people that could not afford attorney, especially the elderly and his always answers their questions and never sends a bill. I think he is one of the best real estate attorneys in the State of Florida and I hope I can continue to use him in the future. This county is better off because of Randall Thornton and my hopes that some of us can only try to reach the bar he has set.**

In closing, I am told that we only go through life onetime, but if I ever have to go through it again, I hope I am privileged enough to have someone like Randall to navigate some of the trouble waters and call my friend.

**Richard D. Childers-    Former School Board Member, Trustee, City Councilman**





## Hunt Law Firm, P.A.

601 S 9<sup>TH</sup> Street • Leesburg, FL 34748 • PH (352) 365-2262 • FX (352) 365-1928 • info@huntlawpa.com

October 22, 2013

The Florida Bar  
651 E. Jefferson Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

RE: Randall Thornton (Bar No. 176505)

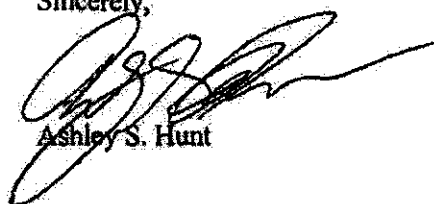
Dear Sir or Madam:

I am writing this letter in support of my personal friend and colleague, Randall Thornton. I have been a member of the Florida Bar for nine (9) years. Approximately two (2) years ago, I began the journey of opening my own law practice. At that time, I had heard a lot about Mr. Thornton, but did not know him personally. Shortly after opening my own practice, I was introduced to Mr. Thornton by a fellow member of the Florida Bar. I can honestly say that my introduction to Mr. Thornton has been a pivotal moment in my career as a young attorney and a true blessing. As a member of the Florida Bar for nearly forty (40) years, Mr. Thornton has invaluable experience and insight on the practice of law. He is a problem solver, not a problem starter and is well respected in the legal community. Mr. Thornton has been instrumental in my development as a young attorney and business owner. He has always gone above and beyond in assisting and guiding me and has never asked for anything in exchange for doing so. Mr. Thornton has had absolutely nothing to gain by helping me out, but chose to do so anyway. Mr. Thornton has been a great example to me and someone that I strive to be like professionally.

It is my understanding that Mr. Thornton has accepted responsibility for the situation that led to the current investigation by the Florida Bar. I would be very surprised, if outside of this current investigation, Mr. Thornton has ever had any issues with the Florida Bar. I am requesting that the Florida Bar take a common sense approach in issuing any type of sanction against Mr. Thornton. It is my belief that suspending him for any extended period of time would have the inverse effect of what the Florida Bar is seeking to accomplish. I would encourage the Florida Bar to think outside of the box when making its decision so that some good may come of this unfortunate situation. For example, other local young attorneys could benefit from Mr. Thornton's experience and legal knowledge. Some sort of sanction allowing Mr. Thornton to mentor other attorneys in the area, just as he has done for me over the past couple of years, would serve the greater good of the community and the Florida Bar.

I would welcome the opportunity to speak with someone further regarding Mr. Thornton. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Ashley S. Hunt

Susie Scott  
Post Office Box 164  
Lake Panasoffkee, FL 33538  
(352)793-7868

October 21, 2013

The Florida Bar  
651 E. Jefferson Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Re: Randall N. Thornton

Dear Sir or Madam:

I started working for Randall in July of 1991. Over the last 22 years, I have come to know Randall very well as an employer, friend and family man. He is the most honest, dedicated and caring person I know. When Randall gets involved in something, he gives everything he can in any way he can.

Randall was County Attorney when I started working for him and was so dedicated to the Board of County Commissioners and residents. He worked long hard hours to serve them to the best of his ability.

He is highly involved with Scarc, Inc. Where he works with individuals with disabilities. He has served on the board and attends most all of their events. All of this is at his own expense.

He has been a member of the Wildwood Rotary Club for many years. He is probably the most dedicated member in the club. He has served on the board and organized many of their fund raising events. He attends every meeting and has received the Perfect Attendance Award for many years. He is there for the events, even ringing the bell for donations for the Salvation Army, collecting for the food drive and seeing that so many children receive something for Christmas many of which is with money from his own pocket.

He served on the Board of Trustees for the Lake Sumter Community College for many years.

Randall has received many Certificates of Appreciation and Awards for his contributions to our Community. He has helped so many people, organizations and charities over the years including me. He paid the way for several high school students to go on their Senior Trip because they could not afford it. My son was one of them. They were all so grateful to him. He has hired high school students who were enrolled in Business Coop. classes. He continues to give donations to most any Organization, Charity, School, Library or Church that ask.

We have gone numerous times to Hospitals, Nursing Facilities and Homes to get documents signed. Randall did whatever he could do to help his clients in need. Many of them were not charged for any services that he provided. He has helped so many clients over the years, with divorces, adoptions and guardianships and charging only the filing fees if that was all they could afford. Randall is not the type of Attorney who charges for every phone call or every letter. He does what he can to advise his clients the best to his ability and again many times at no charge.

Randall is very dedicated to his practice, he works on weekends and holidays if he needs to. He is somewhat of a workaholic in the way that he really enjoys his work. People ask me if Randall will ever retire and I tell them I don't think he ever will, he loves his work and will continue to help people as long as he is able.

I know that I have only mentioned less than half of the things that Randall has accomplished and it has been a privilege to know and work for him. I have the utmost respect for him and it would be an honor to continue working for him. I know that no one is perfect and that we all make mistakes. Randall's mistakes were honest mistakes, he would never intentionally do anything to jeopardize his practice. I ask that you consider all the good that this man has done for his employees, clients and community over the last 40 years, before you render your final decision of discipline.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Susie Scott". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Susie Scott

MARSHA MARTZ  
4529 CR 317B  
Bushnell, FL 33513

October 21, 2013

The Florida Bar  
Tallahassee, FL 32399

To Whom it May Concern:

I met Randall Thornton back in 1996 when I moved to Sumter County and started working for the clerk's office. Shortly thereafter, in 1998, his secretary left and interviewed for her position and was hired. That was 15 years ago and I am still employed by him. I can't imagine working for anybody else. He is not only my employer but a friend. Randall has clients that have been with him since he started practicing and I believe that is because he is very knowledgeable in his job and he is honest.

Over the years of my employment, I have witnessed Randall representing clients on a pro bono basis. If someone cannot come into the office, he will assist clients by going to their home, hospital, nursing facility or wherever he needs to go in order to help them and get the job done. Randall will do the extra mile if he has to and he treats everyone fairly and with honesty. He is a valuable asset to the legal professional and will be a great loss to our community as an attorney.

During my employment, I have had the chance to witness many aspects of his personality and work ethics, all of which are impressive. He served as the county attorney for Sumter County for over 35 years, served as attorney for the clerk of court and has served on numerous boards.

Randall is a person of good moral character who cares about his clients, community and family. He always strives to do the right thing in all situations. He is a tireless worker to his job as attorney or whatever he is doing at the time. He donates his time to helping the community by projects through Rotary or community fund raisers and usually with money out of his pocket. The community knows they can count on him for his help and participation.

While I know that no one is perfect, Randall has worked hard to build his practice and does his job well. I find Randall to be a very honorable man and is truly an asset to this community. I treasure the opportunity to be his secretary and friend.



Marsha Martz

**Kelly S. Rice**  
**P.O. Box 648**  
**Webster, FL 33597**  
**(352) 793-6911**

10/18/13

The Florida Bar  
651 E. Jefferson St.  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Re: Randall Thornton, Attorney at Law  
P.O. Box 58  
Lake Panasoffkee, FL 33538

Dear Sir or Madam,

By way of this letter please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Kelly Rice, a licensed Florida real estate broker and a longtime client of Mr. Randall Thornton.

I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Thornton during the past seventeen (17) plus years. During this time Mr. Thornton has represented me and/or my clients in excess of fifty real estate transaction totaling in excess of twenty million dollars. The majority of the transactions were routine, however, a few were extremely complex and Mr. Thornton's expertise and thorough representation served me and my clients well.

It recently came to my attention Mr. Thornton's practice of law has come into question. While I am not aware of the specifics of his situation, I can vouch for his character and his level of professionalism. His reputation in our community is stellar and I believe there are few lives in our County that have not been touched in a positive way by Mr. Thornton.

Any consideration afforded to Mr. Thornton would be sincerely appreciated by many within our community.

Respectfully,



Kelly S. Rice



TOM WILEY, CPA  
LEE WILEY, CPA  
STACY L. MULKEY, CPA  
EYRY MARTIN LOW, CPA

October 16, 2013

The Florida Bar  
651 E Jefferson Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

Re: Randall N. Thornton

Dear Sirs:

It has been my privilege to be not only a friend but to have worked closely in a professional capacity with Randall Thornton for almost 40 years. I have known Randall since before he completed law school and I completed my education and became a CPA. During our years of association I have watched Randall not only practice law but work within our community in numerous charitable activities. He has been a tireless worker in our local Rotary Club and has contributed to most any charitable activity he has been asked to help. Organizers of all of our local fundraising projects know that they can go to Randall for help with their particular project. The help will come from not only his pocket but many times from his hours of service. Randall acted as our County Attorney for over 20 years during the time in which our county transformed from a rural county to what it has become today as a result of The Villages development which now has approximately 100,000 residents and is still growing. During this time he acted as a legal advisor to our County Commission which was faced with hard decisions about the changes taking place within our community. His service to the Commissioners and residents of Sumter County was invaluable.

My occupation as a CPA for 35 years has involved working with numerous lawyers who practice in many areas of the law. Much like my CPA community, the legal community has some good members and some not so good members. I have never hesitated to refer a client to Randall Thornton because I always knew he would be treated fairly and honestly. I can't make that same statement about all attorneys I have come in contact with. When you refer a client to another professional you always hope that it will be a good experience for the client. Not once in my years of practice have I ever worried

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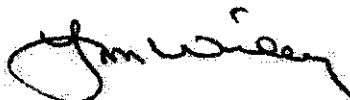
about how the clients experience with Randall would be and not once have I ever had a client come back to me and complain about the services he provided. I often tell clients that I refer to Randall that he may not tell you what you want to hear but he will tell you the truth.

It is my understanding that Randall's problem involves recordkeeping within his escrow account. In my capacity as a CPA I have seen other recordkeeping mistakes in attorneys' escrow accounts. The mistakes are almost always a result of the fact that attorneys aren't trained to be bookkeepers, they are trained to be attorneys. It is my opinion as a CPA that examination of a lot of attorneys trust accounts would reveal numerous instances of unintentional honest mistakes. I can say without exception that any mistakes made by Randall were honest errors and were never done with the intention of harming anyone or benefiting him.

As we have both grown older I have often asked Randall how much longer he would practice law. He has always responded that he enjoys the practice of law and has no reason or desire to retire. When thinking about Randall I am reminded of a golf trip I was on in which a group of guys went to a fancy restaurant and the maître d' asked if the group had reservations. One of the guys in the group looked around at the two occupied tables in the restaurant and said "Reservations! What you guys need are customers." Much like the maître d' in need of customers, the legal community and the general public would benefit greatly if there were more attorneys like Randall Thornton.

If anyone has any questions about Randall Thornton I hope that you will contact me.

Sincerely,



Tom Wiley

**Wiley, Wiley**  
&  
Associates, P.A.  
Certified Public Accountants

**SCARC, INC. EVALUATION,  
TRAINING, AND EMPLOYMENT CENTER**

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Bushnell, Florida 33513  
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October 17, 2013

The Florida Bar  
651 E. Jefferson Street  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-2300

RE: Character Reference for Randall N. Thornton, Attorney at Law

Dear Sirs:

I have known Mr. Thornton for over thirty-five (35) years and have always found him to be a true professional of unquestionable character and with the highest ethics. His devotion to community service especially as an advocate for individuals with developmental disabilities (intellectual disabilities, cerebral palsy, autism, Prater Willi) has been exemplary through out his career.

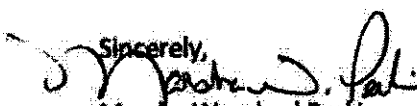
In 1974 as a young attorney just beginning his career, Mr. Thornton donated his time and expertise to a group of concerned citizens and helped them found the Sumter County Association for Retarded Citizens, Inc. (later SCARC, Inc.). For nearly 40 years he has been organization's the pro bono attorney.

Mr. Thornton has served twice as the organization's President and for multiple terms on the Board of Directors. Through his leadership and guidance the organization has grown from a small group that met monthly at the fairgrounds to provide an activity day for people with disabilities to a multifaceted organization that provides a variety of services to facilitate people with disabilities to live meaningful lives as a part of the community. To this day he supports the organization through personal donations quite literally *putting his money where his values are*.

Not only has Mr. Thornton worked behind the scenes to make SCARC, Inc. into the organization that it is today, but he has also made an indelible impression upon the lives of the people with disabilities whose lives he touched over the years. Whether as the Master of Ceremonies for the SCARC, Inc. Annual Banquet or as a dedicated volunteer for Special Olympics in Sumter County for twenty (20) plus years, Mr. Thornton has demonstrated his respect for and his ability to uplift and encourage people with developmental disabilities, and they love him for it.

I believe that without Mr. Thornton's efforts, SCARC, Inc. would not exist today.

Sincerely,

  
Marsha Woodard Perkins  
Executive Director



cc: Jay Burckle, SCARC, Inc. President

