



Remembering our brothers who have passed from this life

Alan Arnold Diamonstein, '48

August 30, 1931 - October 17, 2019



Al was a Private in Band Company. He played on the undefeated JV Football team. He was also on the swim team. Al was a frequent contributor to *The Bayonet*. A member of the Beta Club.

Al really settled down to hard work this year and did not let athletics interfere with his lessons. The results are apparent with his name appearing regularly on the Honor Roll. To that, add his excellent work in his company.

Bud Oakey, '70, had this to say, "*Alan and I spoke of AMA often. As recently as two months ago. He came to a reunion 10 or 12 years ago. I think it was the reunion just before John Chichester. His health has not allowed him to really come back to the last few reunions. I can tell you, as I know firsthand, Alan was very fond of his AMA heritage.*"

Alan Arnold Diamonstein, devoted public servant and beloved community leader, died at his home in Newport News, Virginia on Thursday, October 17, 2019, surrounded by his family. He was 88 years old.

It was once written that "Alan Diamonstein could give politicians a good name. He is a mover and shaker, for sure. A power broker par excellence. But the beneficiaries of his political savvy are ordinary people, children in public schools, moderate-income families who dream of owning a home, students at Virginia colleges, and parents caring for retarded children."

When a reporter asked what he was most proud of in his career in public service, he answered simply "I was able to make a difference."

Alan was the son of the late William and Lillian Becker Diamonstein. Born in 1931 in Hampton, Virginia. Alan grew up on Cherry Avenue in Hampton and attended Newport News High School and Augusta Military Academy.

As a child, he often helped at both his grandparents' grocery store and his father's furniture store in Newport News. Alan's mother, Lillian, instilled in him the lessons her own mother taught her - "One pays rent for one's time on earth". It was from



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Lillian that Alan inherited his energy, determination and commitment to public service. As a member of a thriving Jewish community in the city, he experienced religious bigotry and cultural isolation that laid the groundwork for an unwavering commitment to civil rights and social justice.

Alan attended the University of Virginia, and, after completing a tour with the U.S. Air Force, received his Bachelors degree in Commerce. In 1958 he earned a law degree from the University. Upon graduation, he returned home to open a law office with his friend Stanley Drucker. He later became a partner in the nationally-known law firm Patten, Wornom, Hatten, and Diamonstein (PWHd) in Newport News, where he practiced business and real estate law.

Alan was appointed in 2005 to the University of Virginia Board of Visitors by Governor Mark Warner and reappointed to a second term by Governor Tim Kaine. He also received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree from the College of William and Mary and Christopher Newport University.

First elected to the Virginia House of Delegates from Newport News in 1967, Alan was re-elected every two years, for 34 years until he retired in 2001, to run an unsuccessful campaign for the office of Virginia's Lieutenant Governor. He continued to practice law at the PWHd law firm until earlier this year.

Alan's legislative accomplishments include the creation of one of the first housing development authorities in the nation to finance workforce and low-income housing. He also sponsored legislation creating the Virginia Housing Study Commission, which he chaired for more than 20 years. The Housing Commission led to anti-discrimination laws, the Virginia Landlord-Tenant Act and regulations for condominium development, to name a few legislative landmarks.

He also introduced successful legislation requiring the University of Virginia to admit women on the same basis as men in the 1970s. As Chairman of the House Appropriations Higher Education Subcommittee, Alan had a transformative impact on higher education in the Commonwealth, securing funding to meet the record growth in students attending Virginia's colleges, universities and community colleges, as well as financing for capital projects and student aid.

Arts and cultural organizations across the Commonwealth were also the beneficiaries of Alan's legislative leadership. The Peninsula Fine Arts Center, the Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, and the Virginia Living Museum all expanded their public services and exhibits with his help.

He was especially proud to be able to help Christopher Newport University become a leader in higher education in Virginia with the investment of significant state funding over several decades.

Alan was a trusted advisor and confidant to several Virginia Governors beginning with Governor Charles Robb. Alan served as a key political advisor to Robb and was also tasked with modernizing the Virginia Democratic Party. Alan's work led to continued Democratic Party victories, including the election of the most diversified ticket in Virginia's history, with Governor Jerry Baliles, L. Douglas Wilder, the first African American Lt. Governor in the country, and Virginia's first woman Attorney General, Mary Sue Terry. He championed appointments of women and minorities to state Boards and Commissions in unprecedented numbers. Governors Baliles, Wilder, Warner, Kaine, McAuliffe and Northam also sought out Alan's advice and counsel.

Nationally, he was a major player in the Democratic Party (DNC), first representing Virginia on the Democratic National Committee and later serving as the State Democratic Party Chair, Chair of the DNC's Southern Democratic Chair's Association and as a Member of the DNC Executive Committee. Alan was a close ally of President Jimmy Carter and many Members of his Administration. President Bill Clinton appointed Alan to the Board of the National Housing Partnership. Alan's national political work allowed him to work closely with the Virginia Congressional Delegation and other Members of Congress on numerous

state-federal issues, particularly the funding for the building and maintenance of our nation's nuclear submarine fleet and the aircraft carriers built at the Newport News shipyard.

Throughout his entire career in politics, Alan worked 'across the aisle' to build a vibrant future for Virginia, and particularly for the Peninsula. An avid golfer, he brought opposing sides together through participation in golf tournaments on more than one occasion.

Republican Congressmen Tommy Downing and Herb Bateman considered Alan a friend and loyal partner. Former U.S. Senator John Warner worked with him for decades on many issues related to the Newport News Shipyard, NASA Langley and the Jefferson Lab. Alan recognized the importance of these institutions as economic development drivers for the region and state.

The nationally known Mariner's Museum was the beneficiary of Alan's leadership on their board for years. Additionally, he served on the Board of Trustees of the Sarah Bonwell Hudgins Foundation, as a Member of the Washington Airports Task Force, the Pamela Harriman Foreign Service Fellowship Board, a Life Member of the Virginia Jaycees. The Daily Press named him "Citizen of the Year" in 2001 and he received the Distinguished Service Award from the National Hemophilia Foundation.

Alan is survived by his wife of 47 years, Beverly Hicks Diamonstein, his sister, Elaine "Sis" Litvin (Joe); his children: Candis Trusty (Guy), Karen Allen (Michael), Trey Diamonstein, and Kevin Diamonstein; his grandchildren: Alexander Allen, Benjamin Allen, Joshua Diamonstein, Katie Diamonstein, and Karl Diamonstein; his nieces: Sharon Schramm (Mark), and Ruthie Goodboe (Mike); and his first cousins: Arthur Diamonstein, Marilyn Lacey, Diane Kaye, Fred Swersky, Dorothy Ann Spivick, Sidney Becker (Cynthia), Jon Becker (Susan), Tommy Becker (Allene), and Andy Becker (DeeDee).

The graveside service will be private for family only. A memorial service will be held Sunday, October 20 at 1:30pm at the Alan and Beverly Diamonstein Concert Hall at the Ferguson Center for the Arts at Christopher Newport University [CNU].

Immediately following the memorial service, a reception will be held nearby at the David Student Center at CNU. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Soundscapes.org, AchievableDream.org, or The Alan & Beverly Diamonstein Endowed Scholarship Fund at CNU, or a charity of your choice.