

Firm History

When the founding partners of Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell encountered an unforeseeable roadblock at a Tampa courthouse in early 1983, they turned what could have been a major disappointment into what is now a memorable victory. “After we arrived, we quickly realized we could not get our demonstrative evidence through the doors of the building’s elevator,” recalls Thom Rumberger. The trial attorneys were representing General Motors, and their exhibit included an entire car (minus the engine and wheels). But that did not stop this team of determined lawyers. Lead counsel Rumberger convinced the U.S. Marshals Office to let them remove the entire window frame of the fourth-floor courtroom, and he hired a crane to hoist the car and push it through.



“Never underestimate the use of imagination and creativity to get the job done,” says longtime partner, William “Bud” Kirk.

Humble Beginnings

On Oct. 2, 1978, Thom Rumberger, Bud Kirk and third founding partner, Dick Caldwell, began practicing law in a sublet space with a \$40,000 loan and a collective commitment that the day they no longer enjoyed getting up and going to work, they would stop.

Little did they know that they were creating an Orlando-based institution. Thirty years later, Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell has grown to five offices and is staffed with dynamic attorneys committed to doing everything it takes to best represent their clients.

And these efforts have not gone unnoticed. Over the years, the nationally recognized lawyers of Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell have earned numerous awards. In 1996, *The National Law Journal* featured Bud Kirk in its series on the successful strategies of “Winning: 10 of the Nation’s Top Litigators.” The prestigious publication also named Rumberger partner Dan Gerber as one of the “Top 40 under 40” attorneys in 2002. In 2001, J. Scott Kirk was one of only seven trial attorneys featured in *Orlando Magazine* as one of “Orlando’s 55 best attorneys.” In 2004, the Audubon Society recognized Thom Rumberger for his invaluable, ongoing dedication to the restoration of the Florida Everglades. In 2007, the *National Law Journal* recognized Dan Gerber in its series of “Winning: 10 of the Nation’s Top Litigators.”

With offices in Orlando, Miami, Tampa, Birmingham and Tallahassee, the firm’s attorneys litigate on behalf of local interests, Fortune 500 companies and everything in between.

Building a Florida Legacy

One of the leading product liability law firms in the country, Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell began making a name for itself in automotive product liability. From that base, the firm has grown and diversified its practice to include a broad variety of complex civil litigation matters, including labor and employment, construction, professional liability and commercial clients — ranging from General Motors, Busch Entertainment Corporation, the accounting firm of KPMG and The Everglades Foundation, Inc. “We may be based in Orlando, but our work stretches from coast to coast,” says Dick Caldwell. Adds Kirk: “I’ve tried cases from Maine to California and many places in between. Wherever our clients ask us to go, we go.”

While the lawyers of Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell take great satisfaction in representing corporate America, they also pride themselves on representing environmental interests that are truly Florida based.

Often referred to as the “Defender of the Everglades,” Thom Rumberger has been the lead counsel for The Everglades Foundation, Inc. since 1989. A committed environmentalist, Rumberger also has been a leading figure in the effort to save the endangered Florida manatee. In the late 1980s, the prominent legal figure worked to implement some of the first manatee protection laws.

Method of Success

For 30 years, Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell has set the standard for trying small to multimillion-dollar lawsuits — but they’ve also proven that respect, dignity and fun all play key roles in their success.

“Everyone here has a great sense of humor, and we all care about each other,” says partner Lori Caldwell.

Managing partner Frank Sheppard agrees. “We are a family here,” he adds. “And because of that, we look forward to coming to work and rolling up our sleeves.”

Director of Human Resources and Recruitment, Kaye Daugherty has been with the firm since day one, and she still keeps a memo Thom Rumberger distributed to his small staff during those first, challenging days. The memo welcomes everyone to Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell and stresses the importance of all employees treating one another with respect.

“Still today our partners, associates and staff members have the highest degree of respect for one another,” she says. “Thom, Bud and Dick are tough advocates with kind hearts.”

Bright Future, Continued Growth

Looking to the future, Rumberger, Kirk & Caldwell intends to maintain steady growth as both national and local counsel, to be progressive with the changing face of the law and to remain invaluable to our clients.

“Our goal is to continue to maintain high-quality lawyers and high-quality clients,” says Kirk.

Despite his long tenure as a highly respected, first-rate Florida attorney, Rumberger has no plans of slowing down. “I hope to continue practicing law as long as my intellect permits,” he says.