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*Dedicated to the Contributions and Memory of Sidney O. Dewberry, ESI DPE #001*



Photo credit: [Dewberry.com](http://Dewberry.com)

## **Dewberry's Board of Directors Announces the Passing of Founder Sidney O. Dewberry**

[Article on Dewberry.com](http://Article on Dewberry.com)

The Dewberry board of directors is deeply saddened to announce the passing of Chairman Emeritus and Founder Sidney O. Dewberry, PE, LS. Mr. Dewberry, who was 94 years old and remained active with the firm, died of natural causes on July 16, 2022.

Mr. Dewberry co-founded his eponymous professional services firm in 1956. Dewberry grew from a single-office, six-person civil engineering and surveying practice based in Northern Virginia to a nationwide consulting enterprise with more than

2,000 employees and 50 offices from coast to coast today.

The son of Albert J. and Katie Wilkerson Dewberry, Sidney Oliver Dewberry was born in Pittsylvania County, Virginia, on December 23, 1927. He grew up during the Depression on a tobacco farm along with eight brothers and sisters. At a young age, he watched his father supervising bridge construction crews in Southside Virginia, and realized by the age of 14 that he wanted to become an engineer.

Mr. Dewberry graduated from Gretna High School in 1945. After serving two years in the U.S. Army, he attended Virginia Tech for two years, then transferred



Photo credit: [Jeffrey MacMillan/Capital Business, The Washington Post](#)

planning and engineering for communities such as Montgomery Village in Maryland and Burke Centre in Northern Virginia. He also took pride in major projects around the country.

Dewberry continues to be a family-owned company. Mr. Dewberry turned over the reins as chairman of the board to his eldest son Barry Dewberry in 2012, assuming the title of chairman emeritus and founder. His daughter, Karen Grand Pré, and youngest son, Thomas Dewberry, serve on the board of directors. His grandson, Michael Sidney Dewberry, II, is an engineer in the Fairfax headquarters.

Mr. Dewberry's interest in community development led him to co-author the *Land Development Handbook*, published by McGraw-Hill and now in its fourth edition. The textbook is widely used in civil engineering education programs. He was the chairman and a founding member of the acclaimed Engineers & Surveyors Institute, a model for government-industry partnership.

to George Washington University where he graduated in 1951 with a degree in civil engineering. He married his hometown sweetheart, Reva Anne Lanier, in 1950.

With just five years of engineering experience in the Washington metropolitan area, Mr. Dewberry teamed with fellow engineer Jim Nealon in 1956 to launch their own firm. They purchased the Arlington, Virginia-based engineering department of homebuilder M.T. Broyhill and set to work supporting suburban land development in the region. Reva Dewberry served as bookkeeper and a silent partner for the practice. Richard N. Davis, also a graduate of George Washington University, joined the firm in 1958. Within a few short years, the modest venture expanded to several offices throughout the Washington area. The firm established its headquarters in Fairfax, Virginia, in 1965 and has been located on the same office campus ever since.

Through strategic acquisitions and organic growth, the privately held practice continued to grow nationwide as the decades passed. Today, Dewberry is ranked as one of the leading consulting firms in the U.S., providing design and consulting expertise to support major land development initiatives, transportation infrastructure, emergency management and disaster response, municipal engineering, and building design.

Among Mr. Dewberry's proudest achievements were the fast-tracked design of the Dulles Toll Road in Fairfax County; the design of the Filene Center in Vienna, Virginia, after the original building was destroyed by fire; and

Mr. Dewberry was also a founding member and chairman emeritus of George Mason University's Urban Systems Engineering Institute, now known as the Civil Engineering Institute. The university's civil engineering department is named the Sid and Reva Dewberry Department of Civil, Environmental, and Infrastructure Engineering in honor of their extensive contributions in establishing and supporting the department.



Photo credit: [giving.GMU.edu](#)

Mr. Dewberry was the recipient of multiple awards honoring his civic, charitable, and academic endeavors as well as his leadership in the profession. He was presented with George Washington University's Distinguished Alumni Award in 1991 and inducted into the university's School of Engineering Hall of Fame in 2009. He received an honorary doctorate from Old Dominion University and was presented with the George Mason University Mason Medal.

Additional honors included the Virginia Economic Bridge Initiative's Leadership Award, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce's Captain of Industry Award and James Reese Award for Lifetime Achievement, and the Northern Virginia Community Foundation's Founder's Award. He was inducted into the Washington Business Hall of Fame in 2007. He was named "Northern Virginian of the Year" by *New Dominion* magazine and honored as a distinguished member of the American Society of Civil Engineers. In 2014, he was presented with the Northern Virginia Family Services Legends of Northern Virginia Award. The following year, he was inducted into the Arlington Chamber of Commerce Business Hall of Fame.

In addition to his family and consulting practice, Mr. Dewberry's interests included the collection of antique surveying and engineering tools. In 1995, he established the Sidney O. Dewberry Collection of Surveying and Engineering Technology, which remains on display in Dewberry's Fairfax headquarters. Mr. Dewberry also enjoyed learning to play the piano at a late age, taking weekly lessons for years.

Mr. Dewberry was preceded in death by his wife of 72 years, Reva, and his son, Michael Sidney Dewberry. He is survived by his son Barry K. Dewberry and wife Arlene Evans; daughter Karen S. Grand Pré and husband Bruce; son Thomas L.

Dewberry and wife Christine; daughter-in-law Stephanie A. Dewberry; grandchildren Candace and Suzanne Grand Pré, and Michael, Katie, John, Kelly, Quinn, and Reagan Dewberry; his multiple great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews, great-nieces, and great-nephews.

### **Sid Dewberry's Legacy in the Formation of ESI**

With the passing of Sidney (Sid) Dewberry, our industry has lost an icon and ESI has lost one of its founding fathers. In no uncertain terms, Sid and many in our industry at that time contributed to the genesis and formation of ESI. While the story of the creation of ESI is probably best told another time, we would like to highlight Sid's role in ESI's formation.



Photo credit: [Dewberry.com](http://Dewberry.com)

Sid's vision and his involvement framed the initial discussions between industry and public sector leaders, the subsequent Blue-Ribbon panel and then the creation of ESI as a non-profit organization to support the Public-Private relationship. When it came to the logistics of building an organization (c1987), it was Sid who stepped up and offered office space and staff to host and create ESI.

ESI called the Dewberry building home in its early formative and organizational years, which culminated in the selection of ESI's first Executive Director. While at Dewberry, ESI built and refined its programs and

processes over the next twelve years until relocating to Chantilly in 1999. Up until his passing, Sid's door remained open to each successive ESI leader, and he provided invaluable advice, guidance, and reassurance to each.

In later years, Sid donated numerous copies of his Land Development Handbook to ESI's education department. That handbook is still valuable and in use today by ESI's education program.

Without the vision, support, direction and guidance of Sid Dewberry and his insightful public and private sector colleagues at the start and over the past thirty-five plus years, ESI could not have served to promote

the communication, education and quality of land development processing that is the norm today. With grateful appreciation we remember our good friend's contributions and mourn his passing.



Photo credit: [ASCE-NCS.org](https://www.asce-ncs.org)

## Obituary: Engineer Sidney Dewberry, 94, Firm Founder, Education Donor

By [Derek Lacey](#)

[Obituary on ENR.com](#)—Reprinted courtesy of *Engineering News-Record*, August 11, 2022, copyright BNP Media, all rights reserved.

Sidney O. “Sid” Dewberry, co-founder of Fairfax, Va.-based engineer Dewberry, advocate for higher education and renowned for his business leadership and civic engagement, died July 16 in Arlington, Va. at age 94.

Dewberry and engineer Jim Nealon founded the firm that now bears his family name in 1956, says the company. The two were joined by Richard Davis in 1958, and the firm grew over the next few years to establish its headquarters in Fairfax in 1965.

Dewberry today has more than 2,000 employees in 50 locations nationwide, ranking at No. 36 on [ENR's 2022 Top 500 Design Firms](#), with \$488 million in total revenue.

Dewberry strove for market diversity in the business from the very beginning, after starting the business during a recession and hustling to get work, chief communications officer Molly Johnson says.

J. Hamilton Lambert, former Fairfax County manager and now executive director of the Claude Moore Charitable Foundation, met Dewberry more than 60 years ago, as he was beginning to grow his company.

Lambert awarded Dewberry the sole-source contract

for the Dulles Toll Road, the access road to Dulles International Airport in northern Virginia, something he says made other competitors “ballistic.”

But, Dewberry had a leg up, Lambert says, because the year before the engineer had aerial photography done of the area independently and promised to deliver the plans in six-to-eight months, which he did.

According to *The Dewberry Way*, a company history, Dewberry calls the project “a major breakthrough” and says the firm dedicated an entire floor of its headquarters to project work, completing the design in six months. Dewberry was among the first to drive the new road when it opened in 1984, accompanying then-Gov. Charles Robb at the ribbon-cutting.

The fast-tracked design of the Dulles Toll Road is listed in the book among Dewberry's proudest accomplishments, as is the design of the iconic Filene Center outdoor amphitheater at Wolf Trap National Park for Performing Arts in Vienna, Va. after the original building was destroyed by a fire.

Lambert continued to work with Dewberry when he moved to the private sector, and the firm has been the Claude Moore Charitable Foundation's main engineer.



Photo credit: [Susan Biddle, The Washington Post](#)

“I think he was very easy to work with,” Lambert says. “I’m not an engineer, and he could explain things quite plainly. He was always looking to improve the quality of his company and his work. The critical thing about Sid was he was always true to his word and an unselfish human being. I consider him one of the best friends I’ve ever had.”

Johnson, a 17-year company veteran, worked with Dewberry on the second edition of *The Dewberry Way*. “Even up to this year, he was always somebody who was very curious about the details behind what you might be working on,” she says. “He was so incredibly sharp and on top of trends.”

Dewberry never retired, says Johnson, becoming chairman emeritus when he passed the executive chairmanship to son Barry Dewberry in 2012 and continuing to participate in executive committee meetings and board of directors meetings.

Daughter Karen Grand Pre and youngest son Thomas Dewberry currently serve on the board while grandson Michael Sidney Dewberry II, is an engineer at company headquarters.

Johnson says Dewberry "really cared about making an impact on communities ... and seeing how we can help transform them and make them better places."

### 'A Great Citizen, A Great Man'

That's especially true for George Mason University, where Johnson says Dewberry's impact, including donations to its civil engineering and music schools has helped it become a world-class institution.

According to the company, Dewberry was a founding member of the university's Civil Engineering Institute, and its Dept. of Civil, Environmental, and Infrastructure Engineering is named after him and wife Reva.

"He was a very giving man—he came from a very poor family," Lambert says. "He pulled himself up

from his bootstraps and became one of the leaders in the region."

Dewberry's long list of awards includes the Virginia Economic Bridge Initiative Leadership Award, the Fairfax County Chamber of Commerce Captain of Industry Award and James Reese Award for Lifetime Achievement, says the firm. He also received an honorary doctorate from Old Dominion University and was presented with the George Mason University Mason Award.

"He did a lot for the engineering profession," Lambert says, including reaching out and helping other engineering firms. "He was a leader without peer."

Dewberry co-authored the *Land Development Handbook*, currently in its fourth edition, says the company, and was a founding member of the Engineers & Surveyors Institute.

To Lambert, Dewberry was a man who remembered where he came from and how fortunate he had been, and who was willing to step forward and help others.

"God bless him, he was fortunate enough to change and improve not only other peoples' lives but the region," Lambert says. "He was a great citizen and a great man."



Photo credit: [Dewberry.com](http://Dewberry.com)