

JUDGE J. LAYNE SMITH IS PASSIONATE ABOUT THE LAW

BY BRENDA S. GRINDSTAFF

PHOTO COURTESY OF J. LAYNE SMITH



Judge J. Layne Smith of Florida's Second Judicial Circuit jokes that he is an "accidental lawyer." The Tallahassee native was an All-State and All-Big-Bend football player at Leon High School. He was recruited by the United States Air Force Academy and headed to Colorado Springs, Colorado, in 1980. After basic training and a season of playing linebacker for the Academy's junior varsity football team, Smith returned to Tallahassee, worked construction and became a student at Tallahassee Community College.

"TCC provided a terrific and inexpensive two-year education," said Smith, who earned his Associate in Arts degree in 1982. "I appreciated the smaller classes and conscientious professors."

His favorite was the late Tinsley Floyd, who taught economics.

TCC also holds a special place for Smith because it is where he met his future sister-in-law, who introduced him to his wife of nearly 30 years, Cynthia Seymoe Smith. The Smiths' daughter, Callie, is currently a second-year student at TCC and plans to study graphic design at Flagler College beginning in the fall of 2016.

"TCC was my springboard to FSU," said Smith, who earned his bachelor's degree in 1983 from the College of Business, majoring in risk management and insurance, and graduated from FSU's College of Law in 1987.

Smith was appointed to the bench in March 2015 by Governor Rick Scott following 24 years in private practice. He has also served as general counsel for the Florida Lottery and the Florida Department of Business and Professional Regulation and is an adjunct professor at Florida State University's College of Law.

"Not all young men and women graduate from high school fully prepared or certain of what they want to do," said Smith. "TCC provides everyone with a convenient, friendly, caring and cost-effective two-year education. It provides early evening classes for single moms and dads and for people who hold full and part-time jobs. It is a tremendous resource and an economic engine."