

RESOLUTION R-18-015

A RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS OF MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA, DESIGNATING THE JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM IN THE MANATEE COUNTY JUDICIAL CENTER BUILDING AS THE HONORABLE CIRCUIT JUDGE GILBERT A. SMITH, SR. JURY ASSEMBLY ROOM; AUTHORIZING THE PLACEMENT OF APPROPRIATE SIGNAGE OUTSIDE AND WITHIN THE ROOM; AND PROVIDING FOR AN EFFECTIVE DATE.

WHEREAS, Gilbert A. Smith, Sr., who later became known as Judge Smith, was born on May 10, 1923, in Arcadia, Florida to Cook Hall and Grace Gilbert Smith; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith graduated from DeSoto County High School on June 5, 1942, and enlisted in the United States Navy on June 18, 1942. He was trained as a diesel mechanic and became a fireman first class as well as a motor machinist on LST #6 in the Atlantic Theatre--supporting invasions in North Africa, Italy, France, and Great Britain. Judge Smith served on the LST #6 transporting soldiers from Great Britain to Omaha Beach on the coast of France during the D-Day invasion on June 6, 1944. In early 1945, he transferred to the AVP 36 (USS Half Moon), a small seaplane tender ship in the South Pacific, in preparation for the invasion of Japan. After World War II ended with the surrender of Japan and Germany, Judge Smith served in the Pacific until he was honorably discharged on February 1, 1947, at San Diego, California; and

WHEREAS, upon his return to Florida after the war, Judge Smith enrolled at the University of Florida where he graduated from the University of Florida College of Law with an A.B. in law on February 3, 1951; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith began his legal career with the Florida Attorney General's Office on February 8, 1951, as a special assistant attorney general assigned to the legislative research bureau for the Florida legislature, earning \$56 per week; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith became counsel for Florida's State Road Department in July 1951, where he became a seasoned civil trial attorney specializing in eminent domain cases. During his time working for the State of Florida, he tried at least one eminent domain case in every county within the state; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith tried an eminent domain case in 1956 in the only courtroom in the Manatee County Courthouse with Circuit Judge William T. Harrison presiding and against attorney William Grimes; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith became resident attorney and general counsel of the Florida State Turnpike Authority on May 15, 1955, where he was responsible for condemning all the land for the Florida Turnpike System; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith became resident attorney and general counsel of the State Road Department of Florida on October 1, 1958, where he continued trying eminent domain cases throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith and his family moved to Bradenton in 1960 and he began practicing law with a law school classmate, George Harrison. He then joined the law firm of Dye & Dye in Bradenton as an associate in 1961, and became a partner on March 1, 1965. Judge Smith continued his civil trial practice of trying eminent domain cases as well as providing legal services to Manatee Memorial Hospital and the West Coast Navigational Authority; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith was appointed by Governor Farris Bryant to the 12th Judicial Circuit Census Commission on May 10, 1964, to determine whether the increase in population in the circuit justified an additional circuit judge; and

WHEREAS, on September 22, 1971, Governor Rubin Askew appointed Judge Smith as Circuit Judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit to replace retiring Circuit Judge Robert Willis; and

WHEREAS, on October 1, 1971, Circuit Judge Robert Hensley swore in Judge Smith as a circuit judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, from 1971 through 1991, Judge Smith served as a circuit judge presiding over cases in Manatee, Sarasota, and DeSoto counties; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith was extensively involved in the community serving as Elder of Palma Sola Presbyterian Church, President of Bayshore Middle School PTA and Manatee High School PTA, and was a member of the Manatee District of Sunny Land Council Boy Scouts of America; and

WHEREAS, during Judge Smith's tenure as a circuit judge, he served as Chief Judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit a total of eight years; and

WHEREAS, as Chief Judge, Judge Smith issued many administrative orders including Administrative Order No CM – 86-03 in July 1986, establishing that all courthouses in the 12th Judicial Circuit be secured facilities, requiring security checks and prohibiting firearms and weapons from being brought into the courthouses; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith served as president of the National Conference of Metropolitan Courts in 1987; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith retired as a circuit judge on December 31, 1991, but continued his career serving as a senior judge within the circuit and throughout Florida until 1998; and

WHEREAS, on March 26, 2003, at the age of 79, Judge Smith was appointed as municipal judge of Due West, South Carolina where he served until 2009 and was paid \$1.00 per year for his services; and

WHEREAS, at 80 years old, Judge Smith became an active member of the Due West Lions Club serving as president in 2004 and receiving the Melvin Jones Award in 2013 for his dedication to humanitarian service to others; and

WHEREAS, throughout his life and especially during his career as a circuit judge, Judge Smith was known for his sense of humor and his loud, contagious, rat-a-tat-tat laugh, which could be heard reverberating throughout the courthouse; and

WHEREAS, in his personal life, Judge Smith instilled his love of Manatee County and Florida's rich history in his family: Alpha, his wife of 68 years and his children, Kembra, Gilbert Jr., Brooks, and Kace; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith returned to Bradenton on January 17, 2009, to swear in his son, Gilbert A. Smith, Jr., as a circuit judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit, who had been elected to the position by the citizenry of Manatee County on August 27, 2008; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith returned to Bradenton on July 15, 2015, to participate in the ceremony for the reopening of the Historic Courtroom in the Manatee County Historical Courthouse; the courtroom where he had tried a case almost 60 years earlier; and

WHEREAS, Judge Smith, who passed away on October 23, 2017, at the age of 94, was known as the *Great Equity Judge*, whose belief in equity for all parties transcended the courtroom; and

WHEREAS, Manatee County Resolution R-93-156, allows for the naming of a County facility or location for an individual on criteria including that the individual has "demonstrated integrity, contribution to the community, and patriotism"; and

WHEREAS, in recognition of Judge Smith's lifetime of contributions to Manatee County, the 12th Judicial Circuit, and the State of Florida, the Chief Judge has requested that the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners bestow a special honor in Judge Smith's memory by naming the jury assembly room in the Manatee County Judicial Center after Judge Smith; and

WHEREAS, based on the foregoing, the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners finds that Judge Smith's integrity in office and incalculable positive contributions to his community more than qualify him for the honor requested by the Chief Judge of the 12th Judicial Circuit; and

WHEREAS, Manatee County has complied with all procedural requirements to make this dedication as provided for in Resolution R-93-156; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners finds that it is in the best interests of the County to adopt this resolution.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of County Commissioners of Manatee County, Florida, as follows.

1. The jury assembly room in the Manatee County Judicial Center building is hereby named and designated as the “Judge Gilbert A. Smith, Sr., Jury Assembly Room.”
2. The County Administrator (and his designee) is hereby authorized and directed to work with the Chief Judge and the Clerk of the Circuit Court (and their respective designees) on the design, content, and placement of suitable signage outside and within the jury assembly room to memorialize this designation.
3. This Resolution shall be effective immediately upon adoption.

DULY ADOPTED with a quorum present and voting this ____ day of February, 2018.

**BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
OF MANATEE COUNTY, FLORIDA**

By: _____
Chairperson

ATTEST: ANGELINA COLONNESO
CLERK OF THE CIRCUIT COURT AND COMPTROLLER

By: _____
Deputy Clerk