

A CONSUMMATE LAWYER

William Reece Smith, Jr.

Michael I. Swygert

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To Dianne in celebration of our approaching 50th wedding anniversary.

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FOREWORD: A LIVING LEGEND

A “living legend” generally refers to a person who has achieved a sustained and enduring level of accomplishment that not only exceed the ordinary, but also exceeds the extraordinary. Reece Smith is a living legend. One cannot find a precedent for his life in the law. He is *sui generis*—a scholar-athlete, Rhodes Scholar, lawyer, teacher and leader of bar organizations as well as civic/community organizations. But above all, he is a tireless, passionate advocate of measures that will assure access by all to legal counsel and equal justice under the law.

By his conspicuous example, he has taught our profession that the practice of law is more than the billable hour, more than a means to wealth—it is a means of gaining great satisfaction in using the privilege we have to practice law to help those in need have access to the legal system. Reece Smith has been doing that now for over half a century in Florida, the United States, and across the world. Even today, in his 80s, he continues to work towards the goal of access to justice for all those in need of legal counsel.

Reece Smith has not only led our profession, he has made an impact on many individual lawyers. His influence on his law firm to hire minorities (starting with me, over 45 years ago) long before that was politically correct, was courageous but he thought it was the “right thing to do.” His emphasis upon professionalism has had a lasting impact upon scores of law students, including one who is now a shareholder of our firm and applied to our firm having taken Reece’s ethics course and concluding: “I want to practice law in this man’s firm.” Those of us who have been so influenced by Reece Smith owe him much, as does the profession at large.

This book about this remarkable professional—this “living legend”—should be required reading in every ethics class in every law school. But it will also be fascinating to those already in the profession, as it provides a riveting story of a life well-lived in the law. Enjoy, and let us all commit to follow Reece Smith’s stellar example of true and rewarding professionalism.

Sylvia Hardaway Walbolt
Shareholder, Carlton Fields, Tampa, Florida

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This book is the result of the work of many people, indeed, a team effort. I owe each a debt of gratitude, but none more so than Reece Smith, the subject of this biography. Mr. Smith and I spent scores of hours together over the last three years, for the most part in his office at Carlton Fields in Tampa. Throughout, he was generous with his time and patient with my repeated requests for explanation and information. I thank Mr. Smith's administrative assistant, Sandra Kinley, for her help in tracking down legal materials, speeches, and other documents I requested.

A key contributor throughout has been Sylvia Walbolt, a shareholder and former chair of Carlton Fields. Not only did she furnish fascinating "Reece" stories, she graciously volunteered to read and to edit the manuscript—not once, but several times—a task she has performed superbly. In addition, Ms. Walbolt's husband, Dan Walbolt, an administrator at the University of South Florida when Mr. Smith was the University's interim-president, provided valuable insights and information and also read the manuscript.

In terms of total time, no one surpassed the effort of Carol Ann Ransone, my research associate for two years. A graduate of the Stetson University College of Law, she searched records and files covering the eighty-four years to date of Mr. Smith's life and career, locating, organizing, and distilling relevant information. I extend to Carol Ann my sincerest gratitude as I also do to Ms. Sharon Gisclair, an incredibly talented person who has helped me produce three books. Sharon has served as the administrative assistant to a federal judge, a practice group administrator at Fowler White Boggs, a Tampa law firm and, presently, a business coordinator for the firm of Banker Lopez Gassler. Sharon went beyond the call of duty, working many evenings and weekends at home on this project. Roberta Kemp Flowers, the William Reece Smith Jr., Distinguished Professor of Law at Stetson University College of Law, has encouraged me from the the time I conceived of the idea of writing this biography and I sincerely thank her for her support.

There are others deserving mention. Among them are Ruth Ann Schmitt, an administrative assistant to Mr. Smith when he was President of the Amer-

ican Bar Association, and Harriet Ellis, who had worked for the Legal Services Corporation. Ms. Schmitt and Ms. Ellis met with Mr. Smith and myself over a two-day period in the Chicago area to discuss in detail his work as ABA President. Meanwhile, Dan Perez, a senior office staff member at Carlton Fields, assisted in the digitalizing and editing of the photographs in this volume. Throughout, Louise Petren, head of faculty-support services at Stetson Law School, provided needed services. I give special thanks to Dean Darby Dickerson of the Stetson College of Law for providing me with an office while working on this book..

Most of all, I thank my wife Dianne for her love, support, encouragement, and patience in my undertaking this project and for her critical reading of portions of the manuscript.

Michael Swygert
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