

The R. Wayne Smith & Virginia Bryant Smith Scholarship Fund and the Smith Sawyer Smith, Inc. Community Fund

R. Wayne and Virginia were born just two weeks apart. Wayne was from Gilead, Indiana and was born on February 22, 1922. Virginia was from Macy, Indiana and was born February 8 that same year. They raised four children, Terry, Ron, Sandy, and Mart.

The couple moved to Rochester with their four kids in 1953. Wayne had driven a truck for a living for his father-in-law's company, the Bryant Pickle Factory in Macy. When he got a job offer to sell insurance, he didn't hesitate to pursue this new opportunity. Though he faced some ridicule at first, it turned out to be a great decision for his family.

Wayne was not the first person in the family to get involved in this insurance company, and he wouldn't be the last. The agency started as Jones & Jones Insurance, originating back with Virginia's great-grandfather. When Wayne came into business, it was called Haskett & Jones. Eventually, Wayne bought into the business, and he and Mr. Haskett formed Haskett & Smith.

As Wayne's children grew up, Ron and Mart both became very involved in the family business. Sandy's husband, Jack Sawyer, also became an integral part of their operation. After Mr. Haskett passed away, the two brothers, their father, and their brother-in-law decided to rename it Smith Sawyer Smith, since it was essentially operated by Ron, Mart, and Jack. Though it has gone through several name changes, it has always been at the same location.

The business has expanded tremendously! Sandy's son, Rob, is a key member of the operation. Mart also has two children who are very involved in the business. Though they have expanded to different parts of Indiana and have opened offices in several other states, they still consider Fulton County and surrounding counties to be their base.

Wayne worked for fifty years before retiring. He enjoyed having the ability to welcome family members into the business. They work together, but they also have fun together.

"It's great to be a family and to also be a business," Mart said.

One very interesting and unique aspect of Smith Sawyer Smith, Inc. is its nationwide hog insurance program. The Chester White breed of hogs originated in Rochester, and the breeders needed an insurance agency that would meet their needs. They turned to Smith Sawyer Smith, Inc., and when news spread among other breeds that the partnership was going so well, other hog breeders decided to buy insurance through the company as well.

The program has grown and now provides hog insurance in about thirty states! One hog in Texas was even insured for \$325,000!

Outside of the business, Wayne and Virginia also instilled in their children very important values. They taught them to be hardworking, involved in the community, and to give back.

Wayne was on the Board of Trustees at Manchester University, and that's where the family first gave on a large scale. There is a Smith Gate at Manchester University, which is named after Wayne and his family. Wayne and Virginia also took their children to the Grace United Methodist Church, in which the children were all eventually married.

Wayne was a great athlete and played baseball at Manchester. He was later in the Army and was stationed in the same location as Joe Garagiola, who was the catcher for the St. Louis Cardinals at the time. They played baseball together on the same Army team, and when World War II was over, Joe helped Wayne to get a tryout with the Cardinals. Though nothing ever came of it, he and his family would forever be devoted Cardinal fans. Wayne and Virginia even took the family to St. Louis for vacations and to attend Cardinals games every year for 63 consecutive years.

The family is a very sports-minded family. Wayne coached Little League, Babe Ruth League, and basketball, and he refereed basketball for twenty years. Growing up, Mart remembers even having competitions after dinner by tossing their napkins in the trash can. Whoever missed had to do the dishes!

The Smith family is a golfing family, and they spent a lot of time together at the golf course. As an adult, Terry built Rock Hollow Country Club in Peru. Wayne's grandson, Chris Smith, is even a pro golfer on the PGA Tour!

Though they are a competitive family, Mart remembers that his parents always taught him both how to win and how to lose. They competed with each other, but they also had fun together.

Wayne passed away in 2003. Virginia is now 93 years old. Their initial decision to move to Rochester resulted in many great memories and a successful family business that has continued to be passed down through the generations. The community was certainly enhanced by the addition of this family.

In 1996, Wayne and Virginia established the R. Wayne & Virginia Bryant Smith Scholarship Fund. In 2015, the Smith Sawyer Smith, Inc. Community Fund was also established by family members. Through these funds with the Fulton County Community Foundation, Wayne and Virginia's contributions to Fulton County will better our community forever.