

## 2016 Citizen Lawyers: Judge Richard L. Doughton

### By Whit Pierce

SPARTA – There is a piece of land in Alleghany County where six generations of Doughtons have lived and farmed. Judge Richard Doughton spent his first 18 years on that farm. In 1965, the young Doughton left his home for Chapel Hill, where he would attend the university and graduate after three years of study. From there, he moved 80 miles west to earn his law degree from Wake Forest, and then to Mooresville to join a small firm. From the outset, he undertook his life's work with the special sort of patient resolve and sense of community that one learns growing up on a farm.

After seven years of practice, he returned to the land where he grew up. He took over his family's cattle operation, and opened a one-man firm in Sparta. In the years that followed, he served as Alleghany County Attorney, the Town Attorney for Sparta, the attorney for the Alleghany County School Board, the president of the local bar and judicial district bar, the chairman of the Board of Blue Ridge Bank, a board member of two other banks, a member of the Board of Legal Services of the Blue Ridge, and a member of the State Bar Disciplinary Hearing Commission. He also mentored younger lawyers, and he practiced law with the undiluted professionalism and courtesy that all lawyers ought to exhibit.

In 1997, Governor Hunt appointed Judge Doughton as a Special Superior Court Judge. Although his job title changed, his community-mindedness did not. As a judge, he's been a member of the Bar Association's Administration of Justice Committee, the Bench Bar Committee, the Transitioning Lawyer Committee, and the Rural Courts Commission. He has also been a member of the Pattern Jury Instruction Committee since 2001, a member of the Alleghany County Rotary Club since it was first chartered, and a loving husband to Jane Gambill Doughton for forty-seven years. And he still runs the family farm.

Judge Doughton wouldn't do it any other way. He says that his "community has been mighty good" to him, and he feels an abiding obligation to return the favor. Judge Doughton's efforts do not go unnoticed. Attorney Clark Smith put it this way: "He has always been a favorite of the members of the Bar because of his competency, knowledge of the law and procedure, patience, efficiency, promptness, and pleasant demeanor. He is the perfect example of a Citizen Lawyer."

*The Citizen Lawyer Committee of the NCBA Young Lawyers Division, in conjunction with the NCBA Citizen Lawyer Committee, provides expanded coverage of the 2016 Citizen Lawyer Awards in recognition of their volunteer service and leadership in their communities and beyond.*

*Whit Pierce is an attorney at Smith Moore Leatherwood LLP in Greensboro.*