

LEGAL BRIEFS

JURY AWARDS \$27 MILLION TO RETIRED PASTOR IN SMOKER CASE

A north Florida jury has awarded a total of \$27 million to a retired pastor in a smoking lawsuit against R.J. Reynolds Tobacco Co.

Emmon Smith, who smoked for 40 years before being diagnosed with lung cancer,



was initially awarded \$7 million in compensatory damages Tuesday and another \$20 million in punitive damages Wednesday

in Jackson Circuit Court in Marianna. The compensatory award was reduced by \$3 million when the jury assigned 70 percent fault to the company and 30 percent to the plaintiff.

The case is one of about 8,000 similar lawsuits filed in Florida under a disbanded smoker class action.

Smith, who walks with a cane, was represented by a team of lawyers including Coral Gables attorneys Rick Diaz and J.B. Harris, Tallahassee practitioner Robert Trammell and others.

The initial award for Smith came a day after the U.S. Supreme Court refused to consider RJR's due process appeal in four Florida cases that produced awards totaling \$53 million. **(Staff and wire reports)**