

Past is prolog

HARRY DANIELS '67: 'WILMINGTON COLLEGE IS THE LITTLE SCHOOL WITH THE

Harry T. Daniels' 27th floor corner office with its stunning view of the Boston Harbor waterfront could hardly be further from 933 N. Railroad Avenue in Troy, Alabama. Indeed, his challenging childhood in the heart of Dixie is worlds away from the celebrated lawyer's three-piece suit status in Boston's famed Financial District — yet it's always there.

And that's a *good* thing.

Daniels, a member of the Class of 1967, was recognized at Wilmington College's Commencement May 13 with an honorary doctor of laws degree. The citation noted his life reflects the College's credo of "Making a Living, Making a Life and Making a Difference."

He is a senior partner with the Boston-based international law firm WilmerHale and is considered among the top echelon of lawyers in the nation specializing in complex litigation with an emphasis on business disputes, products liability, securities, and common law intellectual property protection.

Daniels is listed in *Best Lawyers in America* and *Boston Magazine* tagged him as a "Massachusetts Super Lawyer" in business litigation and as one of "Boston's 100 Most Powerful People."

The honorary degree not only cited Daniels' acumen and success as a lawyer but also his volunteer service, work as an educator and roles in leadership positions appointed by WilmerHale and the Massachusetts judiciary.

"I was honored, flattered and humbled beyond words," he said about the recognition from Wilmington College. "It's a great honor to be thought of in that way by my alma mater."

In many ways, that May day in Wilmington brought Daniels' past and present together as his Wilmington College era provided a bridge between his formative years in the institutionally segregated South and the housing projects of Hamilton, Ohio — and the yellow brick road to the 27th floor of WilmerHale's prestigious address of 60 State Street in downtown Boston.

Harry Daniels' story is one of possessing both a vision in which he saw himself succeed no matter the odds and a will to make it happen.

"I grew up in Troy, Alabama," he said. "I was the child of a teenage unwed mother and I never knew my father."

Conspiring against his already tough start in life were the racism and bigotry that existed toward African-Americans in Alabama.

The Deep South following World War II was one rife with Jim Crow Laws. African-Americans were marginalized and segregated from whites in nearly all aspects of society: from education, employment and transportation to eating in restaurants and using drinking fountains and public restrooms.

"Everything was segregated in Troy, Alabama. Troy in the 1950s and early 1960s was a place of difficulty for folks that looked like me," he said, noting his home had no indoor plumbing and they heated with the wood scraps left over from the production of railroad ties.

Daniels was reared by his grandparents.

Though not formally educated, they emphasized the importance of education to their young grandchild. He excelled in school while working jobs picking cotton, stacking peanuts, producing concrete blocks and gathering those same

wooden scraps they burned for heat.

By the time he was a teenager, Daniels realized he must escape Alabama in order to have any real opportunity for success.

"Anybody that could go North did go North," he said, noting that, even a half dozen years after the Brown v. Education case mandated the racial integration of public schools, he still attended an all-black school in Troy.

The summer of his 16th year, Daniels and George Ramsey, a teen from Hamilton, Ohio, struck up a friendship while the latter was in Troy visiting his aunt. That encounter resulted in a chance for him to move to Ohio.

"We talked about the fact that I wanted to come North and George's mother invited me to live with them in Hamilton," Daniels recalled. "I got a one way bus ticket to Hamilton in 1961 and lived with them in their two-bedroom apartment in the housing projects."

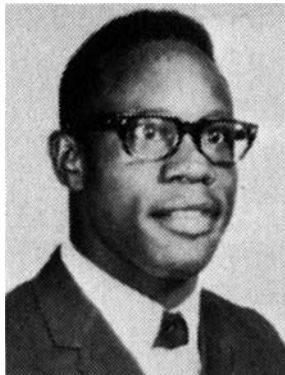
"George, his younger brother and I shared one bedroom," he added.

After awhile, having four persons living in a small apartment "got to be too much," so he accepted an offer to move into another friend's family's larger apartment. Daniels lived with three different families in Hamilton before graduating from high school.

"I'm deeply indebted to all these families," he said. "This certainly was not planned — it was fortuitous and serendipitous. I don't know if I would have left Troy if it hadn't happened the way it did. I don't think I would have left if I hadn't left on my own."

Hamilton Taft was the first integrated school Daniels ever attended and the experience proved to be "surprisingly not that difficult." He graduated 21st out of a class of 266 at Taft and was inducted into the National Honor Society.

He credits the "terrific, disciplined,



Harry Daniels from the 1965 Wilmingtonian.

ue

BIG HEART'

BY RANDY SARVIS



Harry Daniels stands in front of his law office picture window overlooking Boston Harbor.

no-nonsense” teachers he had in Troy with preparing him well in most subjects.

The experience at Taft also provided him with a sense of increased self-confidence and a better view — albeit not perfect by any means — of what a racially integrated society could be than what he experienced in Alabama.

“Growing up in the South, people of African-American descent were all described as being a ‘good colored this or a good colored that’ — there was always an adjective preceding whatever the person was,” he said.

“I wanted to be described as just being good. I didn’t want to be a good *black* lawyer — I wanted to be a *good* lawyer,” he added. “At Hamilton Taft, I was just a *good* student and that made a big, big difference to me.”

While most of his friends in Hamilton were African-American and he lived in the black section of town, Daniels felt “people were just people,” he said. “When I spent time with (both black and white) folks at school, it was fine.”

And that proved true especially on the

baseball and football fields, where Daniels played organized football for the first time in the 11th grade. He said he excelled at the sport largely due to the physical strength he gained through the years working at manual labor jobs.

His high school coach was acquainted with then WC football coach Carroll “Jake” Van Schoyck ’50 and recommended he take a look at Daniels.

“Coach Van Schoyck scouted me and thought I could play at Wilmington,” he said.

But there were no athletic scholarship offers and Daniels knew he would have to personally finance his way at any institution he attended. Van Schoyck told him WC had a Work-Study Program in which students worked three days a week at the Randall Company and attended classes three days a week.

“I had no money. I came from very humble beginnings,” he said. “I knew I would have to work and Wilmington offered me a way to pay my way through College.”

Daniels briefly considered a military option at Miami University, but overslept the morning he was scheduled to take the ROTC entrance exam.

“Wilmington College was the only school I applied to,” he said.

He initially was awarded a one-quarter tuition scholarship for his impressive high school grades. It was enhanced to a 50 percent scholarship after his sophomore year as Daniels continued to excel academically and cover most of his expenses by working a punch press at Randall.

“It was a factory and there were some safety issues, but it was a means to an end — I wouldn’t have been able to go to College if not for the Work-Study Program,” he said, noting the Randall supervisors were especially tolerant of the College students’ occasional shortcomings as factory workers. “I remember catching the green bus to Randall and, after my shift, I’d get to the locker room as quickly as I could and get ready for football practice.”

Randall paid only \$1.13 an hour but that fact was tempered by Daniels’ memory

ALUMNI FEATURE

that picking 100 pounds of cotton in Alabama paid only \$3.

Daniels actually never played football for Van Schoyck, as the coach left the College before his freshman season; Don Phinhey was his head coach and a good influence for four years. Daniels excelled on the gridiron and was a Mid-Ohio Conference Honorable Mention selection.

At WC, Daniels became good friends with George Ford '67 and knew Ron Nance '67, whom he believes were the first African-American students to pledge any Wilmington fraternity. They were members of Sigma Zeta.

"The Sigs were recruiting folks and I got asked to pledge," he recalled. "My friends were there."

One of those Sig friends soon became

He and his wife, Beverly (Jackson) '67, along with Daniel '69 and Carol (Potter) '72 Smith attended the Commencement ceremony at which Daniels received his honorary degree.

Coleman said he couldn't have predicted while in College the degree of Daniels' success, but there were "aspects of his personality and character" he knew would translate well as he embarked upon a career in law.

"When I think about my friend Harry Daniels, I think of him as tenacious in all aspects of his life — he was as tenacious in football and academics 40-plus years ago at Wilmington College as he is now in law and golf. And he plays by the rules," Coleman said.

"He's a loyal friend, a hard worker,

personal sense of pride in seeing the honorary degree conferred upon Daniels.

"I felt sort of like I had accomplished something in just knowing him," Smith said. "Every Sig from that era is proud of Harry and his accomplishments."

Smith hearkened Daniels' leadership qualities and intelligence as readily evident while they were students in College.

"He didn't strive to be a leader — he just had natural leadership qualities," he said. "Also, Harry was such a sincere person who'd always give you a straight answer you could go to the bank with."

Smith recalled, when he pinned his future wife (a fraternity tradition of giving one's frat pin to a girlfriend as the relationship got serious), Daniels, then a senior, conveyed his best wishes to the younger Smith by giving him his Sigma Zeta letter jacket.

Forty years later in commemoration of Daniels' honorary degree, Smith returned the jacket to his fraternity brother. While many men tend to have gained some girth in the years since their college days, Smith thought it might be humorous to see Daniels try on his old jacket.

Smith said his gesture "sort of backfired" when a trim Daniels "slid into it" almost effortlessly.

Jokes and good-natured humor seemed to abound around the fraternity in the mid-1960s as evidenced by Daniels' story of purchasing a car from a fraternity brother for \$5.

"Jerry Miller ('68) had this car, a black 1950 or '51 Plymouth with no front bumper that he sold to me because it wasn't running," he recalled. "To everyone's surprise, I took the engine apart, repaired it and got it running. It was my first car.

"I felt like a big man on campus because I had a car."

With one semester until graduation, Daniels temporarily left College to take advantage of an opportunity to live in Xenia and work at a foundry in nearby Yellow Springs. The pay was much better than at Randall and, working full time for about eight months, he was able to save some



At the post-Commencement luncheon held at WC President Dan DiBiasio's home in recognition of the honorary degree recipients, Harry Daniels tries on his Sigma Zeta jacket some 40 years after he gave it to fraternity brother Daniel Smith '69. Pictured from the left are James Coleman '67, James Landon '58, Daniels and Smith.

James Coleman '67, whom Daniels still considers as his best friend.

"I've known him since I was a freshman at WC — we're like brothers," he said.

Coleman, who holds a doctor of education degree, is CEO and hospital director of Kalamazoo (Mich.) Psychiatric Hospital.

generous and caring, and he's been very supportive of my family and me," he added. "Those qualities referred to Harry when he was a young man — and they refer to him now."

Smith is a retired high school principal that is serving as dean of students at Pickerington (Ohio) High School North. He felt a

money and ultimately graduate owing only \$1,200.

“After my junior year, I wanted to experience what it was like just going to classes and not working,” he said. “Everybody was concerned I dropped out and wasn’t going to graduate, but I came back. It really was a joy to *just* go to school.”

He also finished with a full tuition scholarship and completed his studies in December 1967 with majors in history, government and English.

Daniels remembers some outstanding faculty and staff that really cared about students’ learning and their personal wellbeing.

He noted Robert Halliday in psychology and Neil Snarr and Dan Hodges in sociology.

“Marsha Hodges (English) was a wonderful, energetic teacher and (Willis) “Skippy” Hall (history and government) was terrific — he caused people to think,” he said. “Larry Gara (history) was a wonderful, wonderful person and a wonderful, wonderful teacher.

“George Bowman (English) had a way about him, about teaching Romance languages — he made *Beowulf* come alive,” he added. “Luis Fumero taught Spanish. He tried his damndest to get me to roll my R’s. I was from Alabama and had a lazy tongue.”

Daniels cited public relations director William Lambert as “a good dear friend” and he recalled speaking with Dick McKenzie, who was involved with the Work-Study Program, about wanting to attend law school. He suggested Daniels consider Northeastern University, which was re-opening its law school.

(Years later, Lambert’s daughter lived for a time in Boston with Daniels and his first wife, Paula (Kowal) ’70.)

Daniels long-time ambition was of becoming a lawyer — that is after poor vision made him more realistic about his youthful dreams of being a test pilot.

“Every black kid growing up in the late 1950s was aware of two black people by name: Martin Luther King Jr. and Thurgood Marshall,” he said.

Marshall, the first African-American appointed to the U.S. Supreme Court (1967-91), was well known for his great success



*Harry Daniels poses with his mentor, Jerome P. Facher, a senior partner with WilmerHale. Facher taught trial practice at Northeastern University Law School when Daniels was a student. The book and film *A Civil Action* featured Facher’s legal defense of a client in a real life case. Robert Duvall played him in the movie version.*

in arguing cases before the Supreme Court, the most famous of which was the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954.

“Thurgood Marshall was a lawyer, a hero, winning all those civil rights cases,” he said. “I always in the back of my mind wanted to be like Thurgood Marshall. I wanted to use the system to make a difference for black people.

“But if I hadn’t been a lawyer, I might have been a minister like Martin Luther King,” he added.

Between finishing his WC coursework in December 1967 and graduation in June of 1968, Daniels earned teacher certification and served as a Title I tutor in social studies and English with Wilmington City Schools.

1968 was a milestone year for tragedy in the United States. The Tet Offensive proved an ugly turning point in the Vietnam War and the already violent repercussions of the Civil Rights Movement were ramped up to the nth degree when Martin Luther King was assassinated April 4.

It was a horrific act that profoundly affected Daniels for whom MLK was a life-long hero.

Gara recalled Daniels speaking at the College’s memorial service for the martyred civil rights leader.

“I remember how shaken up Harry was when Dr. King was assassinated — we all were,” Gara said. “His whole concept of nonviolence was shaken by that experience.

It was an understandable, brief, emotional reaction.

“I can see him now up on the Boyd Auditorium stage,” he added.

“Harry was very impressive as a student and I enjoyed having him in class. I’m really proud of him.”

Something positive arose as a result of the King murder in the form of scholarships and fellowships at colleges and universities across the nation that were established in King’s memory and earmarked for deserving African-American students. After a successful interview at Northeastern, Daniels was awarded a Martin Luther King Fellowship that fully covered his law school tuition.

His position as a dorm counselor at NU paid his room and board, and complementing that arrangement was Northeastern’s co-op program in which law students alternately attended classes for three months and worked for three months.

Daniels’ initial co-op was with the New Jersey Attorney General’s Office of Consumer Protection, followed by three co-ops with the Boston law firm of Hale & Dorr, the precursor to WilmerHale, for whom he has worked since 1971.

“They offered me a job when I graduated from law school and I’ve been here ever since,” he said.

The law firm had another vastly important connection to Daniels’ tenure at Northeastern — and since: Jerome P. Facher. He was a trial lawyer with Hale & Dorr that

ALUMNI FEATURE

taught courses in trial practice at both Northeastern and Harvard law schools.

He became Daniels' mentor.

Facher, long considered one of the nation's top trial lawyers, gained popular notoriety when he represented the industry in the 1980s trial of *Anderson v. Cryovac*, a celebrated case of alleged environmental pollution that was depicted in the Jonathan Harr book *A Civil Action*.

The 1998 film version featured John Travolta and Robert Duvall, the latter of whom received a Best Supporting Actor Academy Award nomination for his portrayal of Jerome Facher.

with Daniels' work.

"He's tough on himself. He's his own harshest critic," he said. "Harry possesses a good ethical sense and his integrity is beyond question — he doesn't cut corners ethically.

"Harry cares about the profession," he said. "The image of lawyers is not the highest these days, but Harry Daniels would be a role model for the image of a lawyer I'd like to project."

Daniels, who affectionately refers to Facher as "Chief," said, "It's easy when you have him as a role model. Jerry didn't stop teaching law practice when he left North-

Partners in Majority Corporate Law Firms.

Daniels also is a trustee with Northeastern University and the Boston Foundation for Sight, and a former trustee with the Boston Museum of Fine Arts.

WilmerHale has roots in Boston dating back to the 1850s. It employs more than 300 lawyers in its Boston office alone, which comprises 11 floors. In 1981, Daniels became a senior partner with the firm, the first African-American to attain that recognition.

Considering all his success and the benefits of working 36 years for such a prestigious company, might there have been a certain point at which he felt, "I made it?"

"I don't think I've ever said, 'I'm there.' I worry about every case. In every case, you start over," he said. "The nature of what we do is move from one case to another and the client doesn't care about your last case."

However, Daniels admitted there certainly have been instances in which he has received recognition of a job well done.

"When I became a senior partner, that was certainly a feeling of accomplishment — that's reaffirming because it shows how the partners think of you," he said, noting that being selected to serve on WilmerHale's Executive Committee provided similar recognition.

"Also, being named to the Board of Overseers and things like that say something about your reputation and how you're regarded," he added.

"I've never had the feeling, 'I've made it and now I can relax,'" he said. "Maybe that's why it's still fun to do what I do. It still gets the juices flowing. Just as Thurgood Marshall was my hero, lawyers try cases. Lawyers go to court. That's what I do and that's what I've been doing since I came here.

"I have a terrific job, a terrific profession," he said. "I enjoy immensely what I do. I still love what I do and can't think of anything I'd rather be doing in terms of work."

When he's not working, Daniels is an avid golfer and, when he can get away, enjoys snow skiing and bass fishing, in addition to spending time with his family. He and his wife, Karen, reside in the attractive Boston suburb of Milton, Mass. They have two daughters, Emily and Esmé.

Complementing Facher's accolades for Daniels, Louise Nameika, Daniels' legal



Sidney Mishkin '59, chair of WC's Board of Trustees, chats with Harry Daniels prior to WC's 2007 Commencement at which an honorary doctor of laws degree was conferred upon Daniels.

Facher spotted in Daniels a law school student with a spark, a fire and a will.

"I saw passion, that's what I saw," Facher said, "and dedication, a firm desire to do well and do good."

He said Daniels really caught his attention at Northeastern.

"It was clear that he was in law school for a purpose — he wanted to be the best. Top quality is always recognized and that's what I saw in Harry," Facher added. "The quality of the best students I taught at Northeastern is the quality of the best students I taught at Harvard Law School — Harry is in that tier."

Facher said he and Daniels have worked on numerous cases together over the years, and he's never been disappointed

eastern and Harvard — he's still teaching lawyers."

Daniels has followed in Facher's footsteps as a teacher at Northeastern, as he's taught a course called Litigation in the Workplace, in addition to serving as a faculty member with Harvard Trial Advocacy Workshops and the Massachusetts Continuing Legal Education's Bench Bar Conference and Business Litigation Conference.

Also, he's director of the Massachusetts Thrift Institution Fund for Economic Development, former chair of the Massachusetts Commission on Judicial Conduct and a past member of the Board of Overseers of the Supreme Judicial Court. In addition, he is on the Advisory Committee of the American Bar Association's Conference of Minority



Harry Daniels is all smiles as graduates meet with friends and families on Collett Mall following the Commencement ceremony.

secretary for the past 16 years, confirmed the presence of many of his traits lauded by others: kind, meticulous, calm, good sense of humor, intelligent.

“I and everybody on this floor just love Harry,” Nameika said, noting many senior partners come to Daniels with questions, as he’s universally considered a “very good and knowledgeable” attorney.

“He’s a good mentor and goes out of his way to make you feel comfortable. He’s thinking all the time. He is very appreciative of what people do and he always is willing to take the time to help everyone else.

“I wouldn’t have been with him all these years if he wasn’t such a good man,” she added, citing his loyalty to the firm. “There’s not many at WilmerHale who’ve been here longer than Harry.”

Indeed, Daniels’ longevity — 36 years — is somewhat of an anomaly in today’s world of career leap-frogging to greener pastures.

“While it was not uncommon before my generation, it is rare indeed now and in the recent past for lawyers to end their careers with the firm in which they started their

careers,” Daniels said as he contemplated all those years in law practice.

“It’s been a great, great ride from Wilmington College to here.”

As Daniels looks even further back — to Troy, Alabama — he sees his Wilmington years as pivotal in the success he’s enjoying.

“I wouldn’t be where I am now were it not for Wilmington College — there was something unique about the Wilmington experience,” he said, noting WC offered Daniels “and others like me” opportunities they otherwise might not have had.

He calls WC the “little school with the big heart.”

“Wilmington cared a lot more about who you were and what you did than where you came from. Wilmington embraced students. I always felt safe, secure and welcomed — but I never felt coddled — I felt challenged, but supported,” he said.

“I felt that I was as well prepared for law school as I would have been had I gone anywhere else,” he added. “And I probably did better at Wilmington than I would have at other places. I had professors, not teaching

assistants. George Bowman knew who I was. Larry Gara knew who I was.

“Given my background, I think that made an enormous difference to me and for me — I will always be indebted to Wilmington College,” he said, adding that the College’s affiliation with the Religious Society of Friends was an integral part of his experience in subtle, yet meaningful, ways.

“You could be affected by and benefit from the Quaker influence without having Quakerism imposed on you,” he said.

“There are lots of good schools out there, but my experience with Wilmington is that you can get wherever you want to go from Wilmington College — wherever ‘there’ is, you can get there from Wilmington.

“It’s certainly made a tremendous difference in my life.”