

# Attorney Donald Lee Hollowell: The 18<sup>th</sup> Laurel Wreath Wearer [1968]

Donald Lee Hollowell [Atlanta (GA) Alumni Chapter] was born on December 19, 1917, in Wichita, KS. Although his parents emphasized the importance of education to their children, they experienced financial difficulties during the Great Depression, and called upon their children for assistance. Hollowell enlisted in the Army and was assigned to the 10th Cavalry Regiment, one of the original Buffalo Soldier regiments. He completed correspondence courses to earn a high school diploma. In 1938, Hollowell separated from the military and enrolled at Lane College. He excelled in the classroom and as an athlete, and was president of his freshman, sophomore, and junior classes. Hollowell was recalled to active duty [1941] before completing his senior year. He was assigned to the European Theater for the duration of the war, and rose to the rank of Captain. After the war, he returned to Lane College, and graduated cum laude in 1947. Hollowell then attended Loyola University, in Chicago, earning a JD degree [1951].

Hollowell moved to Atlanta in 1951 and began practicing law in 1952. He quickly distinguished himself as an advocate for social justice. As the civil rights movement gained momentum, high profile plaintiffs sought his counsel, and Hollowell found himself at the center of numerous legal flash points. He enjoyed a reputation throughout Georgia for courage in the courtroom and was often referred to as Mr. Civil Rights. Hollowell first attracted statewide attention, in 1956, as lead counsel in a lawsuit filed by Horace Ward, a black applicant denied admission to the University of Georgia Law School. Although the Ward case was dismissed, Hollowell made an impression. In 1959, he won a decisive legal victory against state sanctioned segregation in higher education, representing three applicants denied admission to the Georgia State College of Business Administration. A federal district court judge ruled the admission policies were unconstitutional. In 1959, Hollowell accepted another school desegregation case on behalf of two blacks [Hamilton Holmes and Charlayne Hunter] denied admission to the University of Georgia. The case captured attention throughout the state because it challenged the practices of its flagship institution. Throughout the proceedings, school officials maintained the two students were not denied admission because of race, citing instead a variety of procedural explanations. With the help of NAACP attorney Constance Baker Motley, Vernon Jordan, and Horace Ward, who joined the Hollowell law firm after receiving a law degree from Northwestern University, Hollowell skillfully exposed contradictions in the defense. Judge William Bootle issued a ruling on January 6, 1961, ordering the University of Georgia to admit the students.

In 1960, Hollowell and Ward won a victory in the Georgia Court of Appeals that led to the release of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., from a Georgia prison. Hollowell and Chevene Bowers King, another pioneering Georgia civil rights attorney, defended hundreds of civil rights activists involved in the Albany Movement. The Albany Movement was a coalition of the NAACP, Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, Southern Christian Leadership Conference, and Albany, GA activists that attacked every aspect of segregation in Albany. In 1966, President Lyndon Johnson appointed Hollowell the first black regional director of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. He held the position for approximately 20 years, and under five different presidents -Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, and Reagan. After retiring from public service, Hollowell joined with Marvin Arrington, a 1960 Gamma Kappa initiate, to form the Arrington & Hollowell law firm. His contributions to reshaping race relations throughout the South earned Hollowell awards and honors, including a Doctor of Law degree from the University of Georgia. Hollowell was a charter member of the Lane College Chapter, the Beta Lambda of Kappa Alpha Psi on April 20, 1940. He affiliated with the Atlanta (GA) Alumni Chapter upon his arrival in 1951. His outstanding achievements as a civil rights attorney earned him the 18th Laurel Wreath. Laurel Wreath Wearer Hollowell entered Chapter Invisible December 27, 2004.

