

Donald L. Hollowell Eulogy
Martin Luther King Chapel • Morehouse College
December 31, 2004

When the call came just yesterday from Mrs. Hollowell inviting me to say a few words of eulogy for Mr. Hollowell, it took a while for the full irony of that invitation to settle in on me. Here was Don Hollowell's gracious widow, who when a university had spurned her husband and his clients over 50 years ago, was inviting the President of the University of Georgia to come to this pulpit. How far we have come, – and how far we have to go.

And yet, the invitation for me to be here today says much about the life and demeanor of Donald L. and Louise E. Hollowell.

Since I returned to the Georgia of my youth some eight years ago, the Hollowells and the Adamses have interacted on numerous occasions – at receptions, at lectures, at commencements, at luncheons and dinners, and at sad occasions like this one, including the funeral of Hamilton Holmes' mother, Isabel. Over the years, the relationship moved from handshakes to hugs, from acquaintance to love, from acceptance to trust.

And it was Donald Hollowell who always set the tone. If ever a man had the right to say "Fie on your house," and move on, it was Donald Hollowell. And yet, he didn't do that. If there was ever residual resentment or hatred or anger or disdain, all of which would have been justified, I never saw it – and such was not just the demeanor of a mellowed, older gentleman. It was the way he lived. And here is where the ironies come in – as educators, as Georgians, as Christians.

First, as educators. Donald Hollowell came to the University of Georgia in the late 50's seeking law admission for Horace Ward and in the early 60's seeking undergraduate admission for Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes. The numerous roadblocks, and starts and stops, would have frustrated lesser men: over 7 years of work on the Horace Ward case alone, and another 3 years with Holmes and Hunter. I don't have time to recount the whole story, but here is the first irony: Don Hollowell came seeking education and he ended up educating us. One of my proudest moments as UGA President came two years ago in December 2002 when The University of Georgia awarded him an honorary doctorate, only the 75th in its 219 year history. Education is truly a life-long process. Donald Hollowell was not only a lawyer, his life was an education.

Second, I come today as a Georgian. I grew up in Albany in the days of dual school systems, dual accommodations, and dueling social mores. I remember in 1961 when social unrest was at its zenith and the city fathers deemed the best solution was just to shut down all public

facilities, including the parks and pools. Mine was not a country club family and at age 12, I quickly figured out in that hot Albany summer that I would rather swim with people of all races than not swim at all.

That's where the Georgia irony comes in. In a pragmatic sense, Martin Luther King and Ivan Allen and Donald Hollowell and countless others taught all us Georgians that it was better to swim together than to sink separately. We have generally been too busy to hate, too open to quit, and too peaceful to fight. And yet in Georgia, as in education, we have miles to go.

Don Hollowell made Georgia better because he criticized things that needed to be better.

Third, I'm a Christian. I try not to wear it on my sleeve, but I do try to wear it. Not always perfectly, often awkwardly, but it's always there. The forces other than law that ultimately brought the races together in the South were college sports and down home religion. Southern cornbread and greens didn't hurt either. I'm a product of two parents who truly believed that you were to treat all people like you wanted to be treated. And just like we sang in Sunday School, that included "red and yellow, black and white" because they're all precious in his sight.

Don Hollowell was a Christian. He didn't strike at people when he could have, but he knew it was wrong for Martin Luther King to be in Reidsville Prison, for Charlayne Hunter to have to study at Wayne State University, for Grady Hospital to be without black doctors and nurses.

I know of the rhetorical tradition of this pulpit and I have no right to lecture this crowd, but Marvin Arrington was right: Donald Hollowell "helped Atlanta save its soul."

The third irony is that by living like a Christian, Donald Hollowell taught us all to respect Christian values.

Finally, Donald Hollowell's work on Earth is now done. Ours is not – as educators, as Georgians, nor as Christians.

Don Hollowell was a man of insight, of brilliance, of courage, of tenacity. He was just the sort of man I believe the Apostle Paul had in mind when he wrote "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith, henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness." II Timothy 4:7-8, or earlier in Galations 5, "Gentleness and self-control, against such there is no law".

Donald Hollowell, may you rest in peace.