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SENIOR JUDGE HORACE WARD TO RECALL UGA DESEGREGATION BATTLE IN FALL SIBLEY LECTURE

ATHENS, Ga. - Horace Ward wanted the University of Georgia, but the University of Georgia didn't want him. Ward, who 50 years ago became the first African American to seek admission to the state-supported institution, will recall the battle to desegregate UGA in the School of Law's 92nd Sibley Lecture to be held Tuesday, October 31 at 4 p.m. in the Chapel. The lecture and reception which follows are open to the public without an admission charge.

Ward, now a senior judge on the United States District Court for the Northern District of Georgia, will share his experience in the lecture, "Desegregation of Public Higher Education in Georgia Revisited: Background, Court Cases, and the Aftermath as Witnessed by a Major Participant."

Ward's eyewitness account occurred both as a plaintiff and lawyer. In September 1950, he applied to the University of Georgia School of Law. The U.S. Supreme Court had recently forced the University of Texas to desegregate, and other border states had begun to admit blacks to their universities. Ward, a LaGrange native who had earned an undergraduate degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta and a master's degree in political science from Atlanta University, had reason to believe he stood a chance of being admitted. However, UGA and the University System of Georgia Board of Regents responded to his application by establishing new law school admissions criteria: a battery of tests and the requirement of personal recommendations from alumni, including one from the judge of the superior court in the applicant's home judicial circuit. The moves effectively blocked Ward's entrance. UGA and the board of regents offered to pay his tuition at an out-of-state law school -- a practice that was prevalent among Southern universities seeking to maintain segregation. Ward refused and spent the next seven years fighting to gain access to his home state's university.

Ward was represented in his discrimination suit by a team of well-known advocates, including attorneys Donald Hollowell and Constance Baker-Motley, who represented the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Thirty days before his case was to be heard, Ward received notice that he had been drafted into the army. After serving two years in the military, he returned to Georgia and renewed his lawsuit. The case finally went to trial in December 1956, but was dismissed shortly thereafter when the judge ruled the issue as moot upon learning that Ward had enrolled as a law student at Northwestern University. Thus, the question of discrimination was never decided by the court.

Ward returned to Georgia upon the completion of his law degree at Northwestern and soon joined his former attorney, Donald Hollowell, in representing Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes in the lawsuit that led to the integration of UGA in 1961.

"The School of Law is honored to provide a forum for Judge Ward to offer his truly unique perspective of a shameful chapter in the history of this institution," said Paul Kurtz, associate dean of the law school. "It is important for the university community to learn from the mistakes of the past in order to move forward."

Ward was elected to the Georgia State Senate in 1964, where he served four terms as the second African American elected to that body since Reconstruction. Governor Jimmy Carter appointed him to the Civil Court (now State Court) of Fulton County in 1974, becoming the first African-American trial judge in the state. Ward was elevated to the Fulton County Superior Court in 1977 by Governor George Busbee, and in 1979, he became the first African American on the federal bench in Georgia when President Carter appointed him to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Georgia. Ward continues to serve on the federal court today, but assumed senior judge status in 1994.

Ward was the subject of a documentary on Georgia Public Television earlier this year, "Foot Soldier for Equal Justice," which chronicled his efforts to desegregate the University of Georgia. The program was prepared by Maurice Daniels, an associate professor in UGA's School of Social Work.

The Sibley Lecture Series, established in 1964 by the Charles Loridans Foundation of Atlanta, is designed to attract outstanding legal scholars of national prominence to the law school. It honors the late John A. Sibley, a 1911 law school graduate who served for many years as chair of the board of the Trust Company of Georgia.

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A photograph of Judge Horace Ward is available electronically via UGA Communications' Photographic Services Web Site at <http://photo.alumni.uga.edu/photohome.htm>

You will need to search for Ward by name.