

THE UNEQUIVOCAL HERBERT BLALOCK DIXON, JR.

IN FOUR PARTS

WRITTEN BY BROTHER DONALD G. LUCAS, BASILEUS
ALPHA OMEGA CHAPTER



“The proverb says, whoever follows a wise man walks in good company.”

Brother Courtenay L. Miller, Chaplain, Alpha Omega Chapter
On the occasion of Brother Judge Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr's retirement

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

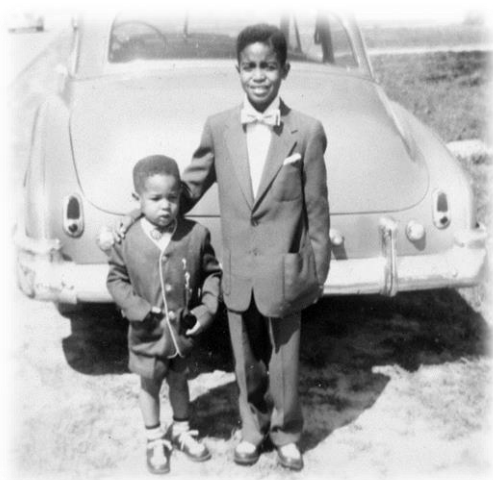
As the fall season ushers in the changing of colors, so are we reminded that nature's cycles are mirrored in our labors and our lives. Fittingly, on Friday, October 23, 2015 at 5:30 p.m., in the season and hour of transition, colleagues, family and friends filled the 3rd floor atrium of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia's H. Carl Moultrie, I Courthouse in Washington, D.C. They gathered to reflect upon and celebrate the career of Brother Judge Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr. on the occasion of his retirement after 30 years on the bench. The large, resonant hall was filled with onlookers, many of whom stood along the walls, as the many chairs provided for their comfort were already occupied. Their faces were young and old, with expressions changing over the course of the evening's program from heartening reflection to gratitude and honor as they contemplated their days spent in service with the judge.

To the far left of the podium where the program speakers, including Brother Dixon, shared remembrances and foretold things to come, stood a bust of the late Brother H. Carl Moultrie, I. The sculptor is to be commended for capturing Brother Moultrie's dignity and grace, and for forecasting his apparent pleasure at his former law clerk's journey. On this day, a reflective and proud gaze seemed to soften the face of the heavy bronze rendering. Its position and proximity to the program activities also seemed appropriate, given Brother Moultrie's presence in Brother Dixon's life; the bridge builder returned to witness the once "fair-haired youth" reach the far side of the "chasm, deep and wide." To the initiated, the sturdy bronze bust was a fitting complement.



Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr. was born in Savannah, Georgia to Herbert and Julia Dixon. Like many black parents in the Jim Crow South, the Dixons nurtured Herbert and his younger brother, Julius, through their own examples of hard work, perseverance, and necessarily related sense of possibility and betterment. His father worked for the United States Postal Service as a mail carrier and his mother worked as a county health nurse. Based on their own experiences, the Dixons instilled in their sons the importance of education. Herbert's father attended Savannah State College, but did not graduate. His mother completed a four-year nursing program at the University Hospital School of Nursing (the Lamar School of Nursing) in Augusta, Georgia and graduated as a Registered Nurse. The Lamar School was recognized in the South for its efforts to train "colored" nurses. As was the custom at certain schools in the South, the Lamar School allowed blacks to study and train with white students as long as the black students sat in the back of the class.

Notwithstanding the indignities, many black students persevered and became the first college-trained black registered nurses in the South. Julia Dixon was included in that number.



Dixon was educated in the segregated schools of Savannah. He attended Alfred Ely Beach High School where he was a self-described nerd. His favorite subjects in school were science, physics, algebra and geometry. Although Beach High School did not offer math classes beyond algebra and geometry at the time, Dixon remembers having particularly inspiring math and liberal arts teachers who exposed him to new possibilities. His new-found inspiration wasn't limited to academics. He was so inspired that, although he had not before played organized sports, he decided to try out for the school's state championship basketball team. Suffice it to say, his basketball career was short-lived; nevertheless, his inspiration remained undiminished. With

basketball out of his system, he could focus on more altruistic pursuits. He ran for and served on the student council in his sophomore and junior years, and went on to become student council president as a senior.

This accomplishment perhaps marked the beginning of a pattern that would play out over the course of Dixon's life - a pattern that would at a minimum prove elemental, and more likely, fundamental to his character and contributions over time. This pattern can be described as a recurring demonstration of a willingness to try; a willingness to step outside of one's real and perceived limitations, either self-imposed or external, with a "can do" spirit; an active employment of one's faith and values gifted and learned. The early 20th century poet, Edgar Albert Guest, put it this way:

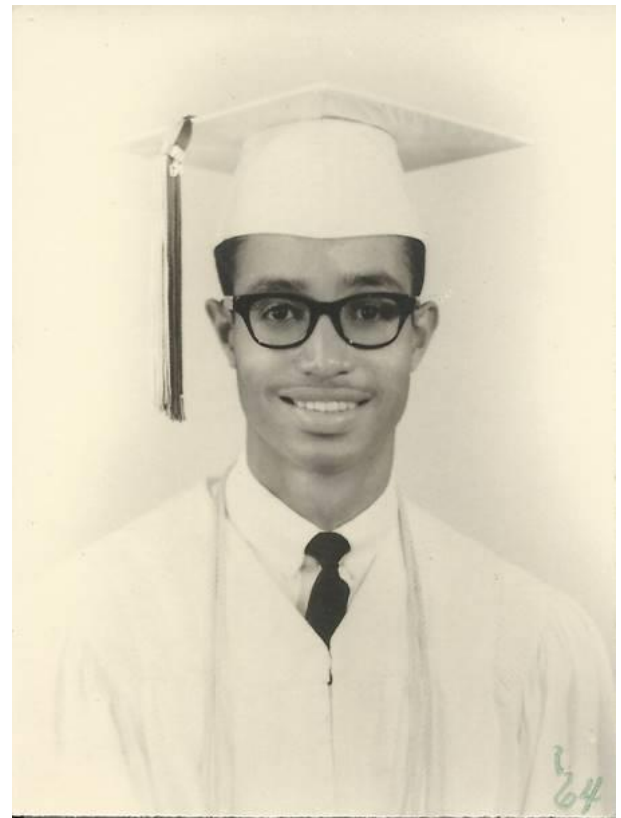
*Somebody said that it couldn't be done
But he with a chuckle replied
That maybe it couldn't, but he would be one
Who wouldn't say so till he'd tried...*

Dixon described himself as a classic introvert in school. Nonetheless, he was recognized in high school as the most likely to succeed. Today, he reflectively submits that, "It is hard to believe the difference of what I could do then and what I can do now."



RESOLUTION

As early as elementary school, Dixon wanted to be a doctor. In particular, he wanted to help kids by becoming a pediatrician. While in high school, Dixon had a change of heart (or perhaps a recalibration of compass) and decided he wanted to pursue a different career, electrical engineering. He applied to Howard University as it was the biggest of the Negro institutions at the time. Given his interest in electrical engineering, and the fact that he was a Georgia resident, Dixon also applied to the Georgia Institute of Technology (Georgia Tech). Though he was a Georgia resident and had received the highest SAT score of his high school graduating class in 1964, his race made his acceptance to the predominately white institution unlikely, and so it was. Georgia Tech did not begin accepting black students without a court order until 1961, and even then only a few were admitted to the university. Dixon remembers the letter he received from Georgia Tech, in which the school congratulated him on his achievements to date and conveyed that it believed Dixon would be successful in college, just not at their



college. The university actually said in its letter to Dixon that based on the caliber of its students, it didn't think he would succeed at Georgia Tech. It seems the standard rejection letter was insufficient.

Dixon's not being admitted to Georgia Tech was likely a blessing in disguise. After high school Dixon matriculated to Howard University with the support of his parents and the help of a few partial scholarships, including one from Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity. Early on, he declared electrical engineering as his major course of study. By his own standards, his academic performance was average in his first year. College life at Howard University was rich with diverse and competing experiences, including Greek life. In his sophomore year, Dixon decided to pledge a fraternity and, despite receiving a scholarship from the Alphas, set his sights on the Alpha Chapter of the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Incorporated - The Mother Pearl.

Dixon chose Omega because of its demonstration of brotherhood. He described it as phenomenal. “You could just tell when they were together with each other. It was more like a brotherhood than a club.” By comparison, the Alphas and the other fraternities seemed like mere clubs to Dixon. In addition to the exceptional comradery that existed among the Omega Brothers, Omega’s values, principles, demands, and personalities were appealing to Dixon. The quality within Dixon to be courageous and principled, noble and resolute in his undertakings was and continues to be valued by Omega. Omega likely chose Dixon as much as he chose Omega for this very reason.



Suffice it to say, Dixon and the Brothers of the Mother Pearl were like-minded. He credits an experience that occurred on his first day as a pledge as proof that if he wanted to be (or needed to be) uncharacteristically unreserved, he could. After being accepted into the Lampados pledge club, the Omega Brothers gathered the “Lamps,” as the pledge club members were called, and told them a basketball game was scheduled for that afternoon between Omega and another fraternity. The game was to begin in about an hour, and in that time each Lamp was to convince two “Fine!” young ladies to accompany them to the game. The introverted Dixon did not panic (at least not in front of anyone). There happened to be a nice young lady Dixon had taken an interest in, but with whom he had had not gotten beyond “Hello, how are you? What’s your name? Where are you from?” Faced with his first challenge as a Lamp, he figured his limited progress with the young lady would have to do. He ran to the dormitory and buzzed her room pleading with her to come to his aid. He explained he needed her and one of her friends to come with him to the basketball game, quickly! To Dixon’s relief, she agreed and named one of her friends she thought would be willing to go along. Not knowing the friend, the ever-vigilant Dixon responded by asking, “How does she look?”



Thanks to Omega, Dixon was forced to lean into extraversion under the specter of reprisal from the Brothers. He was presented with having to do something out of his comfort zone, and he responded as he had several times before, with courage, faith, and resolve – all Omega qualities. Pledging Omega taught him he could summon the courage and wherewithal to accomplish challenging things. Looking back on that first day on line, Dixon shared, “it sounds like a small incident but it taught

me that if there is something you want out there where you have to be assertive, aggressive, or outgoing, you can do it. The way I describe it is I just take a deep breath and go do what I have to do.”

Dixon laughs when trying to explain why he thought the Brothers chose him for membership. Other than the circumstances at the time, he doesn't know the answer to that question. Prior to becoming a Lamp, Dixon had met some of the Brothers “on the yard” but did not know many of them very well. Moreover, he went into the pledge process without previously knowing any of his eventual line brothers. He met all of them moments before having to quickly find two “Fine!” young coeds who would agree to accompany him to a fraternity basketball game. Surely there are worse ways to embark on a lifelong enterprise of friendship, personal growth, and consecrated usefulness.



The mid- to late-1960's was a dynamic period in the history of the fraternity, and Alpha Chapter was no exception. The Civil Rights movement introduced (some might say, liberated) new thinking in the black community that challenged well-established social and political paradigms. Fashion, music, art, poetry, and politics proffered new ideas of what it meant to be black in America. Soul Brother No. 1 had arrived on the scene and his Funky Drummer protected the beat of a movement - a movement that implored, “Say it Loud, I'm Black and I'm Proud.” Students began to question the relevancy of everything to the black community, including membership in Black Greek Letter Organizations (BGLOs). It was a time of tension and anti-



Greek sentiment, and a resistance to black Greek life became part of the Howard experience. At Howard, there was constant critique, discussion, and debate about BGLO relevance. Prior to this period, BGLOs dominated student life on the storied campus, including the Student Council and The Hilltop (campus newspaper). That began to change in the mid-1960s, as non-BGLO members of the student body began assuming positions of leadership.

History records this as a period of civil protest and uprising. Dixon remembers the students taking over the Howard University Administration Building and engaging in a sit-in to protest the Administration. Regarding this particular incident, Dixon admits his new-found extraversion was not without restraint, as he

avoided placing himself at the center of the disharmony. Philip Stanhope once said, “Judgment is not upon all occasions required, but discretion always is.” When the sit-in ended Dixon was walking toward Slowe and Carver residence halls. A few blocks from the university he remembers coming upon an enormous number of police officers in tactical gear and almost as many police cars and motorcycles. Years later, Dixon learned that the police were staging for a raid of the Administration Building that night to remove the students. However, the raid never happened due to the intervention of another fraternity brother, Luke C. Moore, who at the time was the U.S. Marshal for the District of Columbia. Brother Moore went on to become a D.C. Superior Court Judge.

Some might say this was a period of redefinition and recalibration for Omega, and that may be true. What is also true, and instructive, is that underlying this and other periodic Omega recalibrations was a rediscovery, reclamation, and reintroduction of longstanding values, standards, and principles – Omega’s enduring fundamentals, its own rhythm section.



Emblematic of this reclamation was the 1966 Alpha Chapter line known as The Unequivocal Eleven. Dixon was number 8 of 11 pledges on the line. Dixon’s pledge line was uncharacteristically small in number compared to other contemporary Alpha Chapter pledge lines. For example, the three lines before Dixon’s had 20, 21, and 17 pledges, respectively. Between 1965 and 1966, Alpha Chapter changed its eligibility requirements by, among other things, raising the minimum grade point average required for consideration. The chapter was looking for candidates who possessed better than average grades, and who also demonstrated a capacity for leadership and for preserving Omega’s high standards. Dixon and his line brothers met these requirements.

50th Anniversary Celebration Alpha Chapter’s 1966 Spring Line *The Unequivocal Eleven*



(Above, L-R) #1 Frank Allen (Q); #2 Val P. Viola (Q); #3 Vincent A. Holmes (Q); #4 Harold J. Cook; #5 Charles D. Fowler, III; #6 Charles A. Singleton; #7 Luther Adair (Q); #8 Herbert B. Dixon, Jr.; #9 Karel Kennedy; #10 Stanley Gardner Scott; #11 Vernon E. Haley

Shining Stars in the Crown of OMEGA



Brother Dixon

Brother Cook

Brother Fowler



Brother Singleton



Brother Kennedy

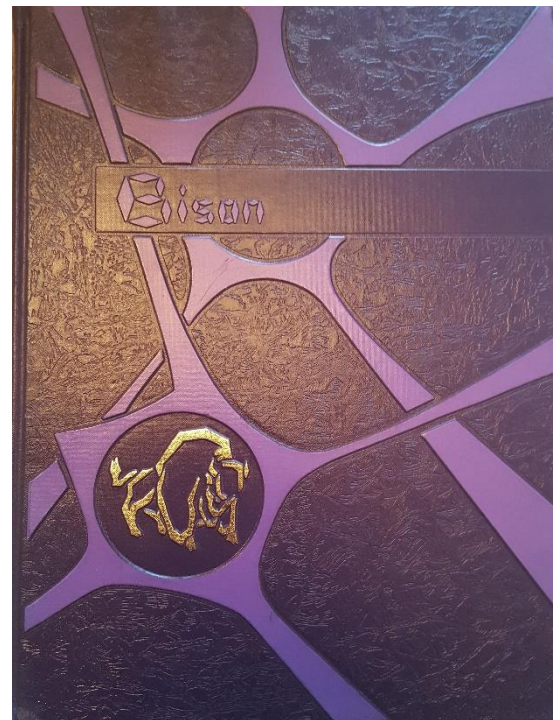
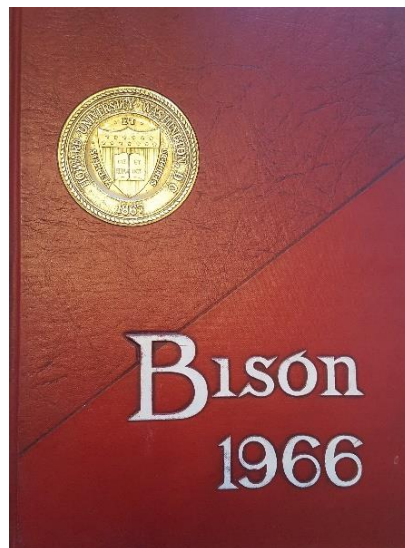
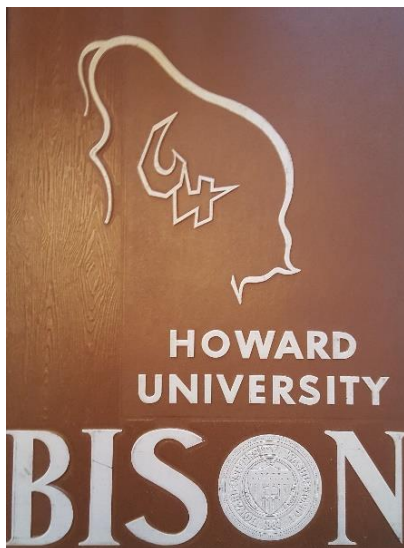


Brother Haley

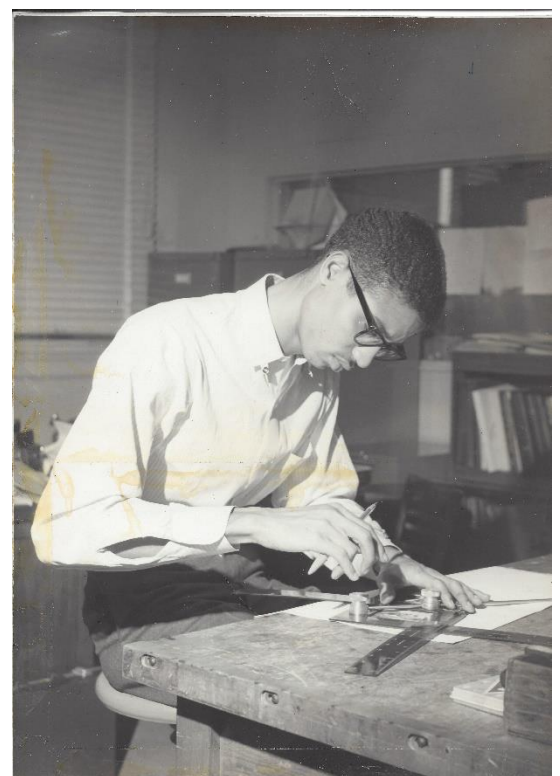


Brother Scott





After initiation, Dixon became increasingly engaged and active in campus life. He attributes his involvement to his pledging and initiation into Omega. Two of Dixon's most memorable endeavors were the Howard University Engineer Magazine, of which he became Editor-in-Chief, and the Bison Yearbook, for which he worked and became Editor in 1968. The Omega men who had previously served as Editor of the Bison Yearbook were Brother Ralph M. Durham (6-64-A) in 1966 and Brother Frank Byron Patterson (15-62-A) in 1964. Both yearbooks were highly acclaimed. Brother Durham's yearbook was burgundy and gold, and Brother Patterson's offering was an unprecedented brown and white. When it was Dixon's turn, he decided to put Omega's preeminence on display by selecting royal purple and metallic gold to adorn the cover of the prized publication. This was a bold and powerful statement, causing quite a stir on Howard's campus. In his not so subliminal promotion of Omega, Dixon reminded the university community that the BGLO, Omega in particular, was still an integral and meaningful part of the college, and moreover, the black experience. The rediscovery, reclamation, and reintroduction were complete. A virtuoso performance, indeed.



In addition to his service to the university community, Dixon was also elected and served as Basileus of Alpha Chapter from 1967-68. The once shy, introverted, and self-proclaimed nerd from Beach High School in Savannah, Georgia, was now the leader of The Mother Pearl on the campus of one of the most historically significant universities in the country. As Basileus, Dixon was committed to making Alpha Chapter the best it could be. He worked with advisors from Alpha Omega chapter, including H. Albion Farrell, former Grand Chaplain, and the Director of the Office of Student Life, Vincent Johns, to further the interests of the fraternity on Howard's campus. He was a true leader, challenging not only himself, but also his Alpha Chapter brothers and others, to try new things and take on new challenges.



He embarked on one such challenge with a committee that included Brothers Edward "Eddie" Kane and Taft "Chuck" H. Broome, Jr. (Kane was an undergraduate art student. Broome was a graduate engineering student who had served as Alpha Chapter Basileus from 1964-65 and, in later life, served as the Dean of Civil Engineering at Howard. Brother Dr. Broome was later awarded the Frank Byron Patterson Award,

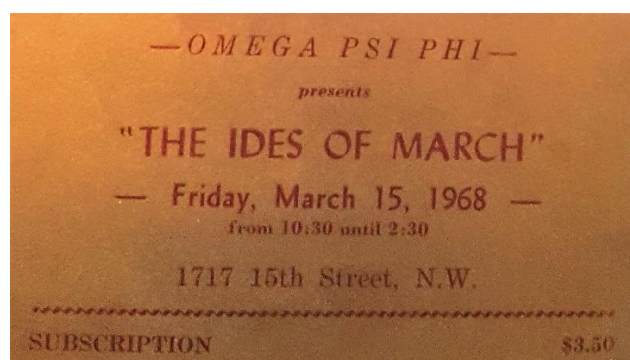
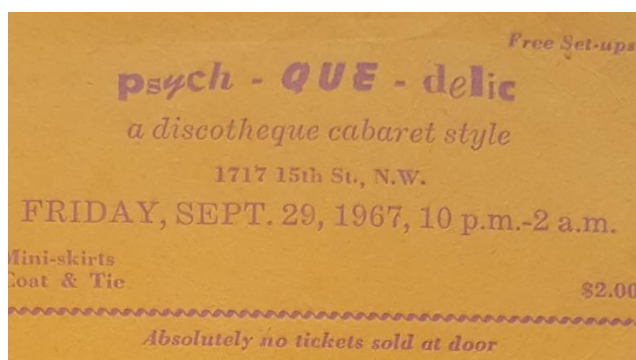


given by Alpha Chapter to honor those Brothers whose service to Omega and its Four Cardinal Principles sets an example for others. Dixon was the first recipient of this award in 2000.) Dixon, Kane, and Broome decided to design a float for the 1967 Howard Homecoming Parade. They designed the float in accordance with Howard's homecoming theme, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow," represented by a log cabin, Founders Library, and a heliport. It was an ambitious undertaking and they didn't have the money to build the float. Fortunately, Dixon, Kane, and Broome had Omega in their souls and in their corner, and they had the engineering and artistic skills necessary to take on this challenge. Their float won first place in its category and first place overall. Afterwards, Dixon recalls how good it felt to take the first place trophies back to the Brothers of Alpha Omega Chapter who had rewarded the young brother's initiative and vision with an investment in his project.

Dixon didn't stop there. As Basileus, he saw an opportunity to increase the Chapter's profit from one of its main fundraising events, and in doing so upset and redefined the campus cabaret market. It was common then for fraternities and sororities to raise money for their respective operations by hosting dances at the student center. The going price for these dances in the late 1960s was 50¢. Alpha Chapter, under Dixon's leadership, set out to host a fall cabaret at an off-site facility, with Dixon proposing an admission price of \$2. Stop the presses! Get out of town! No way will this ever work!" exclaimed the doubters. Protests notwithstanding, Dixon knew that

*When you're up against a trouble,
Meet it squarely, face to face;
Lift your chin and set your shoulders,
Plant your feet and take a brace.
When it's vain to try to dodge it,
Do the best that you can do;
You may fail, but you may conquer,
See it through! – Edgar Albert Guest*

In the face of great backlash from all interested parties, Dixon remained resolute. The cabaret was a hit. By demonstrating courage in the face of adversity, Dixon helped to raise more money from the cabaret than ever before. It was so successful they sponsored a spring cabaret and charged \$3.50. The other BGLOs on campus took note and were quick to follow suit. The campus cabaret market had adjusted and would never be the same again.



Dixon acknowledges that, in spite of his shyness, he began doing all these things he might not have done otherwise because of his Omega experience. Dixon's growth and maturation as a leader is illuminating in the context of the age old debate over whether Omega makes men or men make Omega. The answer probably lies somewhere in the middle. Omega nurtured what was already given to Dixon by his parents and the Supreme Basileus of the Universe. It called out and sharpened his pre-existing sense of right and wrong, integrity, character, judgement, courage, hope, optimism, worthiness, and self-determination. In doing so, it further prepared him for a life of meaning and importance.

PURSUANCE



In his senior year, Dixon set his sights on life after Howard; a life that he intended to share with the former Miss Phoebe Boykins, whom he married that year. Phoebe grew up in Vicksburg, Mississippi, and matriculated to Howard University after high school. Neither of her parents went to college, but they, like Dixon's parents, instilled the value and importance of education in their five children. Phoebe was an outstanding student and active member of the university community while at Howard. She pledged and eventually became president of the Alpha Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. Shortly after graduating from Howard, Mrs. Dixon became a charter member of the sorority's distinguished Federal City Alumnae Chapter in Washington, D.C. She also earned a Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree from George Washington University. Mrs. Dixon went on to have a successful career in the telecommunications industry, retiring from Verizon as its Vice President of Sales. Her older brother, also an Omega man, Ernest A. Boykins, Jr., obtained his Ph.D. and served as president of Mississippi Valley State University from 1971 – 1981.

With Phoebe at his side and in his heart, Dixon initially planned to graduate with a degree in electrical engineering and then apply to graduate school to study for his own MBA degree. After earning an MBA, Dixon thought he would enter corporate America and work as an engineer. His plans would soon change. Upon learning that several of his classmates were pursuing a similar path, Dixon made an abrupt decision to apply to law school. He remembered years earlier that several of his fraternity brothers and other Howard students had attended law school, but he had not known many practicing or aspiring lawyers. Although he was in close physical proximity to Howard University Law School, and in relatively close personal and spiritual proximity to many of the country's most notable legal minds, including James Nabrit, William Hastie, Thurgood Marshall, Spotswood Robinson, and Oliver Hill, he described them all as distant luminaries. Some might say his decision was whimsical, capricious, confused, or ill-advised given his engineering background and training. Others might say it was courageous. In retrospect, it was likely just Dixon being Dixon; at the core of the man is an



internal compass whose directional pointer seems magnetically drawn to what is right and true and honorable. Not that pursuing an MBA was dishonorable, it simply wasn't his truth. Judgement, discretion, integrity, honor, intellect, reason, faith and the courage to live up to these virtues were beginning to define Dixon's constitution. They stubbornly pointed Dixon in the direction of the law.

After graduating from Howard, Dixon worked as an engineer by day and attended Georgetown Law School at night. Georgetown was one of the few law schools in Washington, D.C. that offered a part-time law degree program that held classes in the evenings. It also didn't hurt that Georgetown was one of the best law schools in the country. Although he started law school as a part-time student, that soon changed as the U.S. military came calling. Dixon had joined the Reserve Officers Training Corps (R.O.T.C.) as an undergraduate at Howard, which required him to serve four years in the Army upon his graduation. Instead, Dixon received a deferment from the military until after he completed law school. This arrangement did not last, however, as the military sought to revoke Dixon's deferment unless he began attending law school full-time, a requirement with which he complied.



Dixon graduated from Georgetown in 1973 and subsequently clerked for fellow fraternity brother and Georgetown Law School alum, H. Carl Moultrie, I, then an associate judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia. Brother Moultrie served as Omega's first National Executive Secretary from 1949 – 1972 and was considered by many to be "one of Omega's best known and respected sons," and more affectionately, "Mr. Omega." In 1978, Judge Moultrie became Chief Judge of the D.C. Superior Court and, shortly after his passing in 1986, he was recognized for his many years of service by the renaming of the courthouse building in his honor. Brother Moultrie's example would have a profound impact on Dixon during and after his clerkship. Dixon described Brother Moultrie as tirelessly committed to

excellence in all he did. His enthusiasm was infectious. His energy, wit, sharp mind, thoughtfulness, and ability to ascertain quickly the right thing to say or do at the right time with an uncommon sense of economy was legendary. All of these qualities were elemental to Brother Moultrie's unmistakable charisma, but perhaps most compelling was his keen sense of what it means to be human and his related ability to engineer our tendencies, capabilities, and limitations as human beings into a workable and productive organizational circumstance. This served Brother Moultrie well as Chief Judge of the D.C. Superior Court and as Omega's first National Executive Secretary. Dixon was uplifted by his association with Brother Moultrie.

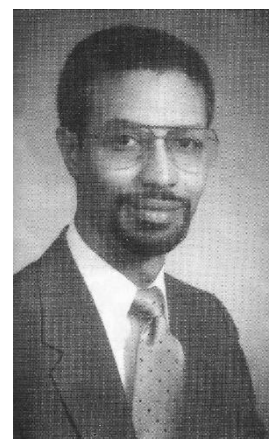
During his clerkship, the military came calling again. Dixon had graduated from law school and it was time to fulfill his military commitment, but it was also an important time in his development as a lawyer. So Dixon sought the help of Judge Moultrie, and two other prominent D.C. Superior Court judges, George D.

Draper, II, and Brother John D. Fauntleroy, in hopes of finding a way to continue his clerkship. Recognizing Dixon's promise and potential, the three judges appealed to the military to allow Dixon to report for duty at the completion of his clerkship. The military agreed.

Ever-dutiful, after finishing his clerkship Dixon reported for military service. He and Phoebe were presented with an opportunity to serve in Japan, which, of all their options, was most appealing. When Dixon reported for duty, to his astonishment the intake officer asked if he wanted to serve for four years or three months. In the moments that followed, Dixon learned that as a result of the Vietnam War ending, there was a surplus of officers. Consequently, Dixon was offered the "palace option," which required him to serve on active duty for 89 days and as a reservist for three years. In the end, Dixon accepted the palace option and was assigned to the Judge Advocate General's Office at L'Enfant Plaza for his 89 days of active duty. Japan would have to wait.

With his military obligation fulfilled, in 1974 Dixon worked for two years as an associate in the Law Office of Wesley S. Williams, Sr. (*Williams was the first black president of the D.C. Board of Education. His stewardship covered the period in which the city's schools were desegregated after the U.S. Supreme Court's Brown v. Topeka Board of Education decision in 1954 and the bitter controversy in the 1960s over the track system, a procedure in which students were grouped on the basis of academic ability and test scores.*) In 1976, Dixon went into private practice with former Georgetown Law School classmate, Francis S. Smith. The two were subsequently joined by another classmate and fellow Alpha Chapter Brother, John A. Turner, Jr., in 1978, and thereafter by Francis D. Carter, later Director of the Public Defender Service. Dixon and his partners operated a general practice law firm that specialized in corporate, domestic relations, and criminal defense law.

As the late 1980's approached, Dixon's "compass" began to point him in a different direction, away from enterprise and toward service. During this time, Dixon served as President of the District of Columbia Lung Association, a member of the National Board of Directors of the American Lung Association, and President of the Jr. Citizens Corps. In November 1984, Dixon was elected Basileus of Alpha Omega Chapter of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Incorporated. Alpha Omega was the largest and arguably one of the most storied graduate chapters in the fraternity. For decades, its members were individually and collectively recognized for their service to the D.C. community and beyond. Dixon would now carry on that legacy, after being sworn into office by his longtime mentor and friend, Brother Moultrie.



Brother Herbert B. Dixon, Jr., Basileus,
Alpha Omega Chapter, Omega Psi Phi
Fraternity, Inc.



More than one hundred fifty Omega Men came together to witness and to participate in the installation of officers and rededication ceremonies at the Alpha Omega Fraternity House located on Harvard Street, N.W., in Washington, D.C.

In the way of a time-honored tradition, the Honorable Brother Chief Judge H. Carl Moultrie, I, delivered the oath to eight newly elected officers of Alpha Omega whom the majority of voting members present had, by secret written ballot, chosen to be their duly elected representatives. As Chief Judge of the Superior Court of the District of Columbia, Judge Moultrie is also National Executive Secretary, Emeritus, with scope and jurisdiction extending four international chapters of Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. He also serves preeminently on numerous other District, national, and international boards dedicated to human progress.



In a solemn tone, with sacred words imbued into the hearts and innermost parts of every Omega Man, Chief Judge Moultrie individually and collectively, commissioned Brothers Herbert B. Dixon, Jr., Basileus; Alfred O. Taylor, Jr., Vice Basileus; Vincent L. Peden, Keeper of Records and Seal; Marlon E. Allen, Assistant Keeper of Records and Seal; Gary C. Clark, Keeper of Finance; Charles H. Strayhorn, Chaplain; George L. Preyer, Keeper of Peace; and Dewitt H. Evans, Chapter Reporter, to their respective offices.

Using measured words with well-modulated tones during the entire ceremony, Judge Moultrie also simultaneously charged each officer, individually and collectively, with a rededication to the four cardinal principals of Omega: Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, and Uplift in the discharge of their duties and responsibilities to the fraternity, to the community, and to the nation, with particular emphasis on “duties and responsibilities.”

The Oracle, Winter 1984-1985



During his two-year administration, Brother Dixon increased Alpha Omega Chapter membership from approximately 290 members to over 400. Dixon was subsequently recognized for his leadership with the Omega Psi Phi Third District Basileus of the Year, Alpha Omega Chapter Man of the Year, and Washington Chapters Citizen of the Year awards.

Less than a year later, in 1985, Dixon was appointed by President Ronald Wilson Reagan and confirmed by the U.S. Senate to a 15-year term of service on the Superior Court, a fitting nod to the legacy of his early teacher and fraternity brother, H. Carl Moultrie, I. Dixon was appointed to a second 15-year term in 2000 by then President William Jefferson Clinton, during which time his own legacy was further trained and perfected.



Dixon's accomplishments and contributions over the course of his 30-year career as a D.C. Superior Court judge were numerous. He presided over more than a thousand cases, some notorious and high-profile. One such case, *Morgan v. Fortich*, involved a child custody dispute between a well-known Washington, D.C. plastic surgeon and her husband, an equally accomplished oral surgeon. During the case, Dixon ordered that the father be allowed unsupervised visitation with the daughter. The mother refused, alleging that the father had sexually abused the daughter. Although the mother was afforded multiple opportunities to prove her allegations based on a preponderance of the evidence, she was unsuccessful. Dixon, in an attempt to compel the mother to produce the daughter, held her in contempt of court and put her in jail for what would turn out to be an extended stay. As the standoff between Dixon and the mother persisted, Dixon was under increasing pressure to release her from jail. Throughout the case, courtrooms were packed, and newspapers across the country covered

the real-life drama. The New York Times quoted Dixon as saying the case had "tried [his] very existence and gnawed at [him] as a human being."

In the end, the case lasted a decade, with the mother's two year incarceration ending after Congress passed the *District of Columbia Civil Contempt Imprisonment Limitation Act* in 1989, effectively undermining Dixon's ability to compel the mother to comply with his order. The case had all the makings of a Hollywood movie, which was not lost on Hollywood. In 1992, a made-for-television film entitled *A Mother's Right: The Elizabeth Morgan Story* aired on primetime television. All the main characters in the real-life drama were depicted in the film, including Judge Dixon. His character made only a cameo appearance, which was just fine with the real-life judge.

Dixon remembers the newspapers requesting interviews and talking to people trying to find out more about him and how he was holding up under all the scrutiny and pressure. Half joking, half serious, Dixon thought to himself that these people had never had the occasion of presiding over a meeting of Alpha Omega Chapter. His Omega experience, including his service as Basileus while at Alpha and Alpha Omega chapters, helped prepare him for tough times on the bench. The newspapers even called around asking who his friends were. Little did they know, his friends were in plain sight. He was going to the fraternity house every Wednesday night as he had always done. Once again Omega had prepared him, and once again Omega was there for him.



Although it was well known, the Morgan v. Fortich case was only part of Dixon's experience, contribution, and legacy as a judge. One of Dixon's other notable accomplishments was his election as Chair of the National Conference of State Trial Judges, the largest and most prestigious organization of general trial judges in the world. As described by Brother Dixon, "that was a nice accomplishment by a judge from a non-state." To say that his industry affiliations, chairmanships, mentor protégé relationships, advisory boards, leadership councils, lectures, papers and other journalistic contributions were many, would be a gross understatement. But they too are only a part of the legacy Dixon has perfected.

In the early 1990's, Dixon, aided by his compass, found his way home. Not back to Savannah, Georgia, but back to his truth – technology. It was during this time that Dixon discovered information about electronic case filing in the Delaware court system. An engineer at heart, Dixon saw the possibilities in the Delaware example and was motivated to implement the same and more in D.C. He moved quickly and led an effort to implement electronic case filing in the D.C. court, which would prove to be the first of many significant contributions he would go on to make involving applied technologies. Dixon was very interested in technology and understood its ability to bring about efficiencies and reduce errors. He was also an experienced and accomplished judge who understood well the mechanics and infrastructure of justice, or at least the judicial process and related judicial proceedings. He understood the technology and he knew how to apply it. Dixon began pushing the concept of high-technology courtrooms to his colleagues and to the chief judges of the D.C. Superior Court. In an article he wrote for the National Center for State Courts titled, *The Evolution of a High-Technology Courtroom* in 2011, Dixon wrote

Traditional litigators and judges whose skills were honed without the newfangled gadgets were not the fastest to embrace new technologies. As time passed, however, the population of old-school litigators dwindled and interest in litigating in high-technology courtrooms increased. I had the good fortune over the last two years to be involved with the design and construction of a high-technology

courtroom and to be assigned to the courtroom and asked to promote use of the new technologies among the practitioners on my calendar.

After pitching the idea of a high-technology courtroom, one of the chief judges agreed to give it a try. As he had done many times before, Dixon delivered. Since then, Dixon has been responsible for the establishment and continual development of two state-of-the-art, high-technology courtrooms at the D.C. Superior Court. These courtrooms represent a fundamental shift in how cases are filed; how arguments, evidence, and exhibits are presented; how witnesses are engaged in the judicial process; and how jurors deliberate.



High-technology courtrooms have evolved under Dixon's leadership, and are now equipped with large, hi-definition video displays; annotation monitors that allow witnesses to digitally mark exhibits; witness monitors that allow for presentation of evidence to elicit testimony concerning the authenticity and relevance of the exhibit to the witness; evidence cameras that can convert a paper document or physical exhibit to a digital image that can be enlarged or otherwise enhanced for clarity; video (DVD) players; courtroom printing and data storage of exhibits; integrated

controllers that allow for the centralized management and sharing of content; wireless Internet connectivity; remote witness testimony and video conferencing; and computer-aided discovery.

In addition to designing and promoting high-technology courtrooms, Dixon's currency and commentary on issues involving the application of Fourth Amendment protections to the search and seizure of evidence obtained from digital and cellular telecommunications devices and networks, is duly recognized by his peers. He is considered one of the foremost authorities on current and future jurisprudence related to advancements in communications technology. Because of his trailblazing work, Dixon is known nationally as the "Technology Judge." He is a frequent speaker at technology conferences and writes a regular technology column for *The Judge's Journal*, a quarterly publication of the Judicial Division of the American Bar Association.



The Technology Judge! A distinguished and unequivocal legacy trained and perfected through the practice and personification of Manhood, Scholarship, Perseverance, Uplift and service to others.

PSALM

On April 7, 2016, Brother Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr. celebrated his 50th year of service as a loyal Son of Omega. On July 5, 2016, husband and father Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr. and his wife, Phoebe, celebrated 47 years of marriage. On October 31, 2015, Judge Herbert Blalock Dixon, Jr. retired after 30 years, 4 months, and 25 days as a judge on the Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

In 2000, after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Mechanical Engineering from Stanford University, Dixon's daughter, Stacey Angela Dixon, earned her Ph.D. in Mechanical Engineering from the Georgia Institute of Technology – the same Georgia Tech that years earlier denied admission to her father. In 2015, after graduating with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Engineering from the University of Maryland Baltimore County, Dixon's son, Jason Herbert Dixon, earned his Ph.D. in Electrical and Computer Engineering from the same Georgia Tech.

The thing about retirement parties is that although their context is the celebration of one's career, the more meaningful subtext invariably is the celebration of the person. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow proffered, *"For his heart was in his work, and the heart giveth grace unto every art."* Although the occasion was billed as a retirement party, it was not lost on this fortunate observer that it too was a time to celebrate the spirit of the man. Judge Dixon put his heart into all his worthy labors. His masterpiece was and will forever be his disciplined and graceful expression of values, intellect, family, friendship, and faith. Omega draw nigh and give ear, for the spirit of Omega speaks through Brother Dixon's story. This is the same spirit that for 105 years has found its voice in the biographies and autobiographies of Omega's many worthy sons. If we listen closely, perhaps our steps will be more clearly ordered...perhaps our potential will be more completely fulfilled.

Chief Justice Mark Martin of the North Carolina Supreme Court and former Chair of the American Bar Association Judicial Division had this to say about Brother Dixon when in April 2013 he presented Dixon with the Pursuit of Justice Award by the Torts and Insurance Practice Section of the American Bar Association: "Judge Dixon is a model judge and colleague. He is fair, calm, judicious, a problem solver, bridge builder, and in his own quiet way, a trailblazer and a leader. He is kind, understanding, self-deprecating, mild-mannered, reasonable, and really funny. He is diplomatic but truthful, kind but principled, a thinker and a doer. Judge Dixon lives and breathes justice and diversity so much so that he is probably unaware of how fair he truly is and how many different people he has encouraged and helped. Judge Dixon also doesn't know this, he has fans...a legion of them. He is not a rock star, but a wonderful human being that has made all the difference."

Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.

- Ephesians 6

Sincerely, the judge is a highly respected judge, a leader in the legal profession, respected throughout the ABA, a distinguished member of the Board of Governors of the American Bar Association, and I consider it my privilege to call him, my friend.

Attorney William T. Robinson, III, of Kentucky, former ABA President

Your comments about my dad, and how significant his perception is, and how significant his influence is, reminds me of growing up. Because, whenever I wanted to do something fun in this city, I had to get his permission and all my friends' parents would also have to get his permission. If he said yes, then they would let their kids do it too. - Daughter Stacey Dixon

You've touched the lives of so many, you've improved our profession, and brought great respect and dignity to the profession through your leadership and service. - Attorney Michael G. Bergmann, Chair, Judicial Division American Bar Association Chicago, IL

If God had given me the opportunity to create a big brother, I would not have done Herbert Blaylock Dixon, Jr. justice. The impact that Herb had on the world is the same impact that he has had in our family, and I'm so thankful that God blessed me with a brother of the character of Herbert Dixon. I love you Bro. - Brother Julius Dixon

A very principled judge who handled complex cases and would follow and apply the law no matter the consequences. I was always impressed by Herbert's initiative, accountability, and ownership of the projects he took on. I was also impressed with Herbert's unselfishness. He was always willing to share his knowledge with others. Herbert gained recognition for DC Superior Court through his writing and speaking engagements as he was often called upon by other jurisdictions to talk about technology in the courtroom. He created and implemented the DC Superior Court iPad program and implemented real time court reporting that enhanced communications between court reporters and judges. The success of Herbert's initiatives were largely attributed to his ability to explain technology in clear and understandable terms. Thank you, Herbert, for leaving DC Superior Court better than when you found it. - Chief Judge Lee Satterfield, Superior Court of the District of Columbia.

The National Conference of State Trial Judges commends past Chair Herbert B. Dixon, Jr., on his judicial career of extraordinary accomplishment, positive impact on the administration of justice, and profound service to the American Bar Association, its judicial division, and particularly the National Conference of State Trial Judges. Through distinguished and sustained leadership, Judge Dixon's legacy among his judicial peers is legend and his influence stands to empower the Conference and its membership into the future. - William C. Carpenter, Jr., former US Attorney for the District of Delaware, Judge of Superior Court of Delaware

He has always been generous with his time, his unending patience, and his expertise. -

Honorable Henry (Harry) Greene, Senior Judge, D.C. Superior Court

DC Superior Court's 'Technology Judge' to Retire in 2015
The Legal Times - November 21, 2014



I met Herbert 41 years ago when he started his own private practice. I was very impressed with and admired Herbert's sense of promise, hope, and determination, and my admiration for him remains undiminished today.

Herbert is determined, highly principled, and courageous; a loyal friend and colleague, with an intensity of purpose, though self-deprecating.

He possesses strength of character and personal and professional courage – Herbert is like that tree that stands by the water. He does not back down and he cannot be moved when he believes he is in the right.

While personal courage and integrity in one's personal battles is admirable, what is special about Herbert is he is courageous in supporting his friends and colleagues.

Herbert is a loyal colleague, he can be trusted to maintain a confidence, and he will back a colleague to the hilt.

While he is intense...he has the grace not to take himself too seriously.

It is not what he knows, but how willing he is to share his knowledge unselfishly and with genuine care and patience.

*Harold L. Cushenberry, Jr., Judge D.C. Superior Court
And fellow Georgetown University Law School Graduate*



“He is a man of steel and velvet”

Brother Julius B. Dixon

BROTHERS - In More Ways Than One
In Christ . . . In Blood . . . In Fraternity

Bro. Julius B. Dixon
Life Member # 322
Alpha Chapter
Howard University
April 15, 1972



Bro. Herbert B. Dixon, Jr.
Life Member # 300
Alpha Chapter
Howard University
April 7, 1966

