

A classical man: Dr. Haywood L. Wilson Jr.

This past Saturday morning, a great many folk in this community lost a part of themselves.

For many of us, Haywood Wilson was simply a good friend. For some, he was a boss, a colleague, Sunday school teacher, deacon, or community volunteer.

For his family, he was a husband, father, brother and son. For this community and for his beloved state of North Carolina, Haywood Wilson was like the Rock of Ages, as steady as the Rock of Gibraltar. All of us have lost something.

him one bit. He didn't believe in dressing like a gangster with diamonds, chains and funny hats. Indeed it was an odd thing for Haywood Wilson to be seen looking flashy at all. For Haywood was not about style. He was about substance — no flash. Ask him about anything, any subject, and he'd probably be able to offer an opinion. He was well read. He was a classical man.

He thought it was a good idea to be married to one lady, Rosa, and treat her just like a queen. We

always seemed to make me laugh. He used to accuse me of making him laugh but actually it was him making us both laugh all the time.

Haywood knew how to pray. In fact, many of us would shake our heads in amazement after he offered the blessing or invocation when he would use the word "repast" instead of dinner or lunch. He always prayed for the people in North Carolina. Always. People just didn't know that while they were on their way driving down the interstate, there was Haywood Lester Wilson Jr. busy including them in one of his well-known prayers on campus.

On one of our recent trips we stopped to get barbecue at Speedy's in Lexington. Before we ate one speck of meat, Haywood made sure that the food had been properly blessed. Even before we ate barbecue, Haywood said something about blessing the "people of North Carolina." We couldn't believe it. On our way back home, he made us stop so that he could get his favorite peach milkshake — which he just loved. I don't recall him saying the blessing before eating his shake.

His command of the English language was well known. In fact

the brother was so good with words that we used to accuse him of being able to speak the "king and queen's English." Haywood knew how to make something awful sound good.

One of his favorite expressions was, "sir" which he would often use to interrupt you in a kind and gentle way when he wanted to let you know that you may have made an error in your presentation of the facts. Then he would just laugh. He had such a wonderful laugh that just made you feel good.

Haywood also knew how to make people feel welcomed. He knew how to make people feel like they had something to contribute. He knew how to play on a team. He'd been a team leader many times before, and thus he was well aware of what it meant to be effective in a supportive role.

He was not one looking for the limelight, hoping to be seen, standing tall above others. NO, that would have been flash. Haywood was not about flash, Haywood was about substance, which is why so many, many, many of his colleagues and his friends will miss him.

Giving? Yes, always sending me things to read as if I didn't have enough to read. He must have real-

ly loved the course he taught this past summer in Bible school because he sent me the whole book! I didn't have time to read it thoroughly, but I could see that it was addressing many of the difficult problems that you and I talk about in this space on a weekly basis. I could expect a call from him every Monday sometimes on Friday to give his approval and support.

It was for people like him, them, the unsung heroes, the true backbones of this community, the salt of the black community, the ones who behind the scenes were

quietly getting things done. They were teachers in both the classroom and in the church. They were the stalwarts. They were very proud black folks. They were the Rock of Ages, the rock in a weary land.

So as I sat on the couch this past Saturday afternoon with my five year-old baby boy wrapped in my arms, trying to explain to him exactly what had happened to daddy's friend, and why daddy was so sad and why this thing was so permanent, I just held him tightly until we both fell asleep, him because he was tired; me, because I was hoping it was only a dream.



ON THE AVANT-GARDE

By DR. NAT INVIN II

This Saturday morning reminded me once again of how tenuous life is. It really is quite fragile. It really is like the spider's web, the dew of the early morning, the sunlight at dawn and dusk, all here just for a very short time.

At times we are lulled into a mindset that would have us believe that we and our loved ones would live forever — that God would be so kind, and so merciful as to give us a waning when He, being omnipotent, omniscience, omnipresent is about to do something that will make us unhappy. But no, such is not the case. Like a thief in the night, we are each moved from the comfort of knowing to the uncertainty of the unknown, grasping, looking, reaching for anything on which to hold.

This tenuous hold we have on life, this grip we have on each other as we try to explain the meaning of this existence, this existential framework through which we see things — LOVE — oddly enough is the very thing that makes us so vulnerable — that makes us hurt so much when Saturday morning does come into our lives.

Love makes us hurt like this. Love causes us to cry when we have to leave each other — when one of us dies. We loved and now we hurt. Yet as much as it hurts, as much as it pains us to experience the ultimate grief, it is this same force, God's love that sustains us throughout all of the rest of our lives.

Every day as we look at those who are closest to us, our families, hugging them real tight, or when we make new friends, we extend ourselves through the power of love so that all of us will share in the joy of life — but also in the misery of life. Unless we make ourselves vulnerable to being hurt, we cannot understand the joy of life. Truly it is the great mystery.

Haywood was one of those kind of people that made black folks great. He grew up during the time when we were called colored or Negro, yet he remained fiercely proud of who he was, and where he came from.

I cannot recall the number of times we talked about the problems facing black folks, and what it will take for us to turn things around. We always talked about this.

Haywood came up during the glorious year, the time when people went to school to get their lesson, to make something out of themselves. He always expected to be somebody, to do something worthwhile with his life, to make black people proud and to show to all the world that black people could indeed, given the opportunity, achieve great things as well.

Thus it was no surprise to find that he would graduate as salutatorian and later Magna Cum Laude, then complete studies culminating in the Ph.D. He didn't consider himself to be especially brilliant, but he was tough, resilient. He believed in staying with it, always. If it took tenacity, forget it, you'd never beat Haywood.

Haywood believed in taking care of his family — number one concern. He didn't have any interest driving a fancy car. In fact, he relished being seen in his old broken down Volkswagen. Didn't bother

both used to laugh about how much smarter our wives were than we. He loved and cared for his children. Used to talk about them all the time. Loved to tell me stories about how his daddy raised a family on less than \$39 dollars a week. He saw tough times and still made it.

I am not sure what it was that made Haywood sparkle but he

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