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## The Force Behind the School

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# The Force Behind the School

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“How can one write about Howard’s School of Business and Public Administration and not write about the man who has led it since its birth and who seems to continue to serve as its inspiration?”



“D

on't put anything in the article about me.”

says Dean Milton Wilson as he sits in a conference room adjacent to his office, swiveling around in his

chair, his fingers interlaced casually atop his head.

Oh, sure he'll tell you how he first became personally interested in business: “I started college in the late '30s and I started as a mathematics major. After I got to calculus one of my teachers, an old white lady, called me in and said, ‘What are you going to do when you graduate?’ In all fairness, I had taken math simply because I love math. I said, ‘I don't know’ and that was the truth. She said, ‘Well, let me give you some advice . . .’

“She said, ‘You've done well in math but these white fellows [who major in mathematics] are going out and they're going to work for AT&T and those companies. But I'm going to tell you those companies are not going to hire you.’ She said, ‘Why don't you go over to the School of Commerce where you can use your knowledge to a greater advantage for yourself and your race?’ I went over there and I fell in love with business.”

Why? “Oh, gosh,” he answers, “in the first place, the challenges are great, the interaction is great and it's a good way for me to transfer knowledge from the mainstream of economic activity to our race—because some of this data that you acquire is surely unpublished. Also, I like a project where you can measure results and in business you can do that. And business is a profession where you can change your goals periodically. I have to have new challenges.”

He'll tell you, too, why he was attracted to Howard: “I was elected full professor at one of the major white schools but I came to Howard because, everything being equal, I think Blacks ought to help their race. I believe in working where I can do the greatest good for the greatest number.

“Building up this school was a challenge even though I had built another [business school] up at Texas Southern. It's been a challenge, and frustrating, too, at times. But the one thing that is true about Howard was that I considered [building up the school] a challenge where there was going to be a conscientious effort to give me the resources needed to meet the challenge. Challenge is one thing, but if you don't have any resources you can't do very much.”

He'll be delighted to speak at length about his school's assets and even speak with refreshing candor about some of its weaknesses: “We've been good about preparing our students to move into the corporate world, but we need to put more emphasis on entrepreneurship training. That's an area we'll be

stressing more and more. And right now, we're in the process of matching our human resources with our physical resources. We have our computers, for example, but we need to tie them into the external world so we can interact with economic and business data banks throughout the country.”

And he'll have no qualms about answering a skeptical question, such as: “How is having a few Blacks in important positions in corporations going to help the mass of Black people?” “It will help guide the corporation in the decision-making process to include some of these people,” he replies, “as well as communicate the problems of these people in order that the problems can be better understood.”

But, please, oh, please, he insists again, “I don't want a thing about me in the article.” Question: How can one write about Howard's School of Business and Public Administration and not write about the man who has led it since its birth and who seems to continue to serve as its inspiration?

What follows, then, are some facts about the man behind the school. They don't come from him, no way, but from his difficult-to-acquire résumé and a few miscellaneous publications:

Educated at West Virginia State College Institute (B.S. in business) and Indiana University (M.C.S. and D.B.A.) with further study in behavioral science at the University of Chicago; teaching and/or administrative experience at St. Phillips Junior College in San Antonio, Texas; Hampton Institute; Dillard University; Harvard University; and Texas Southern University (where he was founding dean and steered the School of Business to accreditation before coming to Howard); operator of his own successful C.P.A. firm in the Houston area; successful manager of the mortgage loan portfolio of a Texas-based insurance company; consultant with the General Accounting Office and the Agency for International Development; member of the board of directors of corporations (e.g. Great Western Financial Corporation) and educational and business organizations (e.g. The Institute for American Business); recipient of a variety of awards and honors.

But such bare facts can't communicate the personality of the man, how he seems to be genial and tough at the same time, how he seems to embody such a take-charge, get-things-done approach to everything he does. For *that*, you have to see Milton Wilson in action. That shouldn't be hard if you visit the school—for he's likely to turn up just about anywhere.

One last question directed at this man who doesn't want to be written about: “Don't you feel a bit like a big proud papa when you walk around this new building, don't you feel a deep sense of personal satisfaction as you go about your rounds?” “Well,” answers Wilson, humoring the interviewer, “when I walk around this building I'll tell you what I'm looking at. I'm looking at another challenge. I'm looking to see how we can make the best use of this building and our programs. That's what I see; challenge.” □