

David Baker Lewis

Class of 1965 - Business Administration

The *Oakland University News*, May 29, 1974 edition, reported that “The Black Reunion Committee at Oakland University is holding its first reunion Saturday, June 1...”. The reunion included a dinner at the Oakland Center and a semi-formal dance in the Gold Room of the OC. So, if anyone inquires, the first reunion of “all present and former Black students [of Oakland University] and their guests” was held on June 1, 1974. I was an enthusiastic participant in the reunion.

But there is more to report!

In the same edition, the *Oakland University News* reported, “Wade H. McCree, judge of the United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth District [Circuit] will deliver the address at Oakland University’s 12th graduation exercises”. Judge McCree was one of the first African Americans, if not the first, to deliver the commencement address at Oakland University’s annual commencement. I knew him well; he was my father in law. Oakland University awarded Judge McCree an honorary degree at the 1974 commencement. I was honored to participate in robing him as part of my duties as a member of Board of Trustees of Oakland University, having been appointed to the Charter Board of Trustees of Oakland University by The Honorable William G. Milliken in 1970.

But there is more to report!

Also participating in the robing ceremony was Oakland University Trustee Otis M. Smith, also appointed to the Oakland University Charter Board of Trustees by Governor Milliken. By 1970, Otis had served the State of Michigan as Auditor General of the State, Chairman of the Michigan Public Service Commission and member of the Michigan Supreme Court and was serving at the time as General Counsel of General Motors Corporation.

Two African Americans on the Oakland University Board of Trustees bestowed the robe and academic hood signifying Oakland’s honorary degree upon its African American commencement speaker at the 1974 OU Commencement. There is a photo of Judge McCree, Otis and me in our respective robes somewhere in my files or perhaps in the files of the University at Kresge Library that memorializes this event in the history of African Americans at Oakland University.