

Influencing a Profession: Impacting the World

Lowell Haines '75 still smiles as he remembers the day he told his parents that he was leaving his vice presidential post at Taylor University to enroll in law school. "I remember my mother – a wonderful Methodist missionary who, if I ever knew a saint, she was the saint – saying, 'Oh Lowell, not the law.'"

"Well fortunately, she lived long enough to see the Lord can even use lawyers," he related.

In the years since that day, Haines, along with fellow Taylor alumni Joe Miller '89 and Ted Hollis '93, have seen the evidence of God's leading in their lives – and legal careers – which have converged at Baker & Daniels LLP one of the nation's oldest and most prestigious law firms, where they serve as partners.

Founded in 1863, Baker & Daniels employs more than 370 lawyers worldwide, serving clients from Fortune 500 companies and regional businesses, to non-profit entities, local governments and individuals. The firm has offices throughout Indiana, and in Chicago, Washington, DC, and Beijing, China. Some of the firm's client-counselor relationships are more than 100 years old and men who eventually became U.S. vice presidents, governors and senators served there in years gone by said Haines, who along with Miller works in the firm's Indianapolis, Ind., office with non-profit organizations. Hollis, who also works in the Indianapolis office, is an employment law lawyer.

"I do think Joe, Ted and I have had, in many ways, the privilege of being the Lord's representatives in a very unusual place ... Ted is growing in influence with the Christian Professional Chamber of Commerce and serves a variety of Christian churches and organizations. Joe also has developed a growing practice with churches and other Christian ministries. I work primarily with Christian and secular colleges and universities from across the country. We serve many faith-based organizations of all kinds," said Haines. "Of course, the firm is a business and these organizations are only some of the firm's many clients. But it has allowed us to take a skill that we have, and the vast resources of this firm – which really are considerable – and use them to help Christian organizations advance their purposes; whether it is a Christian college in Florida or a seminary in Kentucky, a church on the north side of Indianapolis or a church denomination that has worldwide missions."

"In terms of why I became a lawyer, generally, I just always had this irritating, aggravating desire to make a big difference in the world," related Miller. "I evaluated all the ways that I could do that if God would give me the opportunities. I thought about government and politics; I spent a little bit of time on Capitol Hill during my time at Taylor. But I really felt like one of the best ways to effect change from a Kingdom standpoint was to be a lawyer."

But Hollis, who during his college years thought about going into coaching or attending seminary, said his choice of the legal profession was ultimately not his own. "God steered me in the direction of law school, which is not something I anticipated doing," he recalled. "In fact, I remember when I was a very young child my parents used to tell me, 'You're going to end up as a lawyer because you like to think about things and argue about things and figure out things,' and I said, 'No, one thing I'll never be is a lawyer.'"

For Haines, the law represents a second career. Following graduation from Taylor, he obtained an MA from Ball State University and then worked for ten years in various administrative capacities at Taylor. It was only toward the end of his time at Taylor that he began to consider a legal career.

The television representation of lawyers is often misleading said Haines, who added that a successful practitioner often accomplishes more behind closed doors and in writing than he or she ever does in open court.

Haines noted that lawyers endure an extensive vetting process before landing a job at a firm like Baker & Daniels. Such was the case for Haines, Miller and Hollis.

Hollis stated, "All these qualities that we have been discussing about Baker & Daniels lawyers, the things that we learn during the interview process, and during the summer clerkship process for the folks who are seeking us out and want to work here come down to this: it is usually the folks who made top grades at law school who get the interview," Hollis said. "That comes from a lot of hard work at law school; but it's based on skills and learning that you have already obtained. In other words, it doesn't come about just at the law school stage. You've got to have an excellent foundation, and for me, that foundation was laid while I was a history major at Taylor. The skills I acquired through the history department and the professors there served me very, very well.

"I think about the ability to analyze things that I learned from Dr. (Bill) Ringenberg '61. I think about research skills and writing skills that I developed in classes with Professor (Tom) Jones '71. I think about the public speaking skills that I developed in working as a teaching assistant for Dr. (Steve) Messer (and) a broad range of experiences I benefited from in working with Dr. (Alan) Winqvist, including the opportunity to travel Europe during J-Term one year in 1992 on a Reformation Heritage tour," Hollis added. "All of those professors contributed things to me: skills that I took away and knowledge that I acquired from them served me very, very well at IU law school. Without my Taylor experience I wouldn't be here, I'm quite confident."

Miller related details of one conversation during his first year of law school with a classmate who had graduated from one of the nation's most prestigious liberal arts colleges. "I let slip to him that I had been accepted at his alma mater, but had chosen to go to Taylor for undergrad, and he looked at me like I had three heads," Miller remembered. "He said, 'Big mistake buddy. Big mistake.' I remember thinking, 'How so?' I felt equally well prepared by Taylor, and I had a life-changing experience along the way." The friend later came to appreciate Miller's abilities during shared project work, and the two developed a mutual respect and friendship.

"I think all three of us feel that we went to law school with extremely talented people, very skilled, proven people, and we all did just fine with our Taylor background," echoed Haines. "Our Taylor background – and I of course graduated years before these guys did – really did prepare us to go and compete with the best of the best."

Beyond case studies, client meetings and preparation, Haines said a watchful, anticipatory attitude is critical for a lawyer today. He related one instance in which vigilance by lawyers who were alumni of a single sex institution led to establishing that institution's exemption from state gender equity laws. He said a similar vigilance is a must for those who represent Taylor and other Christian colleges and universities.

"We need to be very vigilant to make sure, when new laws are being considered by Congress or legislatures around the country, that we have people alert and watching to make sure that laws are not passed that, intentionally or unintentionally, create tremendous difficulties for Christians and curtail religious freedoms," he said. "Fortunately, there are people who are becoming more aware of this concern. Indeed, there are some Christian organizations in Washington, the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU) for example, that are realizing that we must become more aware, and more involved and active in making sure that Christian colleges are not inadvertently harmed by legislation. There is always an active group on the other side of each issue of importance to Christian higher education that aggressively is working to impose its beliefs on the Christian college."

"Decisions are made behind these doors that impact our world in significant, relevant ways," continued Haines. "If there are not people of faith behind those closed doors, the Christian perspective is never going to be registered; it's never going to have influence or protect Christians or Christian organizations. Every year we are involved in legislation. Every year we are discussing with clients the things they want to see put into the laws that affect society, and then we work with the government in all kinds of situations to effect those desires. We must have people of faith involved in that."

"We have an opportunity to influence for the good a sector of professional life in our economy that really has been deservedly chastised in the media and popular culture," reflected Miller. "Lawyers have an uphill battle to reclaim their reputation as a profession but we're sort of agents of change, and of the Kingdom, within that group. That's a pretty humbling opportunity; it provides the opportunity to take a gospel stand in a professional field where sometimes it's not expected."

"It's always good to remember that being here in my practice can't be about me," Hollis added. "It's about serving the needs of our clients. It's about supporting colleagues. It's about taking care of my family; and it's about being where God has chosen to place me."

"We put in a lot of hard work to get here," Hollis continued. "But we wouldn't be able to do that without God having opened and closed various doors in each of our lives. We each took different paths to get here, but we ended up exactly where God wanted us to be."