DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD
Honoring
Frank Goldsmith ’67
June 10, 2017

Upon Frank Goldsmith receiving the Frank Porter Graham Award from the North Carolina Civil Liberties Union in 1988, Davidson graduate Jim Fuller ’65 said of Frank:

“It [is] Frank’s leadership by example in the cause of human rights; Frank was our conscience, and we responded to him. He did what he believed, and became an example of what e.e. cummings said should be our goal in life—to be living, not merely undead.”

Indeed, Frank Goldsmith lives a life worth living.

As a student at Davidson, Frank founded a chapter of the Southern Students Organizing Committee, which promoted the rights of Southern textile workers – a move that was radical for our campus at the time – and racial integration. While a law student at UNC-Chapel Hill, in addition to his academic honors, Frank was given the Citizenship Award for his work in promoting law student involvement in legal aid for the poor. Frank’s commitment to civil liberties did not waiver during his assignment as a captain in the U.S. Army Judge Advocate General’s Corps, where he trained troops on war-crimes law and advised an underground GI movement.

Frank has been in private legal practice since 1973, mostly with Goldsmith, Goldsmith, & Dews in his hometown of Marion, North Carolina. In Western North Carolina, Frank is known as the lawyer to see for civil rights and constitutional litigation. He has litigated cases at all levels of the judicial system, including the United States Supreme Court, where he won a case for a prisoner as court-appointed counsel in 1977. More recently, Frank represented five detainees at Guantánamo Bay (and is the author of a chapter in a book entitled “Obama’s Guantánamo,”) and removed an innocent man from Death Row.

Frank’s numerous professional and civic contributions – including serving on the boards of the North Carolina ACLU, the North Carolina Advocates for Justice, the North Carolina Justice Center, Beth Israel Synagogue in Asheville, and on the McDowell County Rescue Squad’s Mountain Rescue Team (as a certified EMT) – point to his deep and abiding commitment to, and belief in, the causes of social justice. Frank has often taken unpopular stands on human rights causes to ensure that all individuals might receive equal treatment under the law.

Frank Goldsmith, for your efforts to bring more justice to the legal system; for your tireless advocacy on behalf of those who cannot speak for themselves; for your enduring dedication to civil rights; for your humane instincts, your disciplined mind and, ultimately, your life of leadership and service, the Davidson College Alumni Association is proud to honor you with the 2017 Distinguished Alumni Award on the occasion of your 50th reunion.