Alumni Profile – Brigadier General James Gorham

GREENVILLE, N.C. (Nov. 10, 2015) — Brigadier General James R. Gorham is a veteran of the military and the first African American officer to become a general in the N.C. National Guard, one of the aspects of his life that he says he is most proud of accomplishing. The other, marrying his “college sweetheart” and having three “wonderful children.”

Gorham received his bachelor of arts degree in history from East Carolina University in 1981 and holds a master’s degree in strategic studies from the U.S. Army War College. He says the Friday and Saturday night dances at the Ledonia Wright Cultural Center, aka “The Hot Box,” are one of his favorite memories of his time at ECU.

ECU had an impact on Gorham and prepared him for the many roles he would hold throughout his life.

“First and foremost, ECU afforded me the opportunity to meet the love of my life, Barbara, who has been my wife for the last 29 years,” said Gorham. “Secondly, ECU provided me with a well-rounded education that opened doors and helped me to ascend the corporate, military and municipal ladders of success.”

Gorham retired in 2012 as brigadier general and assistant adjutant general for domestic operations with the North Carolina National Guard, capping a 38-year military career that included three years of active duty service in the U.S. Army. In his duties with the National Guard, he was the lead officer for outreach to state and local leaders. Additionally, Gorham spent 29 years in the banking industry, retiring in 2010 as manager of retail banking at First Citizens Bank.

In 2010, Gorham had the privilege of delivering ECU’s fall commencement address. This October, during ECU’s 2015 Homecoming weekend, Gorham won the Dr. Andrew A. Best Trailblazer award, which recognizes groundbreakers, innovators and pioneers, awarded by ECU’s Black Alumni Chapter.

Currently, Gorham is the director of special projects for the North Carolina Department of Public Safety. In this role, he provides oversight of the Center for Safer Schools and supervision for the various Veteran initiatives.

A native of Falkland, N.C., Gorham currently lives in Kernersville, with his wife and their three children, one of who is a 2015 graduate of ECU. In his free time, Gorham likes spending time with his family, eating out, going to sporting events, going to movies and traveling. He says his future goals include writing a book titled, “Sharecroppers Wisdom,” and hiking The Appalachian Trail.

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