

# Gregory J. Banks '74

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Tuesday, May 12, 2015

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**UNH degree:** Bachelor's, history

**Currently lives in:** Englewood, N.J.

**Please share highlights of your career or occupational experiences.**

During the first seven years after college, I pursued a retail management career, most of it spent at department store A & S on Long Island. Working in retail management gave me the opportunity to learn new business skills, interface with store level and corporate executives, and engage with consumers. Just prior to shifting my career to financial services and insurance I was a retail store manager for J.C. Penney. I earned my Series 6 financial license in 1983 and embarked on a financial services/insurance career with John Hancock. During my 15 years with John Hancock, based in Queens, N.Y., I earned my LUTCF designation, multiple honor club awards, became a manager and

was recognized for serving as a union steward. In 1998 I joined Guardian Life Insurance in Garden City, N.Y. where I worked until health issues forced me to retire in early 2001.

**What are your overall highlight(s) and/or life achievements since graduating?**

In October 1981 I married my long-time girlfriend and UNH classmate, Lori Holliday. Our first daughter, Alyssa, was born in 1992. She is a recent Cornell University graduate working in the marketing field for global CPG giant, Unilever. In 1994 our second daughter, Lindsey, joined the family. She is currently a junior at Quinnipiac University majoring in marketing and very active in student government. When my daughters were very young I became actively involved in youth sports, coaching Little League baseball and later parochial school basketball, which I still do as director of the basketball program at my daughters' former Catholic elementary school. We have an award-winning program and I am especially proud of the 2014 fifth- and sixth-grade girls' team I coached to an undefeated league record of 23 wins and no losses. Despite my health issues, I've enjoyed dedicating 15 years to youth sports and was humbled to be acknowledged with the prestigious Bishop Francis Award for volunteerism by the Archdiocese of Newark several years ago.

**How and what were you involved with on campus when you attended UNH? What were some of your accomplishments as a student here at UNH, and as a pioneering black student at UNH?**

I was primarily involved with the Black Student Union during my time at UNH.

**What is one of your favorite UNH memories?**

One of my favorite memories is UNH orientation where I met my roommate, Michael Chisholm. We have remained lifelong friends for 45 years. Through our days as UNH students and as adults we have always been there for each other. Overall, my favorite memories center on all the people I met at UNH, many of whom have remained longtime friends.

**What is one of your very most unique UNH memories or experiences?**

I think the most unique experience I had at UNH was in 1974 when Pepsi called the UNH radio station to speak with Michael Chisholm, who was DJ'ing a nighttime soul show at the time, asking if he could help them recruit black students for a TV commercial they would be filming. We shot the commercial in North Conway and it was a kick to see ourselves on national TV.

**Who were your role models and/or mentors while here at UNH, and how did they impact your life?**

I had a great advisor — he was young and personable. He really helped ground me, guiding my choice of majors and course selection for three years. My most influential role models were some of the black upper classmen who preceded me to UNH. I looked up to guys like David Pemberton, Larry Woods and John Lyman. I admired their confidence and their comfort level being in a predominantly white environment. Their attitude gave me hope that I could succeed as well.

**What advice would you give to current UNH students of color, or any students, based on what you learned while at UNH, and what you've learned from life after college?**

My advice to current students is to be adaptable. Life does not always go according to plan and the more flexible people can be the more likely that they will persevere and overcome obstacles and adversity. Don't worry about making mistakes — they often lead to great successes. I also strongly believe that students should try to get as much exposure to a broad array of classes and subjects as they can before declaring a major in order to truly get a feel for what they want to do with their lives. It's challenging to know what you want to spend the rest of your life doing at 18 years old.

- WRITTEN BY:  
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## INCLUSION



University of New Hampshire

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