

SPECIAL HONOR: Hamilton Thrilled By Honor At Gaston College

By Richard Walker

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It wouldn't be much of a stretch to say Florida State basketball coach Leonard Hamilton is the more prominent Gaston College graduate in the school's 51-year history.

But Hamilton was still humbled to be honored last May as part of the school's 50-year anniversary gala; The 1968 Gaston College graduate who played basketball for the school in each of his two years there was given the 2015 Alumnus of Distinction Award.

"Receiving that distinction was a very enjoyable moment for me and my family because that was a period in my life where there were a lot of challenges going on," said Hamilton, a member of formerly all-black Highland High School's last graduating class in 1966 before attending Gaston College as one of the school's first African-American students. "There were racial challenges. I had to overcome them and the people at Gaston College gave me a chance to overcome them and reach a level of success."

At Gaston College, Hamilton was a two-year standout at guard and set the school's single-game scoring record with 54 points in a 150-87 victory over Montreat-Anderson College on Jan. 30, 1968.

After leaving the school, Hamilton played basketball and earned a degree at Tennessee-Martin, where he is a charter member of their athletics Hall of Fame, and later received his master's degree from Austin Peay State.