



# A WALK ON THE TALL SIDE

The trajectory of 6-foot-5-inch Damon Hart '99, a legal, business, and community wunderkind, has been meteoric—and he's not done yet.

By **C** **B.**  
PHOTOGRAPHS BY **ADA DE**

# THE 185-YEAR OLD BOSTON PUBLIC GARDEN IS A POWERFUL PEOPLE MAGNET.

Residents and tourists alike are attracted to it—drawn in to escape the hustle and bustle of the city at lunchtime, to admire the famous tulip beds in season, to skim the surface of the pond in iconic swan boats, or, like many, to capture the romance of the setting as a backdrop for marriage proposals.

But, look closer and you'll see others who've sought respite from hectic offices or crowded restaurants to have private conversations. That's why Boston College Law School alumnus Damon Hart, who was named Executive Vice President and Chief Legal Officer of Liberty Mutual Insurance Company earlier this year, and BC Law graduate Steven H. Wright '81, then a partner in the global law firm of Holland & Knight, met there twenty-three years ago. Their talk that day—under a clear, sunny sky on a bench near the future site of the 9/11 Memorial—set Hart on the path that has led him to the top ranks of one of the world's largest corpora-

tions. In fact, Hart has been named Secretary of Liberty Mutual, effective in January 2023, and will oversee governance of the company's board of directors in addition to his current responsibilities.

In 1999, Hart was on the threshold of graduation from BC Law School with a pocketful of enviable job offers when he received the call from Wright to meet in Boston Public Garden. Wright, who is African American, was seeking new re-

lawyers, and he urged Wright to speak with the promising young law student.

Wright, who is now the Senior Vice President and General Counsel of the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston, says he was glad he took Walker's advice. Damon was one of the best graduating law students I had seen, he says of their first meeting. In addition to being extremely intelligent with a high level of drive and desire, Wright says Hart also had a thoughtfulness about him, a graciousness that made him stand out.

For his part, Hart was equally impressed by his exchange with Wright; he declined his other offers to join Wright at Holland & Knight, where he was im-

cruits for Holland & Knight, and he was especially interested in candidates who could add diversity to the prestigious firm's professional ranks.

I had consulted my networks around town, and I learned about Damon from another BC Law graduate, Chuck Walker, Wright recalls. Charles Chuck E. Walker, Jr. '78 was chairman of the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination and a highly regarded figure among Boston-area Black

**"He's obviously smart, and he had a significant amount of legal experience in the law firms, but there were other attributes: He's a great listener, he's very thoughtful. His level of empathy is excellent."**

Jim Kelleher, recently retired executive vice president and chief legal officer of Liberty Mutual and Hart's predecessor

and though the numbers have grown,  
the goal of 100 Black chief legal officers

school, and though he was recruited by Holy Cross as a football quarterback, he switched to basketball after his freshman year. I had an itch to play basketball, so I walked on and made the JV team, and by the end of the season I was suiting up for varsity, he says. In short order he became the starting forward

for the Holy Cross team that played in the 1993 NCAA tournament.

Hart remains physically active. He plays golf with friends and is also a cyclist who rides in the annual Pan-Mass Challenge to support the Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. And, there are the dog-walks. We got a Covid puppy, and she s

taken a liking to me, so I m the primary walker, he says. On most weekends I take a long walk with a book on Audible or a podcast. I m kind of a podcast king.

And despite a hectic professional and civic schedule, Hart carves out time to spend with his family. He lives with his wife, Kathy, and son, Miles, nineteen, and daughter, Aveda, fifteen, in the Boston suburb of Brookline. Both his son and daughter are athletes, and Hart often travels with them for their school and club tournaments. The family also enjoys the vibrant arts scene in the Boston area, especially art fairs, live theater, and the museums.

But, Hart says, We just kind of like to be with each other, to be honest with you. It doesn t matter what we re doing. During the summer months, their time together is often spent at their vacation home in the Oak Bluffs community on Martha s Vineyard. There s a long history of African American families being down there, which makes it more welcoming, he says. It s just a really cool kind of magical place.

Although Hart grew up in western Pennsylvania, he decided early in his career that he would make his home in Massachusetts, in part because of the extensive network of BC Law alumni, (art )TJe livC cA, am (b) 6leham Lincol 3 (B)tsuppo Infeaing enjTq31362 (am(dBluan )people ItaH)nkikinm