

ANNOUNCEMENTS

VFW Weekend Activities Include Halloween Costume Contest

Bingo will be played at VFW Post 4100 Friday night, October 26. Doors will open at 5 p.m. and games begin at 7. The Bobby Hood Band will provide music for the Saturday night dance on Oct. 27, beginning at 8 p.m. and continuing until midnight. There will be a Halloween Costume Contest during the dance, with a first and second prize given for the winning costumes. VFW Post 4100 is located at 11535 Highway 315, west of Water Valley.

Costume Contest For Youth Is Scheduled Oct. 29 At The VFW

VFW Post 4100 will host an Inside Trunk or Treat for children, 12 and under, on Monday, October 29, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. There will be costume contest with judges selecting winners around 7 p.m. The Post Home is located at 11535 Highway 315, west of Water Valley.

Lions Club Pancake Breakfast Is Second Saturday In November

Water Valley Lions Club has rescheduled their next Pancake Breakfast for Saturday, Nov. 10, due to the power outage planned for the electrical grid in Water Valley for the first Saturday. Serving will begin at 6:30 and continue until 9 a.m. with pancakes, sausage, coffee and juice. It's all you care to eat for only \$5, so bring your family and come out for a delicious breakfast.

York Rite Bodies Meet October 25

The Water Valley York Rite bodies will have their next meeting Thursday, Oct. 25, in the Masonic Temple on Champion Circle, beginning at 7:30 p.m. The meeting will be in the Commandery. A light meal all be served following the meeting.

Identity Theft Prevention Program Scheduled At Oakland Library

BancorpSouth will present an Identity Theft Prevention program on Monday, October 29, at 10 a.m. at the Oakland Public Library. The public is invited to attend this free program open to all ages. If you're interested in learning more about how to protect your identity, this program will be of interest to you. Light refreshments will be served. For more information, please call the library at 662-623-8651.

Private Applicator Training Is November 9 In Coffeeville

The Mississippi State Extension Service will host a private applicators training at the Multi-purpose building in Coffeeville on November 9th at 1:00 pm. The cost for this class is \$20. In addition to the Private applicators class there will also be a Sprayer Calibration class.

DAR Will Welcome State Regent

The David Reese chapter of the DAR will welcome our State Regent, Cynthia Cleveland McNamara, as our guest speaker on Thursday, Nov. 8 at 11:30 a.m. This luncheon meeting is scheduled at The Blake at 100 Ed Perry Drive. Guests are welcomed. Lunch is \$12.

Mrs. McNamara's project: "Gardens, Publicity and Signage" are adding value to DAR's historic Rosalie Mansion, our "Lady on the Bluffs" in Natchez. RSVP by Nov. 5 to Linda at migrantlady@hotmail.com.

Mrs. Lillie May Caldwell Roberts: The First Black To Register To Vote In Yalobusha County

Mrs. Lillie M. Roberts was born August, 1931, in Coffeeville, where she was twice married with no children. At 87, she is still an active member of the NAACP and was the treasurer for her local organization for 50 years. According to local reporting some 55 years ago, Mrs. Roberts was the first black to register to vote in Yalobusha County.

The registration office was located in the courthouse in Water Valley, one of the county seats for Yalobusha County. She tells her story in her own words in a 2015 book, Delta Jewels, In Search of My Grandmother's Wisdom, by Alycia Burton Steele.

In the book Mrs. Roberts said her decision to register to vote in the fall of 1962 came out of the blue and at a most precarious and volatile time. White folks made it clear they weren't going to let negroes vote and warned them against even going to the courthouse.

In nearby Oxford - just 18 miles north of Water Valley - James Meredith, the Black Air Force Veteran, had enrolled at Ole Miss, prompting a riot on the campus and worry in white Water Valley, that some of the upheaval and turbulence would flow into their town - especially if Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Freedom Riders or other civil rights leaders were in the vicinity.

During this time, she and her first husband, Joe Caldwell, were working in Water Valley. Mrs. Lillie, as she was known, cleaned homes of whites and did other domestic work until the couple moved to Coffeeville. She was 31 years old and did not have a social security card. When she sought work, she was told she needed the card to get a job and had to ask where to go to get one.

One day, much to the couple's surprise - even bewilderment - a white county supervisor came to their home and encouraged them to register to vote. Given the moment and the place - 1960s in Mississippi - they were dubious. The Caldwells and their black friends and neighbors were not voting because they were understandably afraid, - paying heed to the constant threats of retribution from the white community.

But the supervisor pointed out that they owned land and paid taxes and therefore had the right to vote. County officials, he said, were taking advantages of them and others by taking

black folks' money but refusing to let them register and vote. Having made his pitch, the supervisor bid them good bye. Moments later he turned around and came back. Promise me you will go to the courthouse to register, he told the Caldwells, and he promised in turn that he would meet them there. All he needed to know was the time they were coming.

The next day the Caldwells set out for the Water Valley courthouse. Mr. Caldwell told his wife that since he did not read as well as she did, he would



By Dottie Chapman Reed

Reed is a native of Water Valley and graduated from Davidson High School in 1970. She has launched a project to collect bios, pictures and other info about women in the county who have made an impact on the African American community.

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been a long time since she went to school. At Mr. Evans's direction, she read three or four amendments, answered a few questions



Lillie M. Roberts

put her in line in front of him. But Mr. Caldwell was going to be prepared. He wore a pair of overalls over his regular pants, so he could carry his 38-caliber pistol in an outer pocket.

The couple entered the three-story building, walking side by side to the stares of white workers who had come out of their offices. Perhaps rhetorically, a few asked who they were. Mr. Caldwell never took his hands out of his pockets. They didn't see the supervisor, but his assurances had emboldened them to keep going.

When the Caldwells went into the voter registration office, a Mr. Evans took a dusty book out of a cabinet and laid it on the table. He opened the book and asked Mrs. Lillie if she knew the Constitution of the United States. Yes, she told him, though she admitted she had forgotten details because it had

and pushed the book back to him. Mr. Evans then told Mr. Caldwell that because he couldn't read or write, he shouldn't vote because he wouldn't know whom he was voting for.

But, "I got her registered," Mr. Evans said.

The couple left the courthouse with the same white folks once again staring at them from their office doorways. When the Caldwells got to their pickup truck, Mr. Caldwell told Mrs. Lillie he was going to open the door for her. And in his most chivalrous manner, he did so. In the moment, he made her feel like she was somebody. She was and is "somebody" indeed.

Mrs. Lillie Roberts still lives in Coffeeville, and of that day, she says, the North

Mississippi Herald newspaper reported that she was the first black to register to vote. While washing dishes a day or so later at the home of a white family, she remembered, the lady of the house came up behind her. "I see you registered to vote," she said. Yes, Mrs. Lillie replied, momentarily worried about what would happen next. But nothing did.

Mrs. Lillie kept her job and remained a registered voter. She believes that several other black residents of Yalobusha County had registered before she did but did not want it made public. They worried they would lose their jobs, especially the school teachers. We all should be proud of the courage that Mrs. Lillie and Mr. Joe exhibited that precarious day in Water Valley.

What a reminder of the sacrifices that have been made in order that we can go uninhibited to the polls on November 6. Better yet, let's run to the polls out respect for Mrs. Lillie and all the Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County!

Special thanks to Fred (Pee Wee) Harris, Davidson High Class of 1966, for telling me about Delta Jewels and Mrs. Roberts. Thanks to Ole Miss Assistant Professor, Alycia Burton Steele, for the permission to share this story and for the picture of Mrs. Roberts. Thanks to noted author, Nadine Co-hodas for making a better writer out of me!

Mrs. Lillie was recently recognized at a senior recognition on October 14th in Coffeeville at her church as the oldest actively participating member of Pleasant Grove Church. See that coverage in the October 18th edition of the paper.

From "somebody" to HERO!, Mrs. Lillie May Roberts. Stay tuned, if you want to hear from me more often let me know. See my contact information above. See you next time!

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

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