

# Heartfelt Memories Of Cora Lee Folson

"Memories of Cora Folson" meets one of the objectives for this project outlined in my first article back in June 2018. While the primary goal is to honor and share life stories of outstanding black women of Yalobusha County, I asked to hear from the children, adults now, who grew up with black nurses, babysitters, housekeepers, maids and the like in their homes. I said then that I wanted to know about these women and who they worked for when they left their own children at home each morning oftentimes unattended, to feed themselves, do morning chores, to get themselves off to school and elsewhere. These black mothers and grandmothers made this huge sacrifice because these were the only types of jobs, aside from



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 compile and share info about women in the county who have made an impact on the African American community. Her column appears bi-monthly, with occasional exceptions.*

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farming, and in a few instances teaching, available to them to help put food on the table and clothes on their backs.

Now I am delighted to learn more about Mrs. Cora and her relationship with the Caulfield family.

I knew her, her son and my late classmate, Willie B. Jones, her daughter, Nancy Telford and her grandsons, Steve and Rickey along

## By Dorothy Caulfield Wiman

the world. I remember her peeling potatoes and letting me have a taste. She would parboil them and then mash them with the old potato masher that I still have. And, she made the best rice pudding and fried chicken. I remember her making desserts with Karo, and I began to fondly refer to her as "Karo," my Karo; and she called me, "Sweetnin'."

I remember Cora would look at the paper and I would ask her to read it to me. She told me her eyes were bad, but now I wonder whether she could read at all. I know African Americans back then had so few opportunities. It made me very sad when I thought about that.

She stayed with us when Mama and Daddy went to watch Ole Miss in the Sugar Bowl back in 1959. One night, I pulled the tall cab-

inet over on me and Cora saved me! Thank goodness there were mostly towels in it.

Not only did Cora cook and take care of us, she also ironed. When she ironed upstairs, she would be so hot, because we did not have air conditioning back then. Thankfully, she usually ironed downstairs in Mama and Daddy's bedroom. She kept the house straight, because we kids pretty much destroyed it with our running up and down, playing cowboys, army, baseball, and shooting squirt guns in the house. It's a miracle we are still alive after all that. I'm sure Cora had to tell on us a few times.

Cora worshiped at Everdale Baptist Church. One of the saddest days of my life was when I had to go to that church to say good-bye to her forever. I remember

18-year-old sister, Corinne. She died August 10, 1971 and is buried in the Bayson Chapel Cemetery.

Mrs. Cora had four sisters and three brothers. Her sister, Mary Folson Ealy, mentioned in a previous article, worked for many years for the Turnage family, owners of the only drugstore in Water Valley.

When I spoke to Rickey about his grandmother and the article written by one of her employers, he quietly observed that "she raised a lot of them."

Recalling my mother's years of domestic work, my heart connected with his for a moment as I heard that pause in his voice and in our conversation. Perhaps we both wondered what if we could have some of that time back.

the preacher came from Chicago. He quoted Psalm 23, and the congregation chimed in with their "Yes" and "Amen."

He said, "Cora's not dead! No! She's gone home! She's gone to the city!" My grandmother had made sure Cora knew the Lord as her Savior, because my grandmother was like that. Cora told me before she died, "I'm ready." She was ready, but I was not ready to give her up. The choir sang, "I Need Thee Every Hour," and even though I was thinking, "Yes and amen," I cried my eyes out.

She affected my life for the better, and she loved me unconditionally. I'm so thankful for the sweetness my "Karo" brought into my life. Even though she left us at such an early age, I think of her often even now at the age of 65, especially when I'm mashing potatoes.



Cora Folson and Dorothy as a baby.

Dorothy's heartfelt reflections and the pictures speak for themselves. She describes her love for her "Karo," a reference to mothers and caregivers adding Karo Syrup to sweeten baby milk. To many blacks, however, the sincerity of the "love" that some white families proclaimed for their black domestic workers remains in question. Many sensed that this "love" had limits, offered only as long as blacks stayed in the role whites had assigned them.

This was one of the reasons I had a very hard time watching "The Help." I struggled to finish the book and watched the movie only after I saw the cast included superior black actors and actresses. It is like most of the movies about Mississippi that I will only watch once or not at all.

My discomfort and resistance perhaps come from having a mother who worked as a maid, having babysat for white families as a teenager, and having spent seven years at a pre-

dominantly white college - whew! Alas, perhaps sharing and examining these memories could lead to transformative thinking and stimulate conversations to make us better people.

Thank you, Dorothy for getting us started and showing us what Mrs. Cora meant to you and

how the care and love she poured into you and your family contributed to your success. Dorothy majored in Bible at Belhaven College and taught 1st grade for 21 years. She was a librarian for 10 years and is now retired and residing in Belzoni with her husband, a Presbyterian minister.

## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Weekend Activity At The VFW Includes Bingo, Dance

Bingo will be played at VFW Post 4100 on Friday night, April 26. Doors will open at 5 p.m. and play will begin at 7. The Bobby Hood Band will play for the Saturday night dance on April 28. The music begins at 8 p.m. and concludes at midnight. Post 4100 is located at 11535 Highway 215, west of Water Valley.

### National Day Of Prayer Will Be Observed On May 2

A local community observance of the National Day of Prayer will be held at noon on Thursday, May 2, at the flag pole of the Crawford Sports Complex in Water Valley. The 2019 National Day of Prayer Theme is "Love One Another" from John 13:34. Several local area ministers and vocalist will lead in prayer and singing and everyone is encouraged to join them.

### North Central PDD Sponsors Over 60 Celebration

During Older Americans Month (May) there will be an Over 60 Celebration on May 29 in the Montgomery County Coliseum from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. The program is sponsored by North Central Planning and Development District Area Agency on Aging. During the celebration attendees can connect with friends, family, and services that support participation; enjoy activities that promote health and personal enrichment; and contribute time, talent, and life experiences to benefit others. There will be a Medicare Minute; a Health Fair; Food; Entertainment; and Fun during the celebration.

### York Rite Bodies Scheduled April Meeting

Water Valley York Rites Bodies have scheduled their next meeting for Thursday, April 25, in the Masonic Temple on Champion Circle. All members are hereby notified that the meeting time is now 7:30 p.m. due to the time change. The meeting will be in the Commandry in Water Valley. A light meal will be served after the meeting.

### Art Students' Work Will Be Displayed At Bozarts

A reception will be held on April 25 at Bozarts Gallery featuring art work from the school year by art students at Water Valley High School. The reception will be held from 6:00-7:30 p.m. The public is welcomed.

### Clean Up Day Scheduled April 27 In Oakland

The Town of Oakland will have a clean up day on April 27, beginning at 9 a.m. Everyone is asked to join in and help. "We will meet at Town Hall and the rain day will be May 4," reported Mayor James R. Swearingen.

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## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Great Music, Good Food, Y'all Come!

Monday Night 5:30 to 7 PM	<b>Bingo and Family Buffet Night</b>
Tuesday Night 5 to 8 PM	Mention this ad and receive <b>\$2 OFF Large Pizza</b>
Wednesday Night 5 to 8 PM	<b>BUFFET NIGHT</b>
Thursday All Day	<b>60¢ WINGS</b>
Friday Night 7 to 10 PM	<b>KARAOKE</b>
Saturday 7 to 9 PM	Music by Luke Fisher
SUNDAY 11AM to 2 PM	<b>Buffet &amp; Plate Lunch</b>

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