

Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha County: The Project Continues

# Ruthie Jenkins White – A Quietly Kept FIRST

Ruthie Jenkins White was the youngest of eleven children, born in June 1952 to Mattie Horton Jenkins. Her father, Johnnie Jenkins, and the family lived and worked on the Moore Place Plantation outside of Coffeeville. Sharecroppers, they farmed cotton, peanuts and corn and had a garden. Mattie could read and write, but neither she nor Johnnie had any formal education.

“When I told my children that as a child we worked on the farm, did the same job, came home to eat together and then went to bed together, they thought it strange,” Ruthie said.

Ruthie was only three when her mother became very ill. Johnnie Jenkins took the seven older children and left. Ruthie’s Aunt Ruth- her namesake – took her in while Mattie was ill. When Mattie got better, she came for Ruthie, and for the next fifteen years or so, it was just the two of them. No one had any information about where Johnnie and the older children were living.

Ruthie attended the black elementary school in Coffeeville - and fondly remembers her first-grade teacher, Dorothy Martin. Her sixth grade teacher, Elvira Jackson, a leading educator, inspired her. And in 10th grade Ruthie found a new passion. “I got really excited in 10th grade at Central High, the black high school, when our math teacher, Alma Faye Chapman, introduced cheerleading. We had never had anything like that before,” she recalled. “I signed up immediately, it was something new and I really enjoyed it. We cheered for the day games only.”

“I wanted to go to college,” Ruthie added, “but I did not have the funds nor did we know who to talk too. I took the ACT in Oxford somewhere. I scored 23 on the ACT [a very good score], and I remember seeing my scores posted at the bottom of my high school transcript and feeling proud.”

Ruthie was the first in her family to graduate from high school, and her class was the last to graduate from Central High before mandatory integration began in the fall of 1970 for all the schools in Yalobusha County.

Mattie wanted her daughter to have a class ring and had to borrow the \$59 from the white family she worked for – Mr. and Mrs. Lillton Pipkin. Ruthie knew them because when she was younger, her mother sometimes took her as she cleaned the house and ironed the Pipkins’ clothes. Ruthie still wears that Central High - Class of 1970 - ring today. She tells her son and daughter that it is made of real gold.

After she graduated from high school, Ruthie reconnected with her older siblings. She learned that Johnnie had taken them from place to place over the years.

Ruthie’s first job – one of many after high school – was at Kellwood Pants manufacturing plant, where she worked for eight years. After leaving the plant, she spent a year as a teacher’s aide at Coffeeville High, and then she moved to the assembly line at Holley Carburetor in Water Valley, working there for ten years.

Ruthie got married in 1972 while working at Holley, but her marriage ended after three years. By 1989, Holley Carburetor began major layoffs. Ruthie found another job, this one in Grenada at Pennaco Hosiery. She stayed there until the plant closed eight years later. Ruthie returned to Coffeeville, working as a cashier for four years at the local Piggly Wiggly Supermarket.

All of these jobs totaled 30 years in the work force, but

Roughly 13 miles separate Coffeeville and Water Valley, and only two months separate Ruthie and me in age. Yet our life trajectories were different. What if someone had told Ruthie that 23 on the ACT meant that she was indeed college material? I was an almost STAR student, scoring the highest in my Davidson High class at the time, but I did not score that high.

What if someone – a teacher, a counselor, a pastor – had given Ruthie just a little push and some encouragement? What if someone had told her about the college admissions process and how to apply for financial aid? That was my first job as a college recruiter! Wish I had known Ruthie then. What if she had been told of other career opportunities?



Ruthie Jenkins White

Ruthie was not done yet. On February 11, 2000 the Yalobusha County Board of Supervisors hired her as the county’s first black assistant purchasing clerk, responsible for getting supplies for all the county departments. This included the sheriff’s office and the courthouses (one in Water Valley and the other in Coffeeville) and covered, among other things, vehicles, guns, uniforms, briefcases, judges’ robes, and office supplies. Ruthie supplemented her training for this new position with computer classes from Northwest Community College and obtained various certifications.

Just as she got settled in to her high-profile position, she

was told that she didn’t need to take any more classes. At the same time, she began to feel pressure to leave her job. She did her best to push that pressure aside and credits counsel from a local pastor for helping her “hang in there,” as she put it. Daily Bible reading also sustained her, though to avoid any backlash, she kept

her Bible in her desk drawer. Nonetheless, she remained as upbeat as possible.

“Under the circumstances I never dreaded the job,” Ruthie said. “And I hoped that I was setting a positive example for my people,” she reasoned.

Ruthie retired in good standing from the Board of Supervisor position in 2015, completing 15 years of service to Yalobusha County. She now volunteers as the District Secretary for the Mt. Moriah District Missionary Baptist Association and its 23 member churches. The Association, based in Coffeeville, was organized in 1908 under the leadership of Dr. C.P. Bohannon and celebrated its 111th anniversary in July.

Ruthie remains active at her family church, Hopewell Baptist, and enjoys spending time with her daughter, son and four grandchildren.

How different her path might have been.

How many more of her classmates might have been able to attend college with proper advice, counseling, mentoring or if given the opportunity?

While the college doors did not open for Ruthie, she forged a career path for which she and her children can be proud. Her mother, too. When the assistant purchasing clerk opportunity became available, she did not ask, as I did, or as First Lady Michelle Obama did in *Becoming*, her award-winning best seller, *if she was good enough*. Ruthie was not afraid to be the first black. She had already paid her dues to become an outstanding, self-assured black woman, an inspiration to her community still.

## PUBLIC NOTICES

### DEPARTMENT OF HOMELAND SECURITY FEDERAL EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT AGENCY

Proposed Flood Hazard Determinations for Yalobusha County, Mississippi and Incorporated Areas

The Department of Homeland Security’s Federal Emergency Management Agency has issued a preliminary Flood Insurance Rate Map (FIRM), and where applicable, Flood Insurance Study (FIS) report, reflecting proposed flood hazard determinations within Yalobusha County, Mississippi and Incorporated Areas. These flood hazard determinations may include the addition or modification of Base Flood Elevations, base flood depths, Special Flood Hazard Area boundaries or zone designations, or the regulatory floodway. Technical information or comments are solicited on the proposed flood hazard determinations shown on the preliminary FIRM and/or FIS report for Yalobusha County, Mississippi and Incorporated Areas. These flood hazard determinations are the basis for the floodplain management measures that your community is required to either adopt or show evidence of being already in effect in order to qualify or remain qualified for participation in the National Flood Insurance Program. However, before these determinations are effective for floodplain management purposes, you will be provided an opportunity to appeal the proposed information. For information on the statutory 90-day period provided for appeals, as well as a complete listing of the communities affected and the locations where copies of the FIRM are available for review, please visit FEMA’s website at [www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/bfe](http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/fhm/bfe), or call the FEMA Map Information eXchange (FMIX) toll free at 1-877-FEMA MAP (1-877-336-2627).

PUBLISH: October 3 and 10, 2019

### SUMMONS BY PUBLICATION

IN THE CHANCERY COURT OF THE SECOND JUDICIAL DISTRICT OF YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI

ESTATE OF DOLLIE ANN HENDERSON, DECEASED

NO: 19-CV-29

RODNEY WOODARD HENDERSON, EXECUTOR

### SUMMONS

THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

TO: Floressa (Florissa) Henderson McCallister  
address unknown

You have been made a respondent in the suit filed in this Court by Rodney Woodard Henderson, petitioner seeking to close the estate of Dollie Ann Henderson, deceased. The respondent other than you in this action is Mose Young Henderson, Jr.

You are summoned to appear and defend against the petition filed against you in this action at 9 o’clock A.M. on the 12th day of November, 2019, in the courtroom of the Panola County Courthouse at Batesville, Mississippi, and in case of your failure to appear and defend a judgment will be entered against you for the money or other things demanded in the petition.

You are not required to file an answer or other pleading but you may do so if you desire.

Issued under my hand and the seal of said Court, this 27th day of September, 2019.

AMY F. McMINN  
CHANCERY CLERK OF YALOBUSHA COUNTY, MISSISSIPPI  
BY: Brenda K. Joiner D. C. PUBLISH: October 3, 10 & 17, 2019

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BID

Notice is hereby given that sealed bids for:

**WVSD GO BOND PROJECT  
WATER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WATER VALLEY, MISSISSIPPI**

Will be received by the Architect for the Owner, at the Water Valley School District – 544 Market Street, Water Valley, MS 38965 until **2:00 pm on Tuesday, November 5, 2019** and thereby publicly opened and read.

Plans and specifications are being made available via original paper copy and electronically. Plan Holders are required to register and order bid documents at [www.millsandmillsplans.com](http://www.millsandmillsplans.com). Questions regarding website registration and online orders please contact Plan House at 662-407-0193. Bid documents may be obtained for a non-refundable deposit of \$250.00 for a Printed Set and \$125.00 for a Digital set. For questions related to the contract documents contact Mills & Mills Architects, PC at 662-332-0388 or 662-350-3149. All Deposit payments are to be made to Plan House Printing. Proposal shall be submitted on the Bid Form provided with the specifications. Bids may be submitted in person or, for those interested, bids can be electronically submitted at [www.millsandmillsplans.com](http://www.millsandmillsplans.com) under the project name. No oral, telegraphic, telephonic, or e-mail proposals will be considered. The current Certificate of Responsibility Number of the bidder shall appear on the outside of each sealed envelope containing a proposal, said envelope being plainly marked: **WVSD GO BOND PROJECT: WATER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT, WATER VALLEY, MISSISSIPPI.**

Bids must be submitted on the form to be furnished by the architect and must be accompanied by Bid Bond or Certified Check for five percent (5%) of the Base Bid payable to Water Valley School District, Water Valley, Mississippi.

Bid envelope must contain on the outside of the envelope, the Contractor’s current Certificate of Responsibility Number and the Contractor’s License Number unless a statement on the exterior say that the bid enclosed is less than or did not exceed \$50,000.00. Envelope containing bids must be sealed, marked and addressed as follows:

**WVSD GO BOND PROJECT  
WATER VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
WATER VALLEY, MISSISSIPPI**

By:  
Construction Company  
Done by order of the Water Valley School District

Dates of Publication: October 3, 2019 and October 10, 2019

### ADVERTISEMENT FOR BIDS

Sealed bids shall be received by the Mayor and Board of Aldermen of the City of Water Valley, at City Hall, Water Valley, Mississippi, by 6:30 o’clock p.m. on Monday November 5, 2019, and shortly thereafter publicly opened for the Financing of a Fire Truck for the City of Water Valley, Mississippi Fire Department.

If your bank would like to finance this equipment for the City of Water Valley, please submit to the City of Water Valley a **4 and 5 Year Lease-Purchase Amortized Government purchase written proposal** for the amount of \$351,767.00.

The City of Water Valley has the right to reject any and all bids submitted.

This the 17th day of September, 2019  
/s/ Vivian S. Snider  
City Clerk

Publish: September 26, 2019 & October 3, 2019



By Dottie  
Chapman Reed

Reed is a native of Water Valley and graduated from Davidson High School in 1970. This article is part of 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. She can be reached at (678) 825-2356 or [reed2318@bellsouth.net](mailto:reed2318@bellsouth.net)