

Let Not Obituaries Be The Last Words...

Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha Part 2 and Some Good Black Men Past and Present

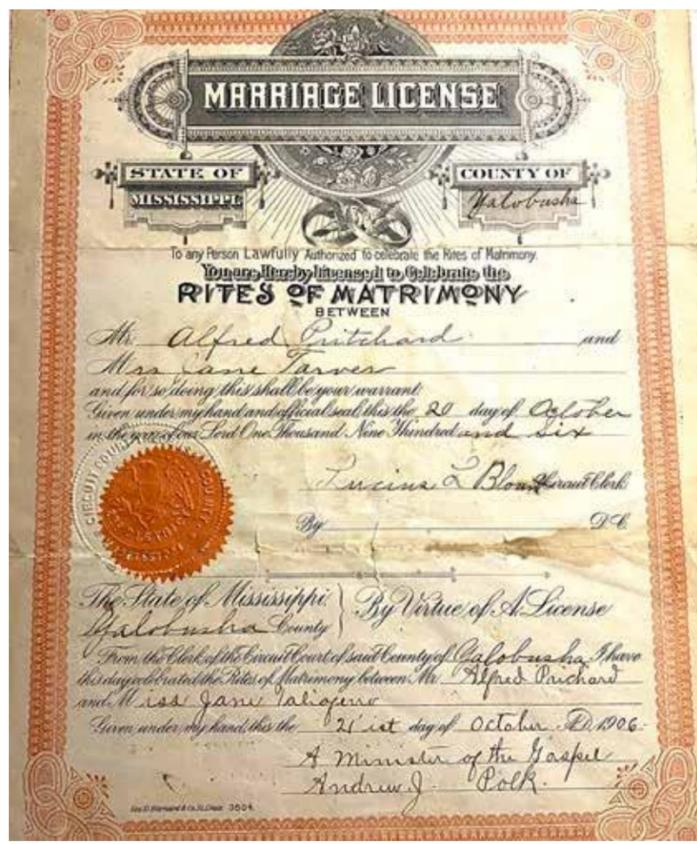
As I spent the last few weeks of 2021 reflecting, I was reminded of the support and comments from readers across the country about the Black Women of Yalobusha column, which ran from June, 2018, to July, 2021, in this newspaper. Yalobusha natives James Wilson and Freddie Harris urged me to write about men, about veterans, specifically. My former union president when I worked at Dow Jones, Ron Chen, wrote in his Christmas card from New Jersey, "What a year it's been. You've done something wonderful by sharing the stories of Yalobusha County. Hope to see/hear more from you in the New Year."

The column grew into an oral history project in collaboration with the University of Mississippi's Center for the Study of Southern Culture. All the articles were compiled into a book in December, 2020, and the oral history interviews conducted by the university's graduate students are now archived on the school's egrave website: <https://egrove.olemiss.edu> for generations to come.

A happy sidebar to this effort was my ability to clear a substantial amount of space in my house during the pandemic. I provided the university library all my mementoes from my student days to my work as a university admissions counselor/recruiter in the 1970s and then as a college administrator in Tennessee in the 1980s. I added my corporate experiences, all in total covering 1970 to date.

Beware friends and associates. I sent and labeled all the pictures so your grandkids can see them when they google your name! Seriously, the collection should be available on the UM library site later this year. And the Center for the Study of the Southern Culture may write an article in its magazine, *The Southern Register*.

More important, I am most proud that reconnecting with the university on the Yalobusha Project has preserved stories of black life in the county from the late 1800s to the present. My grandmother, Jane Ophelia Williams Toliver Pritchard, born in 1871, is pictured on the cover of my website, book and tee shirt. I have her marriage license, on which her Toliver name is spelled



A marriage license from 1906 has Jane Ophelia Williams Toliver Pritchard's name spelled differently three times, minus her own signature.

differently three times minus her own signature. I wonder how often this happened to our ancestors and how it might have altered a family tree.

The stories of our ancestors, our people – black people – can be used to educate and motivate. We must teach our history. Can we share our stories in our classrooms, in Bible study or Sunday school classes? Do we share our family history during Black History Month?

I invite you to participate in Outstanding Black Women of Yalobusha Part II and Some Good Black Men. If there was or is an Outstanding Black Woman of Yalo-

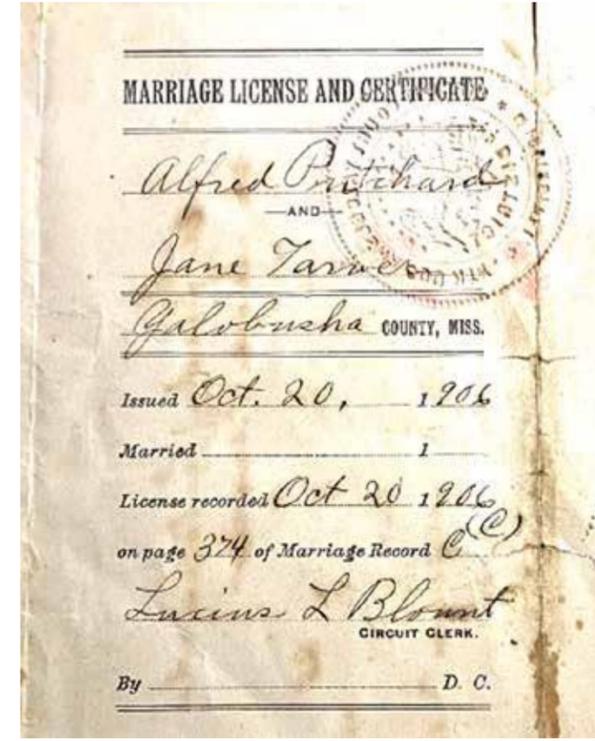


By Dottie Chapman Reed

Reed is a native of Water Valley and graduated from Davidson High School in 1970. She published a series of articles in the North Mississippi Herald from August, 2018, through July, 2020, sharing the stories of unsung black women who made or are making a difference in Yalobusha County. This week she announces part two of the project, which will also feature black men. She can be reached at (678) 825-2356 or reed2318@bellsouth.net

For more information, visit:

www.blackwomenofyalobusha.com



busha or a Good Black Man that you want to highlight in this column, call me at 678- 525-5408 or email me at info@outstandingblackwomenofyalobusha.com. Let not obituaries be the last words...

CEO: Acquisition Will Bring Stabilization And Transformation

ATAR Capital

(Continued From Page One)

solenoids, engine solenoids, start-stop accumulators and hydraulic control modules throughout North America.

The news first circulated in the community on Jan. 4 as ATAR Capital's leadership team meet with workers on all three shifts at the Water Valley plant.

"The leadership team with ATAR was right here last week when we were announcing it," reported interim CEO Ramzi Hermiz. "Cyrus Nikou, the founder of ATAR Capital, was here communicating with workers on all three shifts."

BorgWarner announced the sale as part of the company's accelerated electrification strategy expected to bring the company's electric vehicle revenue from less than three percent of total revenue in 2021 to approximately 45 percent in 2030. Also outlined in this strategy by BorgWarner is a target to dispose of \$3 billion to \$4 billion in annual revenues from its internal combustion engine portfolio by 2025, with approximately \$1 billion of that targeted to be executed by late 2022.

BorgWarner's new strategy created an opportunity for ATAR Capital, Hermiz explained in an interview with the Herald Monday afternoon.

"When we looked at what is happening in Water Valley, we see a business that is performing very well. It has a strong and talented workforce, has success in the market and has a strong reputation," Hermiz reported.

The interim CEO noted that the products produced in Water Valley make an internal combustion engine more efficient, greener and better for the environment.

"We see the ability to expand," Hermiz added.

The focus of the expansion includes both increasing the company's market share of products already in production at the plant and developing future technology for engines and high speed transmissions that will increase the fuel efficiency of internal combustion engines.

"But also if you look at electric vehicles (EV), there are applications of controlling fluid flow. Maybe not an automatic transmission, but there is battery cooling and other activities – we still feel that this product has a life and opportunity," Hermiz explained about current production. "We talk about going to an EV environment, and we will, but there are also hybrid electrics. There are all these other versions of electrifications."

Transforming the Company

Hermiz shared ATAR Capital is not approaching management of the plant as a major restructuring initiative, and instead the goal is to transform it into a higher growth company.

"Frankly under the prior ownership, the business wasn't being invested in. They had it in a decline, which is partly why they wanted to exit. But we see it as an opportunity for growth," he reiterated.

The CEO also cautioned that the company is not immune to the current challenges in the automotive industry with supply chain interruptions, commodity price increases and the global chip shortage that impacts the overall volume of vehicles produced.

"I would say we are sized for what the market will be and continue to go on that path," he added about current

work force.

With the acquisition, ATAR purchased existing contracts serving blue-chip automotive and commercial vehicle OEMs (original equipment manufacturer) including Cummings Engine, Ford Motor Company, General Motors and Stellantis.

Hermiz also provided insight about the lag time between quoting applications for new businesses and production.

"We will quote something this year, but not go into production for a couple of years. There is a valley you have to go through to come out on the other end. But that being said, we are going to look for opportunistic growth opportunities. We are primarily automotive, but we believe there are still more opportunities in commercial vehicles and industrial applications, even water vehicles," Hermiz added.

Automotive Investment Is A First For ATAR Capital

Hermiz shared that ATAR has individuals who have worked in the automotive industry, but this is the investment firm's first automotive acquisition.

Hermiz cited information that ATAR founder Cyrus Nikou told workers at the plant during his visit late week.

"Cryus shared with the team that they may look at 1,500 deals in a year. They probably pursue five or six (deals) a year to close. And this was one of those deals. They were selective in the process and they had other opportunities. Cyrus said if they were going to go into automotive, this was the one he wanted" Hermiz explained. "From their standpoint, it's their money. They are not getting funds from somewhere else, this is ATAR group's personal money in this business. So clearly they are committed to seeing its success."

Hermiz also revisited the strategy to displace competitor companies to gain market share.

"We are committed to doing that and that will be a consistent message we are conveying to our team," he continued.

Hermiz noted that as a smaller, standalone company, there will be a contrast from former operations.

"BorgWarner is a great company, they have a great reputation and do a lot of things really well," Hermiz continued. "But our top-to-bottom decision making is in our control. We are not going to a headquarters, we are not evaluating amongst different businesses. What we have is focus, the ability to be quicker and make decisions faster. We have one facility with this technology, so our focus is how do we grow Water Valley (plant)."

Employees and Local Commitment

Hermiz shared a strong commitment and appreciation from ATAR Capital for the company's work force and the community in a reciprocal relationship that has spanned decades as the business has evolved.

"When you think about our history, it was originally a Holley facility making carburetors. Then the business transformed and started making early stage solenoids,"

Water Valley Plant Will Have New Name By The End Of The Month

The board members of ATAR Capital, the new owners of the BorgWarner plant, have launched an initiative to come up with a new name for the facility by the end of the month.

Interim CEO Ramzi Hermiz explained ATAR Capital wanted to get input from the local team at the plant about the heritage and future of the plant.

"The had their first meeting with a broad spectrum of people at the plant to kick off that exercise," Hermiz told the Herald.

Hermiz said. "The business was reinvented to make more complex solenoids and start-stop actuators. The openness of this community, the work ethic of this community has allowed this transformation multiple times."

Hermiz added that the cycle will continue.

"We believe with the collaborative approach with our associates, with the community, with the county, the state and our customers, we can reinvent ourselves again to drive and deliver a growing business versus what has been somewhat a declining business. When someone says put your money behind your words, clearly ATAR has done that. They have their money in, now they have to generate some action."

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