

Lewis takes oath as marshal

Calling the occasion an "historic one," U.S. Dist. Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. swore in Rufus Lewis of Montgomery Friday as the U.S. marshal for the Middle District of Alabama.

Johnson said Lewis' appointment to the federal post is the first for a black in the deep South since Reconstruction.

Lewis, who registered black voters in the 1950s and thrust Martin Luther King Jr. into the Montgomery bus boycott, will officially assume office as marshal at midnight Saturday.

In Johnson's high-ceiling courtroom overflowing with Lewis' friends and supporters, the judge said it is "fitting" that Lewis take the oath of office "in this court."

Johnson is known for his landmark desegregation rulings in Alabama from his federal bench since 1955.

Lewis will replace James T. Lunsford, whom Johnson called a "hard working marshal." Lunsford is retiring after spending eight years at the U.S. marshal's post in Montgomery.



Johnson, left, swears in Lewis as marshal

criminal suits brought by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, fined \$2,500 in a criminal case; both suits filed in Montgomery's U.S.