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90th birthday celebrated

Rufus Lewis is affectionately called "Coach" by people who know him, and on his 90th birthday recently, Coach had many friends to help him celebrate the milestone event.

A party was held in his honor by Trenholm State Technical College, to which Coach recently donated a collection of writings, letters and other memorabilia he had accumulated during the years he was a leader in the voting rights drive. He became involved in the early 1940s, and in 1960, he was one of the founders and the first county president of the Alabama Democratic Conference, the black caucus of the state Democratic Party.

Appointed by President Jimmy Carter in 1976, Coach was the first black United States marshal. In the early '50s, he opened the Citizens Club, a nightclub for blacks. Its purpose was to motivate black people to vote, but in a social setting.

He is a partner in Ross-Clayton Funeral Home.

The donation of the papers is the first in the school's archival collection, which is to be preserved for public use. They will be housed in the college's state-of-the-art Library/Learning-Resource Tower.

Dr. Leroy Bell, interim president of Trenholm, attended the celebration, as did Peggy Tatum, the vice president. Also in attendance were Dr. Gwen Patton, Dr. Nina Beauchamp and Yvonne Williams, members of the library staff at Trenholm.

Eleanor Dawkins, the honoree's daughter, and his granddaughter, Karen Dawkins, were there to help him celebrate his birthday.

Others attending included James and Mildred Hall, Joseph and Virginia Dickerson, LaRue Pringle, Maxine Kimbrough, Charles Conley, Herman and Barbara Harris, John Knight, Mark Gilmore, Leu Hammonds, Sidney Williams, James Brown, Idessa Redden, Zecozy Williams, Johnnie Carr, Dot Moore, Ella Bell, Diane Ward, who took pictures to record the occasion, Jerome Gray, Darryl Sinkfield, Richard Bailey, Michael King, Joseph Knight, Paurel Johnson, Lulander King, Janice Franklin, Juanita Owens, Mary Wilhaite and Edwin Bridges.

Elizabeth Via Brown writes about social events.



Rufus Lewis, center, celebrates his 90th birthday with his daughter, Eleanor Dawkins, left, and granddaughter, Karen Dawkins.

SPECIAL TO THE ADVERTISER

Behind the News

BY JANE GORDON

Welfare reform in Alabama must be passed by this Legislature, but what form it will take is still in question.

The governor's plan does not address some basic issues like transportation and child-care needs of former welfare recipients, although it is generous in giving mothers time to figure out their needs.

"The concerns about transportation are well-founded," said Sheila Holbrook-White, a policy analyst with Alabama Arise, a non-profit organization that focuses on the needs of low-income people. "Many of the jobs are shift jobs. How does a woman get home and arrange child care in Birmingham when buses stop at 6 p.m.?" she asked in a Tuesday interview.

"The low-skilled, low-paying jobs in Montgomery are all out on the bypass, and there is no way to get there by bus," she said.

Child care is a crucial problem in welfare reform, Holbrook-White said.

"I have not seen any indication from the governor, for example, that the political leadership has a specific plan for child care."

She said that federal money was available for child care, but that the minimum wait is 18 months — and sometimes much longer.

The governor's proposed plan would give welfare mothers two years to find a job. However, the governor's office was not immediately available for comment on the issue of welfare reform as of Tuesday, when public hearings started.

Another issue involving welfare reform came from Lt. Gov. Don Siegelman's office. He is suggesting that welfare recipients be fingerprinted. Calls to Siegelman's office also went unanswered on Tuesday.

A bill allowing video poker machines at Alabama's four dog tracks will likely meet with opposition, although it has passed in a House committee. Milton McGregor, owner of two dog tracks, is on vacation and

The Week In Review

Benefactor birthday

Trenholm State Technical College honors Rufus Lewis

By Roxie Lancaster
STAFF WRITER

Family members, friends, colleagues and representatives from Alabama's State Archives were on hand to wish Rufus Lewis a happy 90th birthday at a birthday celebration hosted by Trenholm State Technical College (TSCC).

Affectionately called "Coach," Rufus Lewis was born in Montgomery County and began an earnest, consistent and persistent voting rights drive in the early '40s.

He graduated from Fisk University and was an Alabama State College football coach and a partner in Ross-Clayton Funeral Home when he opened the Citizens Club in 1952, which was a nightclub for blacks. The Club's primary purpose was to motivate black citizens to register to vote. It had a citizenship school where patrons learned how to fill out the literacy test, the pre-requisite for becoming a registered voter at the time.

In 1960, Lewis became one of the founders and the first county president of the Alabama Democratic Conference, the black caucus of the State Democratic Party. In 1976, former president Jimmy Carter appointed him as a U.S. Marshal, the first black marshal ever in Alabama.

Lewis has entrusted all his private papers pertaining to his prodigious voting rights record of struggle to TSCC.

TSCC archivist Gwen Patton said, "This is the first in our archival collection to be preserved for public access. It is a joy processing the Lewis papers because much is already categorized ... due to Lewis' library skills."

Dr. Leroy Bell, TSCC interim president,



Enjoying Rufus Lewis' birthday celebration are, back row from left, Peggy Tatum, TSCC vice president; Yvonne Williams; Dr. Gwen Patton and Dr. Nina Beauchamp. Sitting with Hon. Lewis is Dr. Leroy Bell, TSCC interim president.

Photo by Diane Ward

added, "We are delighted that Lewis has entrusted our college with his invaluable papers. They are being housed in our state-of-the-arts Library/Learning Resource Tower at Mobile Highway and Air Base Boulevard. His collection, to be shared with students, scholars and the general public, is considered one of our most precious resources."

On hand to celebrate with Lewis were Mildred and James Hall, Virginia and Joseph Dickerson, LaRue Pringle, Maxine Kimbrough (all family members), Charles Con-

ley, Barbara and Herman Harris, John Knight, Mark Gilmore, Leu Hammonds, Sidney Williams, James Brown (elected officials), Idessa Redden, Zecozy Williams, Johnnie Carr, Dot Moore, Ella Bell, Diane Ward, Jerome Gray, Darryl Sinkfield, Richard Bailey, Michael King (community activists), Joseph Knight, Paurel Johnson, Lulander King (Ross-Clayton Funeral Home staff), Janice Franklin, Juanita Owes, Mary Wilhaite and Edwin Bridges, who is with the State Archives.

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The Montgomery-Tuskegee Times

VOLUME 20 NO. 10

KEEPING THE BLACK COMMUNITY INFORMED OF ISSUES AFFECTING ITS SURVIVAL

JAN. 30-FEB. 5, 1997

Trenholm State Technical College (TSTC) Hosts 90th Birthday Party for the Honorable Rufus Lewis



From left to right: Daughter Eleanor Dawkins, Honorable Rufus Lewis and Granddaughter Karen Dawkins. Standing Left to right are: Dr. Leroy Bell, (TSTC Interim President) and V.P. Peggy Tatum of Trenholm State Technical College. Photos By Diane Ward. See other photoes page 10.

Family, friends and colleagues were on hand to wish Hon. Lewis "Happy Birthday."

Affectionately called "Coach," Rufus Lewis was born November 30,

1906, in Montgomery County. Coach Lewis began an earnest, consistent and persistent voting rights drive in the early 1940s.

A graduate of Fisk University, and

Alabama State College football coach and partner in Ross-Clayton Funeral Home, he opened the Citizens Club (a night club for Blacks) in 1952. The primary purpose of the night club was

to motivate Black citizens in a social setting to register to vote. The club was also a "citizenship school" where patrons learned how to fill out the literacy test, the prerequisite for be-

coming registered voter.

In 1960, Mr. Lewis was one of the founders and the first county president of the Alabama Democratic conference, the Black caucus of the State Democratic Party. In 1976, President Jimmy Carter appointed Mr. Lewis as a United States Marshal, the first Black marshal ever in Alabama.

"This is the first in our archival collection to be preserved for public access," said TSTC archivist Gwen Patton. "It is a joy processing the Lewis papers because much is already categorized. Coach Lewis drew up his library science skills in maintaining a prodigious voting rights record of struggle."

Dr. Leroy Bell, TSTC interim president, said, "We are delighted that Hon. Lewis has entrusted his invaluable papers within our College. They will be housed in our state-of-the-art Library/Learning-Resource Tower. His collection is to be shared

SEE LEWIS PAGE 11

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LEWIS

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

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On hand to celebrate with Coach Lewis were family members Mr. and Mrs. James Hall, The Hon. and Mrs. Joseph Dickerson, LaRue Pringle, Maxine Kimbrough, elected officials, Hons. Charles Conley, Herman (Barbara) Harris, John Knight, Mark Gilmore, Leu Hammonds, Sidney Williams James Brown; community activists Idessa Redden, Zecozy Williams, Johnnie Carr, Dot Moore, Ella Bell, Diane Ward, Jerome Gray, Darryl Sinkfield, Richard Bailey, Michael King; and Joseph Knight, Peurel Johnson, Lulander King, Ross-Clayton Funeral Home staff, Janice Franklin, Juanita Owes, Mary Wilhaite and Edwin Bridges with the State Achieves.



From left to right are: Library Staff, Dr. Nina Beauchamp and Ms. Yvonne Williams sitting with Hon. Lewis, Dr. Gwen Patton. Photos by Diane Ward



Enjoying Honorable Lewis' birthday celebration from left to right back row, Vice President, Peggy Tatum, Ms. Yvonne Williams, Dr. Gwen Patton and Dr. Nina Beauchamp. Sitting with Hon. Lewis, Dr. Leroy Bell, TSTC Interim President). Photos by Diane Ward

