

Sorority chooses Woman of the Year

MONTGOMERY — Idessa Williams Redden was named Alpha Rho Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority's Woman of the Year. Redden was instrumental in human and civil rights in Montgomery.

Redden, who worked with Montgomery's Community Action for 30 years, led a voter registration campaign in which she helped register almost 2,000 African-Americans to vote. Redden, 86, has been invited to three presidential inaugurations — John F. Kennedy, Lyndon B. Johnson and William J. Clinton.

Later in the program, Ashley Thomas was named Miss Zetarette 2004. The contestants included Terrica Lewis, Oslynn Brown and Michelle Ashley.



David Alan Planchet Advertiser

Joann Ashley, president of the Alpha Rho Zeta Chapter of Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, left, talks with Zeta Phi Beta Finer Womanhood Luncheon honoree Idessa Williams Redden on Sunday.

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Finer Womanhood Luncheon



Sunday, March 21, 2004

2:00 P.M.

Governor's House Conference Center

Montgomery, Alabama



Woman of the Year



Mrs. Idessa Williams Redden

The life of Mrs. Idessa Williams Redden is an example of courage, faith in action and so much more. Some of her fondest memories are of her time spent working in the struggle for human rights/civil rights here in the City of Montgomery. But her work often extended throughout the State of Alabama and the United States.

Mrs. Idessa Redden attended the first mass meeting at Holt Street Baptist Church on December 5, 1955, after Mrs. Rosa Parks was arrested four days earlier on December 1st. Mrs. Redden says, "When I heard Dr. King speak that night at the meeting, it inspired me to do whatever I could for the Movement." Mrs. Redden never missed a meeting. "The meetings were held on Mondays and Thursdays at 7:00 p.m. every week for about 5 or 6 months. Then the Thursday meetings were dropped", she recalls. Mrs. Redden attended all of the mass meetings until the boycott ended in 1956 with the desegregation of the Montgomery city buses.

Mrs. Redden participated in every march held in Montgomery. She says, "I tried to follow Dr. King everywhere." She went to Mississippi to march with James Meredith for the integration of the University of Mississippi at Jackson, Ms.

In 1957, Dr. King and the Montgomery Improvement Association (MIA) board of directors asked Mrs. Redden to work with Mr. Rufus Lewis as part of a voter education and registration campaign. Over 1,200 people registered as a result of her work from 1957 to 1967. During this same period, Mrs. Redden trained black and white high school students from Montgomery, and those who came from throughout the United States, to help register black people. In the 1960s, Mrs. Virginia Durr encouraged Mrs. Redden to seek political office as the representative for Precinct 2 North, she did. However, unfortunately, after she entered the race, a black male also decided to run. This split the vote and they both lost to the white incumbent. From 1947 through 1957, Mrs. Redden owned a business. And from 1970 until 1998, Mrs. Redden worked at Community Action as a Social Service Worker. She retired at the age of 86.

Recently, Mrs. Redden has stopped giving interviews about her life to people who are writing books. But she does talk to young people about the Movement. "I talk to them because I don't want Dr. King's dream to die," she says.