

There's a whole lot more to commissioners

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funds of its own (the county cannot own a profit-making subsidiary).

Woodruff, who, along with Commissioner Richard Linville, voted against the hospital's reorganization plan last October, says she wanted to make sure the elderly and poor would continue to get proper health care under the new set-up.

"That should have been a concern to all of us," she says. "Whether a person has money or not, everyone will have health care, and I had to have that in writing."

Woodruff says she also wanted to make sure black doctors aren't denied an opportunity to practice medicine at the hospital. "We have black doctors who want to come here to practice," she says. "I wanted to make sure that, after this time (the reorganization), they could still be there."

Woodruff says she still doesn't think blacks realize the county no longer owns Forsyth Memorial -- and won't own it again unless the holding company fails to live up to its agreement to provide health care to all Forsyth County residents and to enforce affirmative action.

That's why the hospital's 23-member governing body must keep its board at two-thirds local members, she says, and must increase its black members from its present two.

"We've got to watch from here on who we put on that board, and we've got to watch who we elect to the county commissioners," she says, noting that the commissioners appoint 12 of the 23 members.

But the hospital's board isn't the only body of responsibility with inadequate black representation, says Woodruff. "I want to see us -- and when I say us, that's what I mean -- get our share of the elected offices," she says. "I'm willing to work to see that we get our share."

And though whites are as able to represent the county as blacks, she said, "until you sit where I sit, you can't represent me. And very few whites have lived where we live and understand us. We came out of slavery. We are survivors."

As to whether the Martinsville, Va., native will run for

re-election as a commissioner in 1986, she laughs softly and says: "I have two years to think about it, and I'm going to do just that."

She says she had never intended to run for any public office, and it was at the urging of a group of young people nine years ago that she decided to run for county commissioner.

What that group of young people initially asked of Woodruff was to share with them her ideal candidate. She ended up being what they were looking for.

In 1976, she was elected to her first term as a county commissioner, which made her the second woman and the first black to sit on the board. She lost a re-election bid in 1980, along with most other blacks who ran for public office then.

But the two years until the next election gave her more than enough time to regroup.

The work paid off and she occupies one of the five elevated chairs in the commissioners' chamber every other Monday night.

In addition to her work as a public servant, Woodruff is a Sunday School teacher and president of the usher board at Union Chapel Baptist Church, a member of the executive committee of the Northwest Piedmont Council of Governments, a member of the Reynolds Health Center Advisory Board and a member of various other boards and agencies.

She's also found the energy to have worked full time as a surgical supply salesman for the last 23 years.

Since her jobs keeps her on the road, she says, "I see a lot of things people don't think I see."

Not to be left out of this year's campaigns, Woodruff actively supports the Rev. Jesse Jackson for president.

"I'm very proud of him," she says, "... I'm proud to be in his corner. If you think about it, he has proven something -- that anybody can run for any office."

"We've already won," she says. "It's the most exciting campaign I've ever worked in, including my own."



County Commissioner Mazie Woodruff

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Black Republicans

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"It's a situation in which blacks will get out to realize that our vote is very vital," says Jones. "The Democrats have taken our vote for granted, and the Republicans haven't been aggressive enough."

Jones says he doesn't plan to change his registration, as Davis has done, but says he does support the "Jesse Jackson movement" and that he is firmly behind Jackson "in spirit."

"If Martin Luther King Jr. was the Messiah, then Jesse is second to Martin," he says. "I think it's good -- it's really dynamite."

Jones says he's ashamed of black officials, such as Wilson Goode of Philadelphia, who support Walter Mondale over Jackson.

"I'm an American first, a black second and a Republican third," says Jones.

Davis agrees and says blacks who support Mondale should step back and reassess their commitment to blacks.

"Mondale is a friend of ours (blacks)," says Davis. "But how much money has he spent with black newspapers before now? None. How can you get mad at Jesse Helms for not doing it when Mondale is not doing so?"

"Like Jesse (Jackson) says, 'Mondale stood up for civil rights, but I am civil rights.'"

Black Republican support for Jackson hasn't happened without at least a few sparks of controversy, however, as was the case a few weeks ago when Alderman Larry Little, Jackson's Forsyth County campaign coordinator, questioned the motives of one local Republican campaigning for Jackson.

Little said that Vernon Robinson, a business professor at Winston-Salem State University, couldn't be both a Reaganite and a supporter of Jackson at the same time. To that, Robinson said in a telephone conversation with *Chronicle's* Executive Editor Allen Johnson, "I'm black first."

While Robinson declined to be interviewed for this article, Davis says a candidate's actions should be the focal point for voters, not his political party.

"I never ask anybody what political party they are," he says. "It's what the person does that's important to me."

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