

Election of black sheriff evidence of change

By REED BRANSON
The Memphis Commercial Appeal

RIPLEY, Miss. (AP) — Tommy Storey is black. But his election last month as sheriff in 85 percent white Tippah County is not the anomaly one might imagine.

A career law enforcement officer with 10 years as chief deputy, Storey faced a white automobile salesman and former county supervisor Nov. 18 in the North Mississippi county and captured 54 percent of the 7,182 votes cast.

"The election was decided on qualifications and who was the best candidate for the job. Race may have played a part, but it wasn't the deciding factor," said Storey, chief deputy in the county

for 10 years until a vacancy prompted the special election.

While racial voting patterns persist in Mississippi and many states, Storey's election and other anecdotal evidence suggests that those patterns are somewhat less prevalent, perhaps even slowly eroding, at the most basic local elective offices.

Since the end of Reconstruction, Mississippi, with a 36 percent black population, has consistently elected only white people to statewide office.

The only post-Reconstruction black congressmen have come from the Second Congressional District in the Mississippi Delta — a district whose boundaries were drawn at court order to specifically achieve that goal. And only five of the state's 174 legislative districts defy racial predictors. In

each, white people were elected from majority black districts.

However, there is evidence crossover voting is emerging, if ever so slightly, at the local level.

In 1989, voters in majority-white Corinth, elected black alderman E.S. Bishop as mayor. And, newly elected black mayors in both Jackson and Vicksburg — cities nearly evenly divided by race — nevertheless won substantial support in white precincts.

Though it is still the exception, perhaps nowhere is crossover voting more prevalent than in the sheriff's office — the official charged with the most practical and decidedly un-ideological job of ensuring public safety.

With Storey's election, two of Mississippi's 10 black sheriffs were elected from majority white counties. And voters in at least a dozen

majority black counties have elected white sheriffs. Mississippi has 82 counties.

"If they can see you're doing a good job and concerned about the public safety, (voters) will elect you regardless of your color," said Leflore County Sheriff Ricky Banks, a white man elected five times in a county that is 61 percent black. "It should be that way with everything."

Banks said that sheriffs, perhaps more than other officials, are held accountable to the most basic public expectations of safety and security. And, when it comes to police work, there is little of the ideological divide that can emerge on issues like taxes or schools.

To that end, voters in Tippah had a clear choice.

Storey, 39, had experience in criminal and arson investigation, a

degree in sociology and studies in criminal justice from the University of Tennessee-Martin, and a host of police training courses. He promised to attack drug trafficking and abuse.

"We're at a crossroads in law enforcement. Crime is getting rampant. So people voted for someone with experience and qualifications," Storey said.

His opponent, James R. Cagle, 62, was clearly well known. But the former president of the Tippah County Board of Supervisors had little to offer in terms of a practical crime-fighting record other than slogans and promises.

"The main issue was that Tommy Storey appeared to have a better platform and communicated that to the voters better," said Eugene Taylor, executive director of the Tippah County

Development Authority. Marty Wiseman, director of the Stennis Institute of Government and an associate professor of political science at Mississippi State University, said the crossover trend has emerged at the grassroots level for the most practical of reasons and with what were once the most unimaginable of possibilities.

"In a state like Mississippi, a lot of the stereotypes melt away at the local level because we know each other," said Wiseman. "And if you get significant numbers of whites voting for black candidates in local elections, how long before an African-American can seriously challenge for governor? It's not that big of a leap."

Best Wishes for The Holidays

Monday, Nov. 24, 2 p.m.,
Carl H. Russell Community Center

Several players assembled and practiced; however, no master points were awarded.

Tuesday, Nov. 25, 7 p.m.,
Carl Russell Community Center

Winston-Salem Duplicate Bridge Club

The members present had a good practice session; however, no master points were awarded. The club held its annual meeting/grade C game on Tuesday, Dec. 2. A report on that event will be published in next week's column.

Congratulations to The Holidays Inc.!

Congratulations to The Holidays Inc. of Winston-Salem on their 36th Anniversary. The group celebrated with a luncheon and bridge tournament Saturday, Nov. 29, at the Anderson



BRIDGE NEWS

Rudolph V. Boone Sr.

Center. The members and guests from the local area, including some Holidays from Greensboro, thoroughly enjoyed this festive occasion.

Members of the chapter are Bessie Allen, Faye B. Carter, Geraldine Cary, Mattie S. Clarke, Demerice W. Erwin, Clara B. Gaines, Irene P. Hairston, Dorothy B. Jones, Bernice Murrell, Gladys D. Oldham (president), Ruth C. Oliver, Olivia B. Thompkins, Marion E. Williams, and Virginia Wiseman. This group of lovely ladies can be proud of being the mother of 20 other chapters in the nation. Best wishes to The Holidays Inc.!

Group aims to empower black investors

The Coalition of Black Investors (COBI) is a new national organization created to address some of the economic inequities facing African Americans. COBI's leadership is comprised of African-American professionals who appreciate the importance of saving, investing, and communication about money, organizers explained.

"COBI was formed to address the unequal distribution of wealth, power and resources that has stagnated growth in black communities across America," said Duane Davis, a spokesperson for the group. "In response, COBI is creating a black economic network

to serve the large and long-neglected population of African-American savers and investors. We want to help African Americans create wealth and increase ownership through investments in public and private enterprises."

COBI is seeking new members — individuals and investment clubs who want to share knowledge and communicate with each other. For more information, contact COBI at (910) 945-8977, website: <http://www.cobinvest.com> or by e-mail at cobinvest@aol.com.

Sentinel publisher Kenneth Thomas remembered as one 'willing to help'

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Kenneth Thomas, whose Los Angeles Sentinel is the largest black-owned newspaper in the West, has died. He was 68.

Thomas died Friday morning of respiratory failure after being hospitalized twice since September for aneurysms, a Sentinel spokesman said.

"Under his leadership, the Sentinel was a voice for the voiceless, an important institution in our community that made sure that the story of the black experience was told in its totality," said John Mack, president of the Los Angeles Urban League.

Thomas, who was also chief executive officer, kept the newspaper afloat despite dwindling circu-

lation and demographic changes. He moved the newspaper's offices to the Crenshaw District after the old South Central office, once in the heart of the city's black community, found itself immersed in a mainly Hispanic neighborhood.

However, circulation remains at a fraction of the 56,000 it was during the height of the 1960s civil rights movement.

Thomas was also credited with giving young black reporters a break in the business.

"He was always willing to help young journalists trying to make it in the industry, and other businesses too," said James Bolden, a former Sentinel reporter.

Thomas became head of the Sentinel in the mid-1980s after

agreeing to pay its debts and keep on owner Ruth Washington as publisher. He assumed the publisher's role after her death.

Thomas was a member of several California and Ohio bar associations. He was a former vice president of the Los Angeles Trial Lawyers Association and the National Lawyers Guild. He served as an adviser to the Los Angeles Fair Housing Counsel and the local chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. He was also a member of the board of the Los Angeles Urban League.

Thomas was survived by his wife, Jennifer.

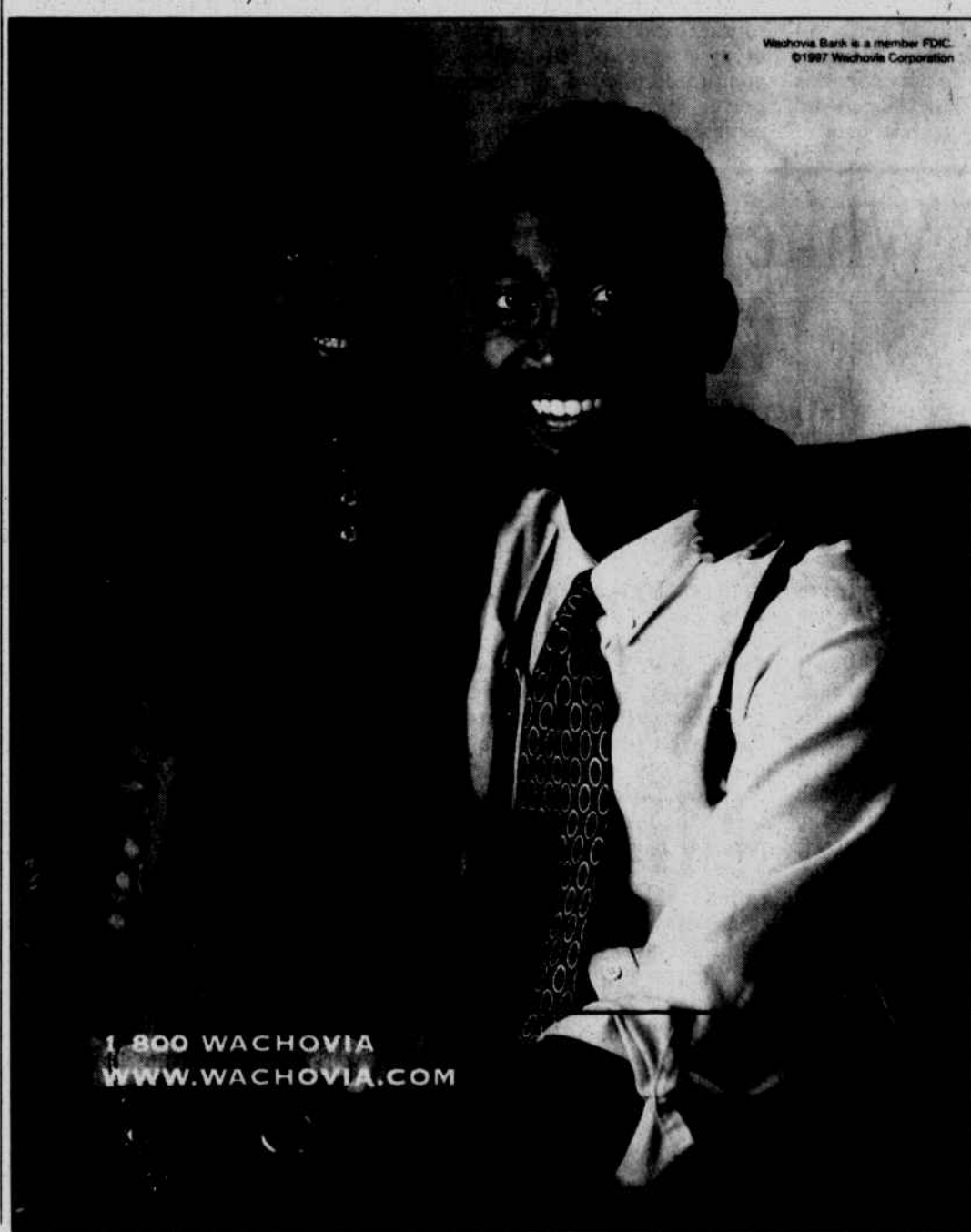
Study shows African-American males more likely to lose motivation to succeed academically

African-American boys, compared with whites, Hispanics and African-American girls, are "particularly and perhaps uniquely" vulnerable to "academic disidentification," the phenomenon in which success or failure in school ceases to matter to the student, according to a new survey.

According to the author, Jason W. Osborne, M.A., the correlations between self-esteem and achievement scores and self-esteem and grades provide a measure of the students' degree of academic identification or disidentification: Self-esteem rising or falling with grades and achievement scores indicate stronger academic identification.

Over the course of the study, there were few substantial changes in the relationship between self-esteem and achievement scores, except for African-American boys. For this group, these correlations declined dramatically. There was very little support for the idea that African-American girls are similarly affected.

The findings come from a four-year study for nearly 25,000 high school students across the United States and is reported in the December issue of the *Journal of Education Psychology*, published by the American Psychological Association (APA).



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