

Leola Woffort, Elma Horton Receive Top Honors At Merit Awards Ceremony

by Connie Bennette

More than 1500 persons joined in to salute the "36 Unsung Heroes and Heroines" at THE MEDIUM's Second Annual Black Communities Merit Awards program at the Garfield 'A' auditorium Saturday. The ceremony got underway at 7 p.m. despite the harassment from "outsiders" attempting to tell the Black Community who "our" leaders are.

Rev. Jesse L. Jackson, founder and president of operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity) delivered the keynote address, receiving standing ovations throughout the 'rap' as he informed the audience to be "necessary". He said the name of the game is "silver" rights -- then civil rights. Comparing sit-ins to sleep-ins in explaining "silver" rights, the 'Country Preacher' said, "You can sit-in the Washington Plaza or any other hotel but

can't sleep there broke. You need "silver" rights -- money, money, money!"

Rev. Jackson's mind-blowing address touched several areas. He called abortion a genocidal attempt to 'kill off Blacks'. The dope pushers and pimps are leechers of the Black community, 'ripping off' in every aspect, he said.

He advised the youth to stay in school and yet all the knowledge possible because "they" are our future leaders and history makers.

Black history is 'necessary', but Blacks must pay attention to the future, "Where are we now? Where are we now", Jackson asked.

"The energy crisis is a hoax. How can we run out of everything in one day," Jackson said.

The 'Country Preacher' dressed in his usual, cool denim attire commended The Medium for honoring the backbones of the community--the real leaders.

Mrs. Leola Mae Woffort, who among other things, was nominated for the outstanding services to welfare rights, showed tears of joy as hundreds gathered around her, showering her with kisses and hugs, when she said, "For the first time in my life, I am speechless. I am so happy."

Adding to her happiness were kisses from the "country preacher" as he gave her the highest award of the evening, the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award.



Mrs. Leola Woffort, winner of the Martin Luther King, Jr. Humanitarian Award and Mrs. Elma Horton, Mahalia Jackson Spiritual Award winner pose with an innocent little bystander.

"I have got to be the happiness person in the world. Thanks to the MEDIUM all of this reality. It's so nice to honor the little people in the community. I am so happy," said Mrs. Elma Horton, as an unbelievable expression covered her face along with kisses from Publisher Bennett and Rev. Jesse Jackson when she received the second highest award, the Mahalia Jackson Spiritual Award.

Said one excited member of the audience, "I've never seen so many people so happy at the same time. This is what I call Black unity. We need more events like this and more people out here like Jesse Jackson who tell it like it is. This is Black Beauty!"

A special surprise award was given to Frank Wills for being a national unsung hero in his "unusual way of opening the doors to Watergate." The award was presented from members of the Black people in Washington (state) by Eddie Rye, Jr., newly-elected President of WSCBEE and director of C.A.M.P. Accepting the award for Frank Wills was Lee Davis, Public Relations Coordinator for THE MEDIUM.

Former Superior Court Judge, Charles Z. Smith was Master of Ceremonies.

Rev. Dr. Samuel B. McKinney (pastor, Mt. Zion Baptist Church) introduced the speaker. Chris Bennett (Medium's Publisher) and Larry Williams (Medium's General Manager) presented the top awards, along with Rev. Jackson.

Associate Publisher, Priscilla Hailey and Connie Bennett, Editor, gave brief descriptions of the 36 nominees' unsung tasks while Rev. Jackson presented them with "Certificates of Recognition."

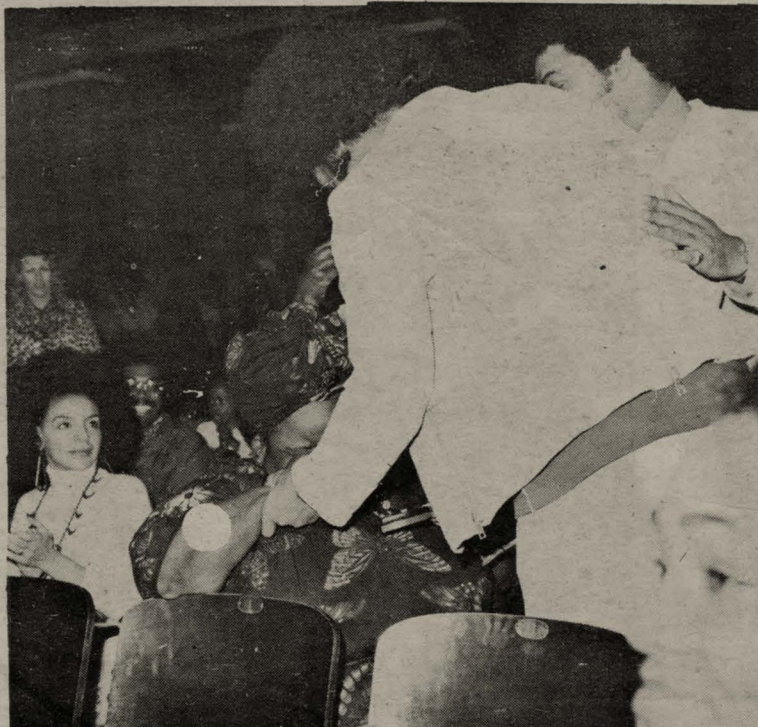
Pat Wright, Medium's Religious Editor, and the Community Choir provided the entertainment which caused the audience to "pat" feet and applaud for more.

Although the and r tree, a generous donation was given to the MEDIUM from the audience for providing a memorable occasion for the Community's unrecognized members.

Thanks to the community for making this event successful and thanks for all the letters and calls for appreciation to THE MEDIUM for a "job well done." THE MEDIUM hopes next year's event will be even better.

TEARS HUGS KISSES

Photos by John Gladney & Ray Herring



"For the first time in my life I am speechless"



Audience showers Leola Woffort, first place winner with kisses and hugs.