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Richard Sellers (Valdosta Daily Times)

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Houseal Moves Into Hotter Politics

District 1 Councilman Expects Heavy Scrutinization

By RICHARD SELLERS
Times Staff Writer

Willie Houseal, one of three councilmen-elect for the City of Valdosta, said he realizes during this year his and the actions of the other new councilmen will be highly scrutinized.

Houseal, of City District 1, will take a council seat in March along with two other newly elected councilmen, making it the first time in Valdosta's history three black councilmen had seats on the council.

Houseal and Joseph "Sonny" Vickers, of District 3, were elected to council seats at a special election held Tuesday. A runoff election will be held between Bunnis "B" Williams and Dr. L.W. Williams in two weeks for the District 2 seat.

"I think it'll be a learning process," Houseal said. "Some things will be done this first year, but — realistically — six months will go by before we initiate some of our projects that we want the city council to act on.

"I plan to use new ideas and to approach former candidates about their ideas," he said. "I'd like to work closely with those people to get them to help me, because during the campaign I heard a lot of good things from those candidates."

Houseal, 33, said two of his main objectives he would like to accomplish before 1986 are to help the upgrade services for the elderly and provide more recreational facilities in Valdosta.

"I didn't have the facilities when I was growing up," said Houseal, who is a native of Valdosta. "We can get grants to upgrade



Willie Houseal: 'A Learning Process'

recreational facilities in our area and Valdosta as a whole.

"I would like to see at least three additional parks in Valdosta, at least one of those in District 1," he said.

"These are tangible things," he said. "Other things you have to promote through policy and procedures, such as fire departments; hiring and firing practices; services; and sanitation."

On if he will run for council again in 1986, Houseal said, "The council seats will be a pressure spot. I'm aware of this and it depends upon how I handle the pressure.

"I will almost have to run again to see some of those things completed," he added.

Houseal said he feels the weakest point of the Valdosta city government is its insensitivity to citizens and lack of communication.

"It's a lack of sensitivity on the officials' part, which gave us a reason to go through the courts for the wards," he said. "If they were sensitive to our needs we wouldn't have the ward system in the first place.

"I'll work to bridge that gap in communication," he said. "I want to be able to tell people what's going on in laymen's terms and hope the people will support me in my endeavors."

Houseal, also president of the Winnersville Coalition Consultants, a civil rights group, said there will be no "conflict of

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interests," as far as his presidency is concerned.

"We (the Winnersville Coalition) will be more interested in problems in organizations and businesses instead of individual type problems in 1985," Houseal said. "We possibly will be soliciting contracts, going into organizations and looking into employee morale and low output in private industry.

"The organization was formed because I had a personal problem and when I found out others had the same problem, I realized it was a social problem," he said. "The Consultants was formed to alleviate problems we found in the community.

"One reason is the Winnersville Consultants will take another direction in 85... We can operate as council persons rather than a civil rights group," he said. "We hope to function as a private organization with profit in mind."

Houseal cited several programs the group started, such as community beautification projects and the RIFF reading program, and also the part the organization played in the civil rights lawsuit against the city to establish the ward system of government here.

"As a race, many organizations were 'carrying the baton,' it's just that the Winnersville Coalition and NAACP carried it across the finish line," he said.

"I'm only one person but can wear several hats," Houseal said.

When asked if he thought this was the beginning of a long political career for him, Houseal replied, "I feel like the political part of my life started long before this election when I consulted with government officials then I think life itself is a political game and you have to do it the rest of your life. Now I'm doing it not for myself but for others."

Also, Houseal said he was not surprised about the outcome of any the council and school board races.

"It was pretty much predicted, except for my race," he said. "I was the only one worried by winning. (Alphonso Roosevelt) Hall was a good candidate and made me worthy of the race.

"It was pretty rough," he added. "Other issues came up that shouldn't have been issues and we shouldn't have had to do that.

"Working together will be one of our (he and Hall's) first tasks," Houseal said.

"My main concern is making a relative contribution," Houseal said. "I said this 3 years ago when I ran for city council. It's more important than all the money in the world. I now have that opportunity and I'll do all I can to see that it's done."