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By Barbra Harris

Jackson Advocate News Service

JOHNNIE P. PATTON

She might be the polite and thoughtful pharmacist who fills your prescription with little fanfare, but Jackson's own Johnnie Patton was perhaps the most photographed delegate at the 2008 Democratic National Convention in Denver.

Photos of Patton proudly sporting her unique signature hat appeared in most major print and Internet publications across the nation. Patton's hat has been worn to the last seven conventions. She was also frequently interviewed about her role as an African American woman being one of the six superdelegates from Mississippi participating in the nomination process.

Indeed, the Mississippi Democratic Party has come a long way since Fannie Lou Hamer and others from the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party demanded a voice at the 1964 convention in Atlantic City, only to be denied. "One of my proudest moments was when I was a delegate to the national convention in Denver, when President Obama accepted the nomination as our candidate... and then when he actually won the election," Patton said.



"I witnessed his speech in Chicago, and of course, when Barack took the oath of office as President of the United States in January (2009). "I will always cherish these events and enjoy discussing them with Hannah, my granddaughter," she added. Patton and 8-year-old Hannah will be off to Washington, D.C. April 4 to join the First Family for the annual White House Easter Egg Roll. "We were privileged to receive an invitation to the White House to join in the Easter Egg Roll with the Obamas, so we are excited about this event," she said.

Patton's relationship with the White House and Democratic hierarchy keeps her in the loop. She participated in the President's conference call with party leaders Tuesday afternoon to discuss what can be expected of the landmark health care bill he signed earlier in the day. Providing "affordability, portability and access to more than 32 million people who could not afford health care until now" was Mr. Obama's focus, Patton said. "He thanked all volunteers who helped with the health care reform campaign and asked that we don't get bogged down with nay-sayers about the cost," she said, adding that the President also talked about the implementation of this reform.

"He outlined those parts of the bill that will begin immediately, such as access to coverage for children, closing the donut hole required on medical costs and coverage for small business employees," Patton said. "He was a little late getting on the call but it was wonderful being part of the process and this historical signage and reform!" Patton, 68, has established herself as a leader in the state and national Democratic Party.

She has served on the Executive Committee of the Mississippi Democratic Party since 1988. Also in 1988, Patton became a member of the Mississippi Federation of Democratic Women, and served as its president from 1999-2001, and treasurer, 1998-2000. Patton has been a member of the Democratic

National Committee since 2000, and secretary of the DNC Black Caucus since 2004, to which she was recently elected unanimously for a third term.

She has been a delegate to the Democratic National Committee Convention since 1992, and has been a member of the National Federation of Democratic Women since 2000, serving as its treasurer from 2007-2009. "I am currently a member of the National Federation of Democratic Women with membership in the Mississippi Federation of Democratic Women, whose primary role is to train women to leadership position in politics," Patton explained.

"As a former president and national treasurer, we focus primarily on grooming and perfecting young women to enter into politics and offer their service in government," she said. Former Virginia Gov. Tim Kaine, the new Democratic Committee Chairman, recently named Patton to a second term on the DNC Credential Committee. Patton is well-respected by the DNC membership and because of her dedication and commitment to the caucuses, most of the members rely heavily on her leadership on the committee, the DNC said.

Johnnie Patton served as Mississippi coordinator for the "Obama for America" presidential campaign in 2008 and was Mississippi co-chair for the John Kerry Campaign in 2004. Patton is known for lending her expertise to Democratic fund-raising efforts.

In 2007, she hosted a fund-raiser in Jackson for the Obama campaign that took in considerably more than its \$100,000 goal. She also co-chaired a fund-raiser in 2000 for the National Federation of Democratic Women. Patton is a member of the executive board of the Women Political Network, and has played a key role in the re-election campaigns of her husband, Hinds County Court Judge Houston Patton, since 1990.

Patton's commitment to fostering change for Mississippi's and America's citizens has taken many paths. She is a member of the LeFluer's Bluff Chapter of Links, where she served as financial secretary from 2007-2009. She is secretary emeritus of the Magnolia Pharmaceutical Association, and a former board member of the Mississippi Symphony Orchestra, 1999-2001. Patton also volunteered at the 1998 "Splendors of Versailles" exhibit at the Mississippi Museum of Art.

She is currently a commissioner on the Jackson Municipal Airport Authority. "As an appointed commissioner to the airport board, my primary focus there is to assure that my representation reflects support for women in business and entrepreneurship and for equal opportunity for females," Patton said. Patton is very passionate about any contribution she can make to secure the future of children.

Question: German theologian and anti-Nazi activist Dietrich Bonhoeffer once wrote, "The test of the morality of a society is what it does for its children." What are your views on this philosophy?

"I strongly agree that as a society of beings, morality is embedded in how one is nurtured, and as a family unit. Strong values and impeccable moral structure is the bedrock for how siblings will conduct themselves as children of today and children of the future," Patton responded. "If we fail to structure or mold our offspring at infancy and adolescence, we cannot expect these youth to become metamorphic as adults with strong moral intrepidity."

Patton has been a pharmacist for 44 years, following graduation from Xavier University in New Orleans in 1965. She is currently a relief pharmacist at the Ridgeland Wal-Mart where she has practiced since 1998. The Wal-Mart/Sam's Club chain recently chose Patton as Community Pharmacist of the Year for 2010. The award recognizes the person who demonstrates commitment to community organizations as a mentor is a volunteer agent in the community and shows readiness to work with young women and encourage women to enter into politics.

On May 3-5, Patton will join more than 300 other participants in Bentonville, Ark. for a Health and Wellness Conference, where she will receive the award. "The main focus of the wellness conference will center on strategic messaging from Wal-Mart executive leadership, networking with fellow

pharmacy and clinical partners and listening to medical visionaries making a difference in their communities,” she said.

Patton is also consulting pharmacist for Infusion Partners and Jackson Hinds Comprehensive Health Center. From 1995-1997, she managed traditional pharmacy practice for convalescent patients, order entry and pharmaceutical dispensing at Madison Medical Center in Canton. She also served as acting director and pharmacy representative with clinical staff.

She was an inpatient pharmacist at the University of Mississippi Medical Center from 1968-1995, where she also was supervisor of Ambulatory Pharmacy Practice. “The scope of my experience has centered around the hospital and clinical environment, concentrating on the dispensing and managerial aspects of retail pharmaceutical practice,” Patton said.

Effective management skills in training, motivating and directing personnel to work congruently with other health professionals has also been part of Patton’s duties. She is a problem solver with invaluable experience and special skills in human relations.

In addition to her many other professional duties, Patton is a real estate purchasing and sales consultant.

She is also an advisor to her family’s restaurant business, the Big Apple Inn on Farish Street, established in 1937. She is the daughter of its original owner. “My father, Harold Lee, and John Mora, my grandfather, ran the business until the early 1980s. My brother, Harold Lee Jr., ran the business until he suffered a stroke. Then, my brother, Gene Lee, worked; and now, his son is running the family business,” Patton said. “We, all five children, have interest in the business.”

Among Patton’s many accomplishments, in 1988-89, she served as publicity chairperson for the Luther Vandross concert, the largest outdoor concert ever held in Jackson.

A native Jacksonian of several generations, Patton attended Holy Ghost High School and was a chemistry major at Tougaloo College before entering Xavier. She later received a master’s degree in public policy from Jackson State University.

Judge and Mrs. Patton are the parents of three children: April V. Patton, Harold Dejuan Patton and the late Portia Magalita Patton.



Congratulations, Johnnie
on being chosen

**JACKSON ADVOCATE
WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2010**



Love, your husband
Houston

*Congratulations
To fellow board member*

JOHNNIE PATTON

*On being named Jackson Advocate's
Woman of the Year*



We salute Commissioner Johnnie Patton

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