



W. A. Woodham

William A. Woodham, known as “W.A.” since childhood, was born in Dothan, AL. He attended Chipola Jr. College and graduated with a degree in criminology and corrections from Florida State University. In 1971, after serving as a Florida Highway Patrol officer for a year and a Juvenile Court Counselor in Gadsden County for four years, Woodham was appointed sheriff by then-Governor Ruben Askew at the age of 29.

At the time, he was one of the youngest sheriffs, and one of a handful with a college degree. He was subsequently elected in 1972, and re-elected to serve seven more consecutive terms, for a total of 33 years, the “Dean of Sheriffs” at the time. Woodham was often described as tough but fair and compassionate, and he managed to maintain the confidence and trust of his constituency,

despite being a white Sheriff serving the only majority black county in the state.

Sheriff Woodham served as Chairman of the Board and President of the Florida Sheriffs’ Association.

Woodham had no fear when confronted with the perils of the job. In the late 70s, when dealing with a hostage situation, he jammed his thumb in the path of gun’s hammer, so when the suspect fired it, it jammed. Woodham saved the female hostage, but suffered lead poisoning as a result. Another incident involved one of Woodham’s own deputies who had been injured in barrage of gunfire by a man who had

killed his wife and shot three deputies. Woodham drove into the chaos to pull his injured deputy into his vehicle and to safety.

Sheriff Woodham was extremely approachable and generous to a fault. One of his most proud accomplishments was his work with the Florida Sheriffs’ Boys and Girls Ranch, where he was past president, board member and Chairman.

Watch the video presented at the 2020 Heroes in Public Safety Lifetime Achievement Award Ceremony of James Harold Thompson speaking on behalf of W. A. Woodham [HERE](#).