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Dellums, Willa
obituary

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Willa Dellums – mother and mentor of Oakland mayor

By Christopher Heredia
CHRONICLE STAFF WRITER

Willa Dellums, the mother of Oakland Mayor Ron Dellums, has died in Oakland, where she had lived for decades. She was 89 and died of natural causes on Sunday.

Mrs. Dellums was born in Texas but spent most of her life in Oakland. She instilled in her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren pride and determination and taught them to be concerned for the well-being of others, the mayor and friends of the family said.

Mrs. Dellums married Vernie Dellums, a longshoreman, in 1935. The couple made a home in West

Oakland, where they raised two children, Ron, and his younger sister Theresa, and had a close network of friends and relatives.

Mrs. Dellums was a pivotal influence in Dellums' ascent from the Berkeley City Council in the late 1960s to Congress, where he spent 27 years and was known for his strong anti-war stances and work toward dismantling apartheid in South Africa, before he retired in 1998.

Mrs. Dellums earned her high school diploma late in life. She imparted to her son and daughter a lifelong love of education.

"Naturally, I am very saddened by the passing of my mother, who meant so much to me and to my

family," Dellums said in a statement Tuesday. "She instilled in me the values and integrity that allow me to be the person that I am today. . . . As I was growing up in Oakland, she prayed that I wouldn't go down the wrong road and that support allowed me to pursue an education and taught me that listening to others is not only important, but an essential tool in order to make a difference."

Even though Mrs. Dellums did not attend college, the mayor noted, she had "a tremendous thirst for knowledge and a visionary spirit."

"I believe she lived out her dreams of education through her children and I am very proud of that," he said.

More obituaries are on page B4

Mrs. Dellums was known for her dignified presence, silvery afro, kindness and delicious spaghetti, which she would deliver to her son's campaign headquarters and share with everyone there.

"We'd be working long hours and she'd come in with the pot of spaghetti and insist we take time to eat," said Charles Stephenson, a longtime family friend, now working as the mayor's director of federal affairs. "Just to know her and her kindness was a great honor."

Assemblyman Sandré Swanson, D-Alameda, a longtime aide to Dellums, said he considered Mrs. Dellums a second mother.

"She was a person of great wisdom," Swanson said. "She spoke about matters with great integrity and had a tremendous social consciousness. She reminded us to always have integrity with the positions we take, and to keep our word. She was the checkpoint for me and also the congressman."

Mrs. Dellums drew a connection between African Americans' struggle against racism in the United States and the plight of black people in South Africa. "She was



CARLOS AVILA GONZALEZ / The Chronicle

Willa Dellums (center) reaches out to touch the statue of her brother-in-law, labor activist C.L. Dellums, at a 1999 dedication ceremony.

the conscience, the wise one" Swanson said. "She was a peace person and very anti-war. The lessons Ron got, he got directly from his mom."

Before her health deteriorated, Mrs. Dellums enjoyed walking around Lake Merritt, often stopping along the way to talk with friends and strangers.

"She was a person who didn't ask for fanfare or attention," Swanson said. "Sometimes she would talk to people and not until she told them who her son was did they

know whom they were talking with."

Mrs. Dellums was predeceased by her husband, Vernie, whom she was married for 42 years. She is survived by her son, Ron, daughter Theresa Dellums, and several grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Information on services is being announced.

E-mail Christopher Heredia at cheredia@sfchronicle.com.

Pervis Jackson – sang bass for Spinners

ASSOCIATED PRESS

DETROIT — Pervis Jackson, the man behind the deep, rolling bass voice in a string of 1970s R&B hits by the Spinners, has died. He was 70.

Mr. Jackson died Monday morning at Detroit Sinai-Grace Hospital after being diagnosed with brain and liver cancer, his wife said.

The native of the New Orleans area was one of the original five members of the group that started out in the late 1950s singing doo-wop in Detroit. They worked under the Motown label in the 1960s but shot to stardom after moving on to Atlantic Records in the 1970s.

Mr. Jackson last performed July 19 in California with the remaining original members of the

group, Bobbie Smith and Henry Fambrough, and two new members, his wife said.

With song's like "Mighty Love," "I'll Be Around," "One Of A Kind (Love Affair)" and "Then Came You," the Spinners were a constant on the R&B and pop charts during the 1970s.

The Spinners compiled 12 gold records, according to the group's official Web site.

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Willa Dellums - mother of Oakland mayor - dies

Christopher Heredia, Chronicle Staff Writer

Wednesday, August 20, 2008



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Mrs. Dellums was preceded in death by her husband, Vernie, to whom she was married for 43 years. She is survived by her son, Ron and daughter Theresa Dellums-Simmons of Oakland, numerous grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

Information on services is pending.

E-mail Christopher Heredia at cheredia@sfgate.com.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2008/08/20/BAEI12EICK.DTL>

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