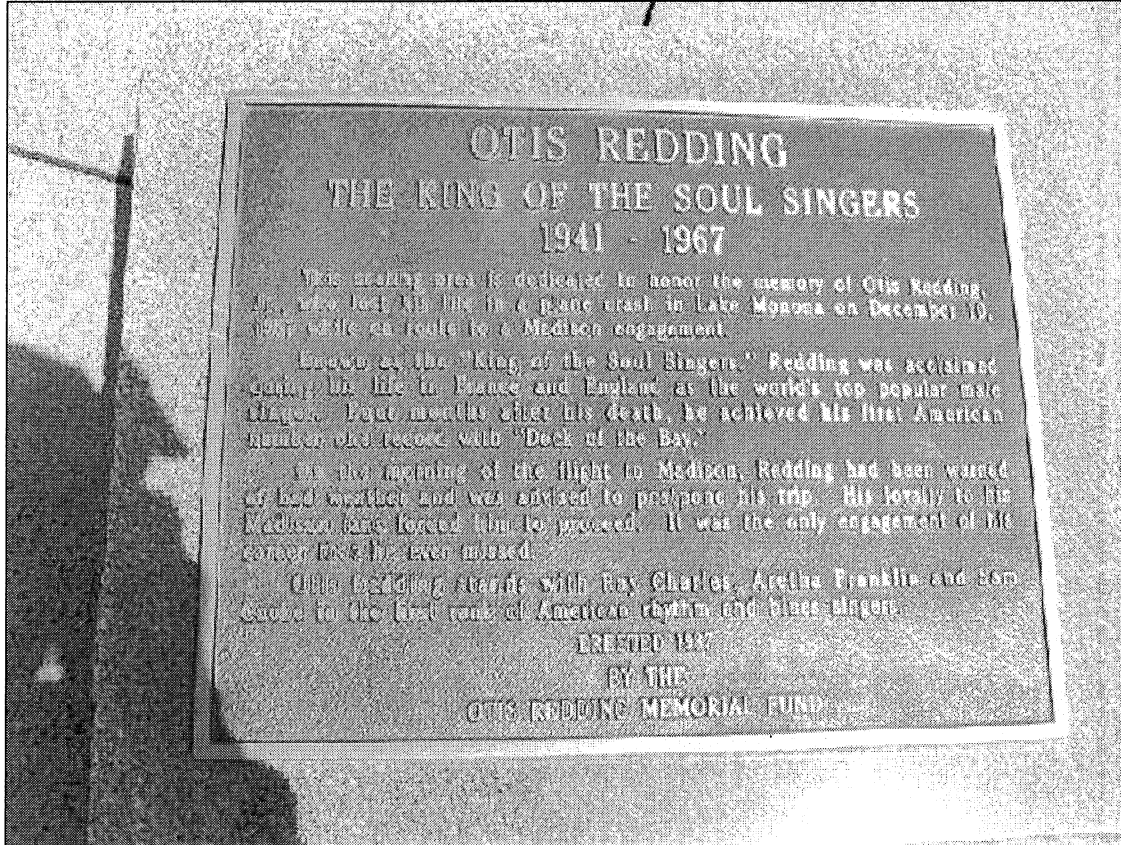
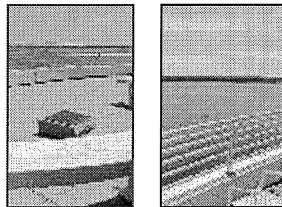


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memorial



Madison Travel Guide from VirtualTourist.com

OTIS REDDING MEMORIAL BENCHES

Ross Ishikawa

Twenty years after a plane bearing Otis Redding, "king of the soul singers", crashed into Lake Monona en route to give a concert in Madison (December 10, 1967), fans provided a memorial for him at the site of the plane crash.

Ross Ishikawa of Madison designed the three curved benches of pink Portuguese marble so that the bases of the benches represent the singer's initials, O. R.

MT
The benches face Lake Monona, in ~~Law Park, near the handicapped fishing dock.~~ In front of them is a bronze plaque set in Georgia granite. Redding was a Georgia native. He was best known in Europe at the time of his death, but the plaque records, "Four months after his death, he achieved his first American number one record with 'Dock of the Bay.'"

For the memorial, radio station Z-104 led the fund-raising, receiving contributions from as far away as Canada, Italy, England and France, but mostly from Madison fans. Enough was raised to create also the Otis Redding Memorial Scholarship at the University of Wisconsin School of Music.

It is said that Redding brought black rhythm and blues music into popular culture, connecting popular music with political and social culture. The air crash occurred during a snow squall. "It was the only engagement of his career that he ever missed."



Law Park, west of Lake Monona ③



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Redding On Center Stage

Capital Times :: Local/State :: 2A

Saturday, August 16, 1997

By Bill Dunn Correspondent for The Capital Times

A city with a big heart honored a man with a lot of soul Friday up on the roof at Monona Terrace.

Otis Redding Jr. was at the peak of his creative powers when he died at 26 in a plane crash Dec. 10, 1967, in Lake Monona. The opener for his scheduled gig at the Factory that night was a group portentously named the Grim Reapers. It took 20 years to get a memorial in Law Park for the Dawson, Ga., native. When Monona Terrace crowded out the park, the memorial marble benches and plaque went into storage.

More than 300 people attended the monument's rededication -- organized by the Madison CitiARTS Commission -- on the building's rooftop level.

Redding's son, Otis III, planned to attend but couldn't because of a conflict, said James Yarbrough, a Janesville public relations executive who heads the Otis Redding Memorial Fund.

Redding wed when he was 20 and was survived by his wife, Zelma, who never remarried, and three children, ages 7, 6 and 3.

"None of the family has been to Madison except Zelma when she came to identify and claim Otis' body," said Yarbrough. A Redding cousin told him Redding's wife still gets very depressed every Dec. 10.

The family sent their thanks via fax. Yarbrough hopes they come for "a sense of closure."

For a time, Otis III and daughter Carla (named after vocalist Carla Thomas) performed as the Reddings. Now they produce and record music for other artists.

Phil Walden, who went to high school with Redding and was his manager, had planned to attend the rededication but also had to cancel. He's president of Capricorn Records in Atlanta.

The biggest applause came for Madison drummer Clyde Stubblefield, who first sat in with Redding in Macon in 1962.

Stubblefield spoke briefly, calling Redding ``a great musician and an honorable person."

What would become of the memorial as the convention center was built was in question. Moose Speros, state tourism secretary, gave credit to a fellow state employee.

``Hermetta Williams would not let this dream die," Speros said. Williams heads the state Minority Business Program.

Thirty African-American children from the Early Childhood Learning Centers came with owner Joyce Boggess.

It was ``our hero day," Boggess said. ``When I was younger, Otis Redding was a hero of mine. I thought this was a good time to bring the children to Monona Terrace to let them know it's theirs too."

Paul Goemans, Stoughton, did participate by taking the day off from his service center job at American TV & Appliance. In 1967 he was a UW-Madison student and lived near Olin Park.

``We actually did swim in the dock of the bay," Goemans recalled. ``We used to listen to good old Otis on reel-to-reel. His soulfulness just kind of resonated with me. He didn't scream at you."

Seattle architect Ross Ishikawa, who designed the memorial, likes its new location. The bench placement is meant to suggest the letters O and R.

``That stands for Otis Redding, but the R also stands for respect -- something the city is giving to Otis with this dedication and memorial," Ishikawa said.

Mike White, 24, who works for Yarbrough, read ``A Tribute to the Big O," which says the singer has taken his show to heaven.

``You may be gone, Otis, but you're still on our mind."

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