

Sen. Bill Nelson pushing for expanded pensions for Negro League players

TAMPA, Fla. — U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson reported progress last week in efforts to persuade major league baseball to include more players from the old Negro Leagues in a pension plan established five years ago.

Nelson has been assisting the players for months in hopes of resolving their complaint about being denied benefits because they didn't play before 1947.

"I am very encouraged," the Florida Democrat said. "For the first time, I have seen an indication by major league baseball that they are going to recognize the valid claims for the players of the old Negro Leagues to receive a pension."

Bob Mitchell, a Tampa resident who pitched for the Kansas City Monarchs in the 1950s, estimates there are about 145 men who were denied benefits in 1997 when baseball agreed to a \$10,000-a-year pension for some former Negro League players.

To be eligible, a player had to have played four years on a Negro or major league team, or a combination of both, and had to have played in the Negro Leagues before 1947 when Jackie Robinson broke the color barrier in the majors.

Nelson met with Mitchell and others eight months ago, promising to take their case to baseball officials.

One option could be lump-sum payments to the players, a move Mitchell said would cost baseball less than \$9 million. Others include quarterly payments (which eligible players currently receive) or monthly benefits.

Nelson said baseball is looking at ways to resolve the dispute but has not made any proposals. Nor is there a timetable for coming up with a plan.



Nelson

Parma, Ohio, and NAACP agree to settle discrimination case

CLEVELAND — Lawyers for a predominantly white Cleveland suburb and the NAACP have agreed to settle a hiring discrimination case.

Parma Law Director Tim Dobeck said a tentative settlement has been reached in a 12-year-old lawsuit.

A 27-year court case involving the city was settled with the U.S. Justice Department in 1999 over alleged housing discrimination.

"Hopefully this settlement and the prior settlement will dispel the notion that Parma is a racist community," said Council President Chuck Germana. He said the label is unfair because Parma has done as much as, if not more than, other predominantly white communities to recruit black residents and job applicants.

The Plain Dealer reported Wednesday that Parma will not have to admit it has been guilty of exclusionary hiring practices. But the newspaper's sources said settlement terms would last six or fewer years and require the city to pay NAACP lawyers \$295,000 in legal fees, appoint an equal opportunity officer and spend up to \$10,000 a year to advertise job openings in minority publications.

The 550-person city payroll includes two blacks, a police officer and a clerical worker.

The agreement to be complete must be approved by the Parma City Council and the NAACP.

U.S. District Judge Kate O'Malley dismissed the case in 1998. O'Malley expressed belief that the city had corrected discriminatory practices.

The 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati last August overturned O'Malley's ruling, setting the stage for a new trial. The settlement came during pre-trial negotiations.

Poll: Powell popular among blacks

WASHINGTON — In a national poll of African-American registered voters commissioned by Black America's Political Action Committee (BAMPAC), Secretary of State Colin Powell received an 80 percent favorable rating. This gave him the highest favorability rating among a list of African-American leaders that included: Rev. Jesse Jackson (80 percent), Activist Al Sharpton (51 percent), and National Security Adviser Condoleezza Rice (41 percent).

Rice experienced the largest surge in name recognition and favorable rating in this most recent poll. Her name recognition has risen from 38 percent in 2001 to 59 percent in 2002.

The top issues of concern among African Americans are national security (33 percent) and the economy (24 percent), according to the poll.

O'Neal to take over reins at renowned brokerage firm Merrill Lynch

Wall Street will be looking a little more in the black with the stepped-up appointment of E. Stanley O'Neal as the chief executive of Merrill Lynch & Co.



O'Neal

O'Neal, 50, who has been president and chief operating officer, will assume his new duties on Dec. 2, a year earlier than originally announced. He becomes the first African-American to head a prominent Wall Street investment company. Merrill Lynch also is the nation's largest brokerage firm.

On April 28, 2003, O'Neal will add chairman to his title. He replaces David Komansky, who had planned to retire in 2004, and recently settled a legal problem with the New York attorney general and decided to retire earlier.

Born in Alabama, O'Neal worked on an assembly line at General Motors, while taking college classes, to pay his way through school. A Harvard business school graduate, he joined Merrill Lynch in 1986. O'Neal recently was ranked No. 1 in Fortune's list of top black corporate executives.

From AP and NNPA wire reports

White woman raised black says skin color is just 'a state of mind'

Forest City woman did not know she was white until a relative helped her locate birth certificate

BY ELIZABETH LELAND THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER

FOREST CITY — Linda Fay McCord was raised in the 1950s as a black child by adoptive black parents. She rode in the back of the bus. She drank from "colored" water fountains.

When classmates taunted her as "high yellow" because of her light skin and hazel eyes, McCord yelled back: "I'm black."

Years later, when a co-worker at her new job confided he was glad the boss hadn't hired a "colored girl," McCord scolded him: "I'm black."

"No, you're not."

"Yes, I am."

The last time she ever corrected anybody was four years ago, when a stranger telephoned, claiming to be her niece. McCord confronted her: "You can't be my niece," she remembers saying. "You sound like you're a white girl."

"I am white," the caller said. "And so are you."

"Oh, my God."

The caller mailed McCord a copy of a faded birth certificate from Surry County, northwest of Winston-Salem. "Linda Fay Alderman," it said in typed letters. "Place of birth: Toast, N.C. Date of birth: 18 November 1946. Color or race: White."

"I don't even know who I am," McCord now says. "I'm caught in the middle of something. My mind says I'm black. Then I look at my skin, and it says I'm white. I've come to the conclusion that color is just a state of mind."

McCord is 55; a big-boned woman, 5 feet 7 inches tall, with freckles dotting high cheekbones and curly hair turned gray. She talks with pride about raising six children as a single mom without welfare. She cooked, painted, cleaned white people's homes, worked as a nurse's aide in a convalescence center and inspected cloth at a mill. She now cooks at a nursing home. She's been married 6 1/2 years to Mac McCord, a black man and retired engineer who says the first time he met McCord he wondered if his friend had set him up with a white woman.

McCord always felt her adoptive parents disliked her



Linda McCord was raised in the 1950s as a black child by adoptive black parents. She rode in the back of the bus. She drank from "colored" water fountains.

because of her light skin. She has a twin sister, Brenda Kay, who has darker skin and seemed to fit in better. McCord said when freckles popped out on her face at age 6, her adoptive mother whipped her and tried to scrub them off with a Brillo pad.

She was 12 when she and Brenda found out they were adopted. She said her mother told them that their real parents gave them away.

As best as she now can figure out, McCord's biological mother was Dutch Irish, a fair-skinned woman who worked as a housekeeper in Mount Airy. Her father was half-German, half-Cherokee, an alcoholic who made his money — when he worked — digging wells and painting houses. He disappeared for days on drinking binges.

Linda and Brenda were taken from home when they were 3, maybe because of their father's drinking, maybe because he'd left on a binge and their mother couldn't provide for them.

Somehow they ended up with a black couple from the town of Ruth in Rutherford County. There are no adoption records, no one who can sort out the truth. A second birth certificate is on file in Rutherford County and lists the adoptive couple as birth parents. "Linda Fay Douglas," it says. "Place of birth: Rutherford County. Date of birth: Nov. 18, 1946. Color or race: Negro."

"If you couldn't go in a

restaurant and sit down with a white person and eat, if you couldn't sit in the bus with them," McCord wonders, "how in the world could a black person adopt a white person in 1949?"

After Linda and Brenda were taken away, their biological mother gave birth to a son and another daughter, who stayed at home and were raised as white children.

Their mother talked about Linda and Brenda. For years, she tried to locate her twins. She called for them on her deathbed in 1987.

After she died, her granddaughter, Jocelyn Dolani, began looking for the twins. She set out to find two white women. After months of digging, she turned up two black women.

When McCord answered the phone, it was as if Dolani was hearing her dead grandmother speak again. She had the same tone of voice, the same infectious laugh.

McCord didn't believe what Dolani told her. But when Dolani described Brenda's crooked toe, McCord knew it was true. How else would this stranger know about Brenda's big toe?

"What was my mother's name?" she remembers asking.

"Betty."

"My father's?"

"Clyde."

She hesitated before she asked the next question. She had dreamed of meeting her parents for so long. She wanted the

See McCord on A5

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SOUTHEAST HIGH SPEED RAIL

Washington, DC to Charlotte, NC

Notice of Availability

The Virginia Department of Rail and Public Transportation and the North Carolina Department of Transportation have completed a Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement for proposed high speed passenger rail service between Washington, DC, and Charlotte, NC.

Public comments are vital to the project and will be entered into the public record. Comments will be received through August 30, 2002, and should be sent to:

David B. Foster, PE
Mail Service Center 1553
Raleigh, NC 27699-1553

Copies of the Tier I Final Environmental Impact Statement may be reviewed at these locations:

<p>Charlotte, NC NCDOT Division 10, District 2 Office 7605 District Drive Charlotte, NC 28213 Davis Diggs 704-596-6900</p>	<p>Durham, NC NCDOT Division 5 Office 2612 North Duke Street Durham, NC 27704 Jon G. Nance 919-560-6851</p>	<p>Greensboro, NC NCDOT Division 7 Office 1584 Yanceyville Street Greensboro, NC 27415-4996 Mike Mills 336-334-3192</p>	<p>Henderson, NC NCDOT Division 5, District 3 Office 1060 Eastern Boulevard Henderson, NC 27536 Scott Capps 252-492-0111</p>	<p>Raleigh, NC NCDOT Division 5, District 1 Office 4009 District Drive Raleigh, NC 27607 Brandon H. Jones 919-733-3213</p>	<p>Roanoke Rapids, NC NCDOT Division 4, District 1 Office P.O. Box 98 Halifax, NC 27839 (Location: NC 903, 1.5 miles northwest of Halifax, NC) Andy Mills 252-583-5861</p>	<p>Sanford, NC Lee County Manager's Office 106 Hillcrest Drive Sanford, NC 27330 Gaynell Lee 919-718-4605</p>	<p>Salisbury, NC NCDOT Division 9, District 1 Office 4770 South Main Street Salisbury, NC 28147 C.T. Corriher 704-639-7560</p>	<p>Star, NC Star Municipal Building 454 South Main Street Star, NC 27356 Robin Hussey 910-428-4623</p>	<p>Wilson, NC NCDOT Division 4 Office 509 Ward Boulevard Wilson, NC 27895 Jim Trogdon 252-237-6164</p>	<p>Winston-Salem, NC NCDOT Division 9 Office 2125 Coverdale Avenue Winston-Salem, NC 27103 Pat Ivey 336-631-1340</p>
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