

BUSINESS

1960's Sit-In Protestor Praises Plans For Historic Woolworth

By Paul Nowell

GREENSBORO (AP) - Nearly 34 years after he helped ignite the civil rights movement by staging a sit-in at the downtown F.W. Woolworth lunch counter, Joseph McNeil and Ezell Blair Jr., now Jibreel Khazan, live out of state.

Efforts to turn the store into a national monument came after Woolworth announced last year the Greensboro store would be one of

nearly 1,000 across the country to be closed in a cost-cutting move.

"A couple of months ago, I was saddened, as you were, when I heard the store was going to close," McNeil said.

"I always felt this place was more than just another five-and-dime. From here, a clarion call was sent out for justice, brotherhood and equality," he told the crowd of people who gathered inside the store for the announcement.

"I feel I can speak for the others when I say we couldn't be more pleased with your plans," McNeil said.

Officials with Sit-In Movement, Inc., a non-profit organization, hope to raise between \$3 million and \$5 million to purchase and renovate the downtown store. They said they have raised about \$450,000.

"The rest of the money will come from the bottom up," said Sit-In Movement President Skip Alston. "It will be a grassroots fund-raising campaign in which every nickel and dime will count and every \$100,000 contribution will count."

Organizers hope to open the museum by Feb. 1, 1995, which would be the 35th anniversary of the first sit-in.

Alston, a Guilford County commissioner, said First Citizens Bank, which owns the building, had agreed to accept the group's \$700,000 offer for the building.

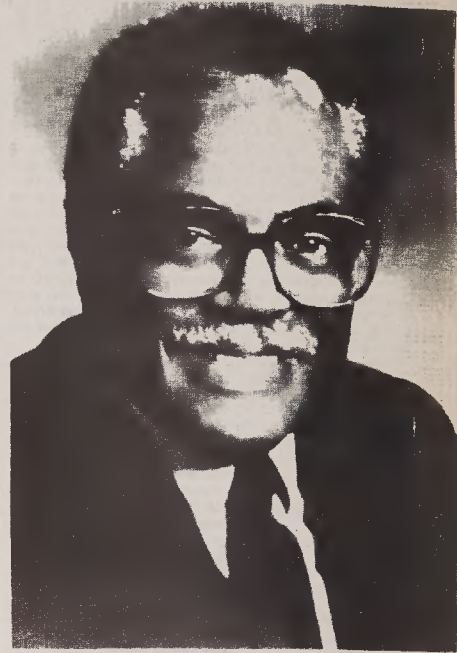
First Citizens vice president John Francis last Thursday presented Alston with a \$50,000 check to help with the effort.

"We have received numerous offers for this building," Francis said. "First Citizens owns this entire block. We know of no other cause more worthy of us dividing up this valuable piece of property than the preservation of the F.W. Woolworth store where the civil rights movement began." Out front, the signs of change were apparent. Plastered on the store's large windows were black and orange signs declaring "Store Closing Sale." Inside, a portion of the floor space was still being used and customers were buying items at the cash registers.

Plans call for the two-level museum to host a variety of exhibits dealing with human and civil rights. Organizers hope to conduct educational programs at the museum. The famous lunch counter will be reopened.

"The lunch counter will be the centerpiece of the museum, but we intend it to be more than just a place to record the struggle of African-Americans for such basic rights as drinking water from the same fountain as everyone else and being able to eat in restaurants and sleep in hotels," said Earl Jones, another Sit-In Movement official and a member of the Greensboro City Council.

"Yes, the Berlin Wall came tumbling down," he said. "This place will bear witness to the struggle of men and women across the world who are, even today, continuing the fight for human rights and dignity in this country, in China, Europe, Ireland, South Africa and in numerous other countries and on every continent."

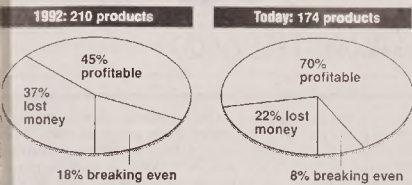


HENRY R. BROWN RETIRES — Henry R. Brown, senior vice president of market development for Anheuser-Busch, Inc., announced his retirement after more than 30 years of service with the world's largest brewer. Brown helped develop many of Anheuser-Busch's most well-known programs, including the internationally acclaimed Budweiser Great Kings and Queens of Africa cultural heritage series, the Anheuser-Busch Community health mobile, the Budweiser Showdown, and Budweiser Superfest concert series and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Life and Legacy Awards. Brown also played an integral role in the initial development of the Lou Rawls Parade of Stars Telethon to benefit the United Negro College Fund.

Meaner and leaner

General Motors has left most of the parts business where it just can't compete. But it is still losing money on about one of every five parts businesses. Group executive J. T. Battenberg must get those in the black fast or put them up for sale.

General Motors Components Group



SOURCE: GM

KRT Infographics

SMALL BUSINESS ANGLE®



BY JACK FARIS

Discouragement Is A Two-Way Main Street

matter how inefficient and bureaucratic you think the U.S. government has become, you have to admire its ability to generate zillions of pages of information on virtually every topic in the dictionary. And it's stuff too.

For example, a report entitled: The Employment Situation. Every day, the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor issues a comprehensive report on the American labor force that only an economist could enjoy.

The report offers a sense of the mood of the nation. Obviously, if unemployment is rising, people are unhappy. If average hourly earnings are up, people are upbeat. If manufacturers are paying more overtime, workers are reaching for their checkbooks and the stock markets are rising.

There's one category you cannot read without feeling emotion — discouraged workers — the number of people who want to work but have given up looking for a job because they no longer believe they can find one. These days there are more than one million of them.

Discouraged workers are not alone. There are discouraged employers out there too. Discouraged employers. Yes, the people who run businesses are suffering from a lack of spirit too. Small-business owners especially are discouraged because of rejection, ill-treatment and lack of opportunity.

Small-business owners are known for their take-charge attitude, their risk-taking spirit, their eagerness to build the American dream, they're getting short shrift these days.

Small-business owners how he or she feels about the prospects for the future and they'll automatically give you a laundry list of obstacles and hassles and taxes and mandates that their state and federal governments have imposed on them. They'll give you the alphabet soup of agencies they've learned to fear and distrust: IRS, EPA, OSHA, and so on.

Discouraged workers should be aware that their woes are due in large part to heavy hand of government which seems intent on erecting barriers to job creation and business expansion. It almost seems that Washington, D.C. prides itself on forcing the nation's smaller firms into growing by laddling on the regulations, the taxes, the mandates and the increasing demands for paperwork.

What about those who have a great idea and want to start a new business? Yes, there are lots of discouraged wannabes out there too. Innovators who are certain they could get that little company of their own and soaring if it weren't for the government regulatory drag.

According to a 1992 study conducted by the nation's largest small-business organization, the National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB), government regulation leapt 11 spots to eighth on the list of small-business key concerns in only four years. At the same time, researchers contend, government regulation will be the No. 1 concern of Main Street firms by the turn of the century. Yes, even higher than health care or taxes.

There is a strong message for Capitol Hill lawmakers in the Bureau's report. It's behind the lines. It says until the oppressing thumb of government bureaucracy is lifted to allow small business growth and hiring, there will be greater numbers of discouraged workers.

Black New Orleans Lawyer Eddie J. Jordan Recommended For Fed Post

NEW ORLEANS (AP) - Both of Louisiana's U.S. senators have recommended that President Clinton nominate New Orleans lawyer Eddie J. Jordan Jr. as U.S. attorney for the federal judicial district based in New Orleans.

Jordan, 41, a former assistant U.S. attorney in the Eastern District of Louisiana, is a lawyer with the state's largest black law firm - Bryan, Jupiter, Lewis and Blanson of New Orleans.

A spokeswoman for Sen. John Breaux, D-La., said Breaux and

Sen. J. Bennett Johnston, D-La., sent a letter with the recommendation to the White House near the end of December.

They chose Jordan after their original choice, New Orleans lawyer Walter Wilkerson withdrew from consideration. Wilkerson complained that the selection process was taking so long it interfered with his legal practice.

Jordan served as an assistant to U.S. Attorney John Volt between 1984 and 1987. The top post is now filled on an interim basis.

Missouri Insurance Firm Charged In 'Redlining' The City of St. Louis

ST. LOUIS (AP) - The Missouri Insurance Department has charged Farm Bureau Town & Country Insurance Co. with "geographic discrimination," claiming the company refuses to insure homes in the city of St. Louis.

The department has suggested a \$75,000 fine against Farm Bureau. A formal hearing on the charges will be Feb. 2 in Jefferson City.

Farm Bureau Town & Country denies doing anything illegal. The department's move comes amid controversy over whether insurance companies are "redlining."

That means refusing to cover homes or cars in poor or black neighborhoods, which are sometimes marked by lines on a company map.

Insurance Department investigators say they found just such a map in a Farm Bureau policy guide. A line was drawn around St. Louis, and the entire city was labeled "ineligible property." Farm Bureau Town & Country is the ninth-largest home insurer in the state. The company has 234 agents

around Missouri but none in St. Louis. Farm Bureau Town & Country has two offices in St. Louis County.

The case shapes up as a test of the state's 1991 insurance discrimination law. The law prohibits companies from refusing to cover properties because of their location, unless justified by a "business purpose" that is not merely a smoke screen for unfair discrimination.

Farm Bureau Town & Country says it has a legitimate reason for staying out of St. Louis.

The Missouri Farm Bureau set the company up in 1946 to provide insurance to its members, general manager R. L. LaFarge said. The bureau is a lobbying and benefit group that draws most of its members from farms and small towns.

There is no Farm Bureau chapter in the city, so the company doesn't market insurance there, LaFarge said. Membership in a Farm Bureau costs \$30 a year.

LaFarge said it is "absolutely not" discriminating against St. Louisans.

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Fair Lending: Deeds, Not Just Words

By Stephen B. Ashley

President, Mortgage Bankers Association of America

In recent years, fairness in mortgage lending has become a hotly debated topic as federal data continue to show higher loan-approval rates for whites than for minorities. The clear message for all concerned is that more needs to be done to ensure that a greater number of minorities successfully complete the homebuying process.

Mortgage lenders, in conjunction with their industry partners, which include various lending agencies of the federal government, must face the issue squarely and do what is necessary to "level the playing field" for all segments of our population. To achieve this objective, we must work to better understand and eliminate the obstacles encountered and perceived by minority individuals who want to become homeowners. We must work to ensure that the process of home financing does not intimidate, discourage, or dissuade qualified individuals from seeking to become homeowners and we must work to eliminate any racial or other bias, intentional or unintentional, in the home-financing process.

Today's mortgage programs can accommodate people of practically all income levels. However, certain patterns of employment, income, credit, and accumulated savings are required to enable an applicant to be approved. We must work to ensure that proper information and help is available to make sure people understand and successfully prepare for the financial requirements associated with home financing. And, we must recognize that while some work and credit patterns may be different, that difference may not necessarily be a reason to decline a mortgage application.

At our recent national convention, the Mortgage Bankers Association of America (MBA) unveiled an ambitious long-range plan to improve home financing opportunities for minorities. The five major points of this plan are:

1) An education and training program for everyone in the mortgage lending industry having direct contact with the homebuying public. This program will emphasize the subtle ways that words, attitudes, and actions can create a feeling of discrimination among customers. The program also will focus on how to improve marketing techniques to reach minority homebuyers.

2) A series of inner-city homebuying fairs for potential homebuyers that will be conducted by mortgage bankers in conjunction with the National Association of Real Estate Brokers, the nation's oldest minority trade association.

3) A research project conducted by the Gallup organization aimed at understanding how minorities view the barriers to homeownership.

4) A forum at Howard University in Washington, DC, on February 7 to raise our understanding of real and perceived barriers to homeownership by minorities.

It will be telecast to universities throughout the country and bring together leading figures from the Administration, Congress, community groups and mortgage bankers.

5) An aggressive effort to increase employment and business opportunities for minority entrepreneurs within the industry.

This plan is the beginning of a long-term effort to provide all Americans with the greatest possible access to homeownership. With the right emphasis, focus and an improved understanding — on both the part of lenders regarding minority lending issues and on the part of minorities regarding what is involved in qualifying for a mortgage — I have high hopes for this initiative and what it can accomplish.

It is the diversity of our country that sets our country apart from other nations. But while our backgrounds may differ, it is our common goals and values that forge the resilience and strength of our culture. Homeownership, is the basic tenet of the American dream that serves as our common heritage. As mortgage bankers, our mission must be to make certain that everyone has a fair and equal chance at realizing the dream of homeownership.

(Stephen B. Ashley is President of the Mortgage Bankers Association of America and Chairman and CEO of Sibley Mortgage Corporation in Rochester, New York.)