

Weapon owned by famed attorney Johnnie Cochran recovered by police

Police last week recovered a gun that famed civil rights attorney Johnnie L. Cochran Jr. reported missing from his Wilshire Boulevard office in 1997.

The .38-caliber Smith and Wesson revolver was thrown out of a Honda Civic while West Covina police were chasing the car early last Monday evening according to the San Gabriel Valley Tribune.

Officers grabbed the weapon and eventually caught up with the Honda and three men inside the car. Police identified the gun as belonging to Cochran.

Two of the men in the Honda, Michael Ray Escoto, 18, and J. Nicholas Varela, 24, both of La Puente, pleaded innocent to drug and weapons charges and resisting arrest.

The third man in the car, Daren Obrecht, 35, of Diamond Bar, was held on suspicion of violating his parole.

Police said they will eventually return the weapon to Cochran. "I'm sure when the case is done, he'll get the gun back," Lt. Wade Weischedel said.

Cochran did not return the newspaper's calls for comment. Reports show the gun was stolen on Oct. 25, 1997. The suspect or suspects apparently got in Cochran's office by prying open a back door. The lawyer's briefcase also was pried open. Cochran reportedly told police he had kept the gun in a drawer.



Cochran

Georgia ends use of race in admissions

ATHENS, Ga. - In response to a federal appeals court ruling, the University of Georgia announced a new admissions policy Wednesday that doesn't consider race.

The admissions overhaul comes after years of lawsuits by white women who argued they would have been admitted if they were black or men. The school is predominantly female and favored male applicants for several years.

The 11th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta threw out UGA's policy last year. The school has now eliminated any consideration of race, gender or country of origin, as well as a tradition of favoring applicants related to Georgia alumni.

This fall's freshman class of about 4,300 was admitted on the basis of an interim formula combining high school grades with standardized test scores.

Applicants for the 2003 freshman class will be placed into three groups: academically superior, academically competitive and not competitive. There will be no accounting for race. The former admissions plan gave some borderline students a slight boost if they weren't white.

Students placed in the not competitive group will get a second reading by faculty reviewers to see whether an "exceptional circumstance" should let the student in, based on essays, community service and recommendations.

CEO is Urban League trustee chairman

STAMFORD, Conn. - The National Urban League named Pitney Bowes Chief Executive Michael J. Critelli as chairman of its board of trustees at its annual conference in Los Angeles.

Critelli has served as vice chairman of the league since August 2000.

"I am very proud to be named chairman of the National Urban League," Critelli said Friday. "As the premier community-based service and civil rights organization in America, the National Urban League has consistently delivered for over 90 years on a compelling agenda of educational achievement, economic self-sufficiency, and civil rights for all African-Americans."

The National Urban League serves more than 2 million people annually. The organization seeks to help blacks enter the economic and social mainstream.

"Mr. Critelli's long-standing commitment to diversity and community development makes him an outstanding advocate and leader for our organization," said Hugh B. Price, the league's president and CEO. Pitney Bowes, based in Stamford, is a \$4.1 billion mail and document management company.

Postage stamp to honor first black high court justice, Thurgood Marshall

The late Thurgood Marshall, civil rights activist and the first African-American to serve on the U.S. Supreme Court, early next year will be commemorated on a postage stamp.

Marshall is one of the most well-known lawyers of civil rights era. He led the legal team that won the 1954 Supreme Court decision, "Brown v. Board of Education," which ended segregation in public schools.

In 1967, Marshall was sworn in as a justice of the nation's highest court. His 24-year term was marked by his dedication to protecting constitutional rights and affirmative action and by his adamant opposition to the death penalty.

"My sons and I are so grateful that Thurgood Marshall joins so many other Americans who have been previously honored, including Roy Wilkins, with whom he worked so closely, who did their best to make our country a living democracy," his wife, Cecilia Marshall, told reporters.

Marshall was born in Baltimore, Md., on July 2, 1908. He graduated in 1930 from Lincoln University in Pennsylvania and graduated in 1933 from Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C. Marshall died in Bethesda, Md., on Jan. 24, 1993, at age 85. He also is survived by two sons, Thurgood Jr. and John.

"He was a man of action, a real player on the Constitution," said Digger Phelps, a member of the advisory committee that makes stamp recommendations to the postmaster general.

The stamp will be issued in January.

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INDEX

- OPINION.....A6
- SPORTS.....B1
- RELIGION.....B6
- CLASSIFIEDS.....B10
- HEALTH.....C3
- ENTERTAINMENT.....C9
- CALENDAR.....C11

Blacks still more likely to be jailed

BY LESLIE MILLER
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

WASHINGTON - The U.S. inmate population in 2001 rose at the slowest pace in almost 30 years, with blacks still far more likely to be incarcerated than whites or Hispanics, the Justice Department said July 30.

For every 100,000 people in the United States, 3,535 blacks were locked up, compared with 62 whites and 1,177 Hispanics. Ten percent of black men between 25 and 29 were incarcerated on Dec. 31, 2001, while only 2.9 percent of Hispanic men and 1.2 percent of white men in the same age group were in custody.

The Sentencing Project, a group that supports alternatives to incarceration, says the black U.S. inmate population is unprecedented. "If black male inmates in local jails are added, the proportion rises to nearly one in seven," said Marc Mauer, Sentencing Project spokesman.

One reason the number of black inmates continues to rise is the government's war against drugs. Convictions for drug offenses accounted for 27 percent of the increase in black inmates, compared with 7 percent for Hispanic inmates and 15 percent for white inmates, the report said.

States are more likely to lock up people for violent offenses



File Photo

Ten percent of black males 25 and 29 years old were incarcerated in the United States on the last day of 2001.

than for drugs, the report said. But the federal government is taking up the slack, with drug crimes accounting for 59 percent of the increase in federal prison inmates - even as the percentage of violent offenders dropped to

10 percent from 17 percent, the report said.

"We're still seeing the impact of the drug war and mandatory sentencing," Mauer said. "As long as there is a commitment in the White House and Capitol

Hill, we're not going to see any change."

The number of state prison inmates grew in 2001 by only 3,193, or 0.3 percent, to 1,249,038, while the federal prison population expanded by 11,577, or 8 percent, to 156,993. The overall increase was 1.1 percent, the lowest annual rate recorded since 1972, the report said.

States facing budgetary shortfalls are now more sensitive to the cost of imprisoning people who break the law, Mauer said.

The three states with the highest rates of incarceration - Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi - in the past two years have tried to limit the growth of their prison populations, according to The Sentencing Project. Louisiana eliminated mandatory minimum sentences for nonviolent crimes, Mississippi eased its "truth in sentencing" law and Texas increased the number of inmates paroled by nearly a third in 2001 over the previous fiscal year.

"The cost arguments are finally hitting home," Mauer said.

Last year, 10 states had substantial decreases in their state and federal inmate populations, led by New Jersey (down 5.5 percent), followed by Utah (down 5.2 percent), New York (down 3.8 percent) and Texas (down 2.8 percent), the report said.

Former mayor has jumped into new arena

BY MAYNARD EATON
THE ATLANTA VOICE

ATLANTA - With his characteristic coolness, verbal command and cutting criticism, former Atlanta Mayor Bill Campbell has hit the radio air waves as the new morning talk show host for Atlanta's WAOK-1380 AM. Campbell served eight years as Atlanta's mayor. Now he is the star hosting a new topical talk radio show with co-host Jean Ross.

"Being here is an opportunity to continue doing what I've done for the past 25 years, and that's be a part of public service," he replied to an on-air question from this reporter. "I'm just moving to a different arena. I've always loved radio. I did a lot of black radio shows (as mayor) because I thought it was a great venue for

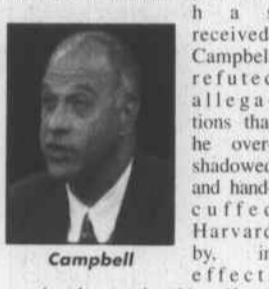
me to talk directly to the black community. So, I view it as a natural progression."

Campbell didn't disappoint. During his first show, he slammed singer Michael Jackson for crying racism in the music business while continually altering his facial features to look nonblack and surrounding himself with an all-white business team. And he ridiculed Atlanta Journal Constitution editorial page editor Cynthia Tucker as "the Michael Jackson/Clarence Thomas" of journalism.

"She is a person who has tried so hard to eliminate any vestiges of her blackness, and really is a pawn of the right-wing zealots, and yet wants to portray herself as black," Campbell charged.

Campbell weighed in on a range of topics from the recent rapes at local subway stations, to

the Sidney Dorsey murder conviction, to the Atlanta City Council's tepid salute to outgoing Atlanta Police Chief Beverly Harvard and the lack of national acclaim she



Campbell

received. Campbell refuted allegations that he overshadowed and handcuffed Harvard by, in effect, running the cop shop himself. "Beverly Harvard was the chief of police and did a terrific job," Campbell emphatically told his listeners. "In all the stories I've read about the Atlanta Police Department in the past six

months, not once has it been mentioned about the great job she did or what is the essential function of a police chief - and that is lowering the crime rate."

"When she took over, Atlanta was in the throes of a crime crisis. We were viewed as the crime capital of the United States. During her tenure, crime went down greater than any other single era in Atlanta's recent history - the last 40 years. That kind of remarkable decline should have allowed her to be viewed as one of the top chiefs in the country were it not for the sexism, the racism of the newspaper, because of the failure of them to appreciate what a good job she did, and because of this ridiculous notion that I ran the Police Department."

"What you hear about is that

See Campbell on A9

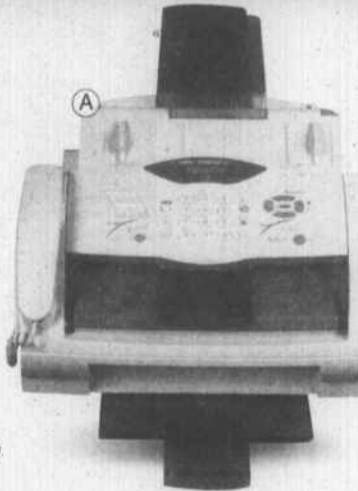
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