

Former D.C. Mayor Barry to expose 'dirty laundry'

By Dwight Cunningham
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — With huge hands and a smile to match, "Big Paul" showed young Marion Barry how to wait on tables in segregated Memphis. Barry looked up to him as a father figure. After all, Paul was headwaiter at the American Legion and took perpetual pride in having the best job a "colored" man could have in the racist South of the mid-1950s.

But one day Paul came to work without the white gloves required for Black waiters, who weren't allowed to touch the food with ungloved hands. Young Barry had an extra pair and loaned them to Paul, but they were too small and exposed Paul's black skin while he waited on the White club goers. That was Paul's last



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day at work. He was fired after his shift. The next day, Paul was found hanged, a suicide.

"The American Legion was my first battleground in the minefield of racism," Barry says in his first authorized biography, due to be released next year. "There was an unnerving reality to being a Black male back then. Much like today, Black men were seemingly disposable.

Our per capita numbers in local lockups and state and federal penitentiaries—numbers I unfortunately would later add to—have always been disproportionate to the overall population curve of Blacks in America."

In "Still Standing: The Untold Story of the People's Champion," Washington's most beloved and reviled politician promises to reveal many of his inner thoughts

during his tumultuous political career. With the help of novelist Van Whitfield, the former mayor also promised to set the record straight about his "dirty laundry."

Through three decades, Barry was a power broker and a symbol of uncompromising hope for the city's Black majority, especially its poor. He created jobs and defied congressional oversight almost in the same breath. As mayor for 16 years, Barry marshaled much of Black Washington into a shrewd political machine. It was a tenure interrupted only by a prison term after Barry was caught on videotape smoking crack with a girlfriend in January 1990.

"I lost focus," he explains in an early chapter. "I fell to the pressures of a high-profile, high-stakes position. My ego was compromised by

people who saw me as a champion and their advocate and by women who wanted merely to lay with power. I was a victim, I was an addict and when all else failed, the whole world knew that, 'The bitch set me up!'"

In another passage, he asks, "Why am I writing this book? If it means I can set the record straight, shed some light on a life that has been defined as much by success as it has been marred by mistakes and if it means I can finally find peace where it counts most, I'll write a million books. As far as I am concerned, peace means the most when it is borne in the truth. And I'm ready to tell it. Will I piss people off? Certainly," Barry says.

Whitfield says there are "absolutely some salacious events that people want to know about him. What people

know about him are 30- to 60-second sound bites. We will provide the real-life stories that go beyond sound bites."

Whitfield says that friends had counseled him against taking on the project, believing that Barry wouldn't be honest and forthcoming. Whitfield since was won over and now meets with Barry in morning sessions each week to craft the book's chapters.

The next phase is to find a publisher, Barry says, adding that a documentary on his life is also being filmed and may be out next year.

In the interview, Barry refused to rule out any future run for political office in Washington. After all, he said, "I love this city and the people love me."

Dwight Cunningham writes for the Washington Afro American.

Michael Jordan's sister describes growing up his shadow

By Johanna Thatch
Special to Sentinel-Voice

WILMINGTON, N.C. (NNPA)—Speaking with Deloris Jordan, eldest sister of Michael Jordan, felt more like chatting with an old girlfriend.

The 44-year-old mother of three adult children says living the life of "glitz and glamour" as a Jordan is simply not her style. Jordan claims she's quick to go barefoot, throw on jeans and neglect her hair if her mood calls for it.

Humble and humorous, Jordan told "The Wilmington Journal," "For the first time in my life I am free..."

She says before she got the nerve to write and publish her debut book, "In My Family's Shadow," she felt prisoner to the Jordan name.

In her book, which details her life experience growing up in North Carolina, Jordan alleges that dysfunction and abuse were prevalent in the Jordan home. In her interview, she emphasized that much of what she has to say is "not pretty, but it's the truth."

In fact, Jordan said the book has taken 10 years to complete. She explained when she first revealed her plans for the book to the family, her mother threatened, "Michael's fans are going to chew you up and spit you out." She put a halt to her writing in 1995. However, her passion to tell her story would not die. "The Lord would not let me run away from the book," she said, "and

He kept laying it on my heart."

In 1998, she again picked up her pen, and in that same year, she says she began her spiritual quest to find God.

"I grew up going to church with my grandmother," she said. "But I didn't know that I could turn to God with all my trials... In 1998, I decided, 'Lord, there's got to be something better than this'."

During that time, she returned to Wilmington and began therapy to deal with her inner-demons. In her book, she alleges one of those demons she wrestled most with was being a victim of sexual abuse. She accuses her father, the late James Jordan, of molesting her during her pre-adolescent years and up until she was a teenager.

However, she shared with "The Journal" that most painful issue to deal with was the rejection of other family members, particularly her mother, Deloris, and her famed brother, Michael.

She claims that she was silenced many times because her brother used his money as a tool to control the behavior of the family, and if she rebelled he would deny her and her children financial assistance. She feels her road to financial independence allowed her personal independence as well, and she finally feels, "free at last."

Prepared to face the brutal criticism of the public, Jordan insists this is not a publicity stunt, nor is she motivated by the almighty dollar. She says, for the most part



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— Deloris Jordan

though, people will reshape their opinions once they read the book, and she has encountered those who have expressed positive feedback. She remembers that at one book signing, a reader told her, "At first, I came here to hate you."

"When I go to most of my book signings, it turns into church," she said. "This is my ministry."

Despite all that she says she has faced, Jordan wholeheartedly believes her life has been preparation for sharing her story. "I get to see that there are a lot of broken people out there. My testimony is yes, I've been broken, but I've not been defeated."

She advised, "God can't use you if you're going to pretend like everything is perfect."

This idea of perfection in the Jordan family is what she feels is partly the cause of the family's dysfunction, and she agrees that this may be part of the reason Michael does not associate with some family members or visit his South-

eastern roots.

"I haven't talked to Michael in almost five years, and my mother in almost in three years," Jordan said.

However, she says she does her part in attempting to keep in touch with all of the family, including those who call Wallace, N.C., home. "It doesn't matter where I go in this world, or what I achieve in this world, I will always go back because these are my roots."

When asked if she thought anyone in the family would actually read the book, she ensured, "I have some cousins who have already read it. I think they'll read it, and you know what, they're going to be surprised. It's so much I could've told, but I didn't tell... Of course, they're not going to be happy about me talking about the abuse, but it is what it is..."

Jordan says that her book will contrast with the family portrayed in her mother's book, "Family First: Winning the Parenting Game," which was published in 1996.

She contends, "The fam-

ily she talks about, I don't know it. I would have liked to have grown up in that household, but I didn't... But I'm grateful for that household because it made me who I am today... If it makes me talk to the man on the street and not make him feel inadequate, and then turn around and talk to the president and not feel inadequate myself, then I'm grateful for being diversified."

Jordan feels that although her story needed to be told, she will certainly move on and has already been doing so. She is working to build and nurture Jordan Signature Publishing Inc. In June 2003, the company will partner with Conner Communications to kick-off the national tour, "In My Family's Shadow."

She stopped back home in Wilmington on Friday to host an intimate evening of "In My Family's Shadow: Up Close and Personal" at the Hilton Hotel.

She plans to continue writing and told "The Journal," "I've finally found something that I liked doing... I have learned how to express my-

self through writing, rather than verbally." Some may ask, "What about the family?"

But Jordan has already replied, "Michael's success hurt my family more than it helped my family."

Jordan continued, "Some people say, 'You're destroying your family', and I say, 'No, I'm not, we were already broken.'"

As for reconciling with her mother, she feels, "The greatest thing I can do for my mother today is stay out of her sight because I feel that I am a reminder [of what happened]... Especially with my father being gone, she's probably got her own battle to fight... And the last time I talked to her, she was still in a battling mode."

Jordan says she has come to realize she belongs to God, and not to the Jordan name. Of her future, she concluded, "I'm open to whatever and where He [God] sends me... If he opens a door, I'll go..."

"In My Family's Shadow" may be purchased at Border's bookstores.

Johanna Thatch writes for The Wilmington Journal.

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