

Will County settles hiring suit for \$50,000

By Bob Merrifield
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Man who says he was passed over 5 times receives new job, back pay

Will County has settled for \$50,000 a civil rights lawsuit brought by a University Park man who said he was passed over five times for jobs that went to younger, less qualified white applicants.

Under terms of the settlement, the county agreed to hire Walter Shelton, 63, to a job in the Land Use Department and grant him \$50,000 in back pay.

Shelton worked for the county as a temporary building technician when county officials in 1996 created a permanent job with identi-

cal duties, he says in the suit.

He applied but the job went to a less qualified applicant, and Shelton was let go despite high performance ratings in the temporary post, Shelton said.

Shelton, who is black, says in the suit that four more jobs opened in the same department and he was passed up for younger, less qualified white applicants.

In the suit filed in Federal Court, he claimed he was the vic-

tim of racial and age discrimina-

tion. County Executive Charles Adelman (D-Lockport) said Shelton filled out only one application and apparently believed he would be considered for other jobs.

"I would have hired him in a minute if I had known about him," Adelman said. "I really felt bad about it."

But, Adelman said, county rules require that current employees get first choice.

"These jobs are filled from within and the union gets first crack," Adelman said. "There was no way this guy was passed over because he was black."

Adelman said Shelton was offered a job within weeks after he filed suit but turned it down.

"About a year later, he said he did want a job," Adelman said.

The back pay, Adelman said, is from the period between the time Shelton lost the first job and his refusal of the county's first offer.

Shelton could not be reached for comment.

The five employees who got the jobs for which Shelton contends he was better qualified include at least three workers with political connections.

They include the brother of state Rep. Jack McGuire (D-Joliet), the son-in-law of County Board member Mary Ann Gearhart (R-Crete) and a relative of Lockport Township Supervisor Judy Batusich.

Gearhart said she never interceded on behalf of her relative and noted that he at the time was not yet her son-in-law.

"I told him there was an opening. That's as far as it went," she said.

McGuire and Batusich could not be reached for comment.

Adelman acknowledged the political connections but said they played no role in filling the jobs.

Assistant State's Atty. Phil Mock said the settlement, which went largely to cover Shelton's attorney fees and lost pension benefits, was less than the potential cost of fighting the suit.

Hostages Jackson helped free pay a visit

By Andy Davis
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Sharing the stage with Rev. Jesse Jackson at a South Side church Sunday, the three U.S. soldiers who spent a month as prisoners during the war in Kosovo thanked those who had prayed for them at home and said faith in God pulled them through.

The soldiers, in Chicago for the Rainbow/PUSH coalition convention, which ended Sunday, could barely speak above thunderous applause as they expressed their

Children born premature and their families gather at Children's Hospital to share their joy with staff and one another.



Rosalinda Richard smiles as she looks at her son, Léonel, who spent about 2 months in intensive care after being born premature.

Nothing short of a miracle

Sheriff's police to expand use of video

12 cars will be equipped to record traffic stops

By Margaret O'Brien
TRIBUNE STAFF WRITER

Just weeks after Chicago Police Supt. Terry Hillard addressed concerns about recent shootings during traffic stops by announcing the department will equip squad cars with video cameras, Cook County Sheriff Michael Sheahan said Sunday his four-camera pilot