

Business

Federal Jury Awards Portland Man in Discrimination Lawsuit



Dexter Morrison

A federal jury awarded a Portland man \$251,000 after he sued his former employer for firing him from his job because he is black.

Dexter Morrison, 45, was fired in 1997 after 20 years shuttling fuel for Unocal Corp. in Portland after a large amount of super-unleaded gasoline leaked from tanks at a company storage facility.

The spill closed 12 blocks of Portland's Front Avenue for several hours. According to Morrison's lawyer, Thomas F. Spaulding, company officials made Morrison a scapegoat for the spill because he is black.

"Mr. Morrison alone was blamed," Spaulding said. "He admitted he was partly responsible. But it was a case of a white employee leaving the bathtub running and a black employee failing to turn it off."

The white employee, Spaulding said, handed off a routine fuel transfer to Morrison when the process was halfway through — which was against company safety policy.

The white employee, who had a poor disciplinary history involving spills, was never reprimanded for the incident that cost Morrison his job.

According to Spaulding, the people who decided to fire Morrison feared losing their jobs because the incident occurred just weeks before Unocal was scheduled to sell its 76 Products Division, including the Portland terminal, to Tosco Corp.

"We argued that managers' personal motivations in making sure the blame was cast somewhere other than on themselves was because of this sale," Spaulding said. "They needed a scapegoat, and faced with two candidates, one white and one black, they chose the black."

Michael D. Williams, representing

Unocal, on Tuesday said the company is "obviously very disappointed with the result" of the lawsuit. He declined to comment further because other discrimination claims brought by Morrison are pending.

According to trial documents, Unocal denied Morrison's allegations and argued it wasn't liable for punitive damages for actions taken by its employees because the firm has "a bona fide policy against discrimination" and has made a good-faith effort to enforce it.

The all-white jury disagreed. In the trial before U.S. District Judge Anna Brown, jurors determined racial motivations led to Morrison's firing and on Monday awarded him \$101,000 in back pay, \$100,000 in punitive damages and \$50,000 in emotional distress damages.

On Tuesday, Morrison, who now works at a Portland logistics firm, said he was "thrilled to death" with the jury's decision. "For me, this was never about the money," he said. "It was about clearing my name."

Job Fair, Bridge To Future

"Helping Bridge Your Future" is the for the 3rd annual Interstate Job Fair

Wednesday Oct 4, at Jantzen Beach. Portland General Electric is a link in that bridge as they give a boost to support this worthwhile community event by offering their services to hang banners over Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Just south of Alberta, and just west of I-5 on North Lombard Street.

An astounding 4500+ people attended last year's fair sponsored by the State of Washington WorkSource and their Job Service Employer Committee.

Over 70 business from both Washington and Oregon are gearing up to make this major, once a year, job fair a success.

Jantzen Beach SuperCenter has

proven to be the ideal location in the past, offering ample room and easy access for employers and job seekers from both states and is the chosen site again for this year's event.

Mark your calendar for Wednesday October 4, from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM to attend the 3rd annual Interstate Job Fair at Jantzen Beach SuperCenter.

There will be great opportunities if you are looking for career options, employment, or a career



Utility crews install banner for the interstate job fair

change. The combined efforts of the private and public sectors will once again ensure one of the largest and best jobs fairs offered by either state.

Gas Furnace Inspections at No Charge

It may be warm now, but winter is just around the corner. If your gas service is off, now is the best time to call to have your natural gas service turned on and to request a furnace inspection at no charge.

And with steeper natural gas bills expected this winter due to higher wholesale prices, an appliance inspection now can help make your gas use more efficient and save costs. These are services offered to customers as part of their utility service.

NW Natural is urging its customers to call now if they want a furnace inspection this year. The company is

again offering routine appliance inspections upon request. A service technician will inspect your home's gas appliances, make minor adjustments if necessary, and ensure that the equipment is working properly. If additional work is needed, customers will be referred to a qualified repair facility.

"If a customer believes that their furnace isn't functioning properly, or if it has been a long time since it was inspected, this is a great time to get some advice," explained Steve Sechrist, NW Natural spokesperson. "Now is the best time to call. The

closer we get to autumn the less time is available for routine inspections."

Whenever cold weather does strike, NW Natural becomes swamped with calls from customers who wish to start or restart their service. By calling (503) 226-4210 now, customers can reduce the change of having to wait.

Sechrist added that the company's customer's service technicians could inspect your gas water heaters, gas ranges and cooktops, gas dryers and gas heart products.

OLCC cancels Cisco & Pancho's liquor license

The Oregon Liquor Control Commission has cancelled the liquor license of Cisco & Pancho's, 107 NW 5th, Portland, Sept. 12 because of a history of serious and persistent alcohol related problems at the restaurant, including a fatal shooting, a stabbing, and what police characterized as a riot involving up to 150 persons.

Cisco and Pancho's president Trudi Li was served with the OLCC's order, which cited violations between May 31, 1998, and Aug 26, 1999, and said the license must be cancelled because Li has not shown a willingness and ability to control the premises and patrons' activities.

The OLCC issued an emergency

suspension of the restaurant liquor license Aug. 26, 1999, based on the above activities and other incidents on the around the premises including thefts, fighting, public drunkenness, drug used and sales, public urination.

The Portland Police bureau has asked OLCC to intercede because of continuing problems at the business located in Portland's Old Town.

Li requested and received a hearing on the suspension before an administrative law judge. The hearing ended Dec. 7, 1999. The judge recommended that the suspension be lifted because Li made a number of changes at the facility, including adding new chef and placing a greater emphasis

on food, removing the pool table and disc jockey booth, installing improved exterior lighting and trying to switch to other clientele.

However, in meetings this July and September, the OLCC concluded that Cisco & Pancho's still had not demonstrated adequate control over the premises and patrons, and refused to overturn the suspension order.

The OLCC's cancellation order becomes effective Sept. 22. Li was notified that she is entitled to a judicial review of the order under ORS Chapter 183 if she files for the review within 60 days.

Phony Fire Inspector Arrested, Businesses Victimized

On Sept 20, Portland State University Campus Safety Officer Laizure arrested 37-year-old Anthony L. Lockridge on Charges of Possession of a Controlled Substance II. (crack cocaine), Delivery of a Controlled Substance II and Parole Violation, on an origi-

nal charge of Burglary in Second Degree.

The indictment charges stem from Lockridge's involvement in phony fire inspector scam that victimized several businesses in the Portland area over the past several months.

A Multnomah County Grand Jury has indicated Lockridge's on 4 counts of Burglary in the second Degree, 1 counts of Theft in the First Degree (over \$1000), 3 counts of Theft in the Second Degree and 4 counts of Criminal Impersonation.

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Urban League's October 4th Dinner Will Celebrate the Spirit of the City.

The Urban League of Portland's biggest fundraising event of the year will be a dinner on Wednesday evening, October 4, in the Grand Ballroom of the Hilton Hotel.

The event is entitled, "Celebrate the Spirit of the City -- the Urban League's Dinner 2000." Sponsors of the dinner include Fred Meyer, Oregon Health Sciences University, Pacific Power & Light, Portland General Electric, Providence Health Systems, and Wells Fargo Bank.

Margaret Carter, President of the Urban League, says the evening will feature local performers. "The League's Dinner 2000 will celebrate the spirit of young, local talent and the generous spirit of our sponsors and contributors."

For information about the dinner, please call the Urban League office at 280-2600.

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Wednesday, October 4, 2000

6:30 P.M. Welcome Dinner

Thursday, October 5, 2000 - Youth, Community & Culture

8:30 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. Welcome Breakfast

10:00 A.M. - 11:45 A.M. Youth Day Summit

10:00 A.M. - Noon Political Workshop

Noon - 1:30 P.M. Welcome Luncheon

1:30 P.M. - 2:30 P.M. Workshop: Technology

2:30 P.M. - 3:30 P.M. Workshop: The Underground Railroad

7:00 P.M. - 8:00 P.M. Reception: Salute to Community Leaders

8:00 P.M. - 9:30 P.M. Cultural Arts Program

Friday, October 6, 2000

8:30 A.M. - 10:00 A.M. Corporate Diversity Breakfast

10:00 A.M. - Noon Workshop: Business and Finance

Noon - 2:00 P.M. Black Church/Black Press Luncheon

6:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M. WCBPA President's Reception

7:00 P.M. - 9:30 P.M. WCBPA Awards Dinner

9:30 P.M. After-Glow... Dessert Party

Saturday, October 7, 2000

9:00 A.M. - 10:30 A.M. Farewell Breakfast

1:00 P.M. - Tee Off Golf Outing, The Las Vegas National Golf Club

WCBPA INVITES YOU to participate in workshops and forums that address important issues to the minority community.

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Inquiries, please call: 818-995-6545

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* Registration fee includes admission to all conference activities and food functions.

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| CORPORATE REGISTRATION | \$300.00 per person | \$ _____ |
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| SPOUSE /GUEST | \$125.00 per person | \$ _____ |
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Individual event tickets may be purchased — Call for details, 818-995-6545