

Survivor plans to retire, help kids as a volunteer

ROSEWOOD

From 1A

"It renews my faith in my government," Mortin said while she held her check at a news conference Friday and kissed her attorney, Richard Ryles. "It closes the door on something that went very wrong in my life."

Mortin, 79, plans to use the money "to live on." She plans to retire from her job as a home-care nurse but only after she finds a suitable replacement for her patient, a homebound amputee. Then she plans to do volunteer work with children.

Mortin knew nothing of the legislature's plan to compensate Rosewood victims until she read about it in *The Palm Beach Post*.

After reading that Gov. Chiles had signed the law in May, she told a lawyer friend at church that she, too, was a Rosewood survivor.

'It closes the door on something that went very wrong in my life.'

ROBIE MORTIN

Rosewood massacre survivor

That lawyer referred her to Ryles, a personal injury and medical malpractice lawyer at Schuler, Wilkerson, Halvorson & Williams in West Palm Beach.

Her interest in Rosewood was clear from the beginning, Ryles said. "She came . . . with a bag full of articles."

Because there were no birth records from Rosewood, Ryles used stories Mortin told him about Rosewood and her family and information gathered by history professors at Florida A&M University to prove she was a survivor.

Ryles did the work free, as did the Tallahassee law firm that originally brought the Rosewood claim to the legislature.

"We always get knocked for being money-grubbers," said

Ryles, who volunteered 75 hours of time. "It's nice to do something for someone who hasn't had the finer things in life."

Lawyer Steve Hanlon of Holland & Knight's Tallahassee office, said his firm spent eight months evaluating the Rosewood case before deciding whether to bring the claims bill before the legislature. Hanlon prepared the bill. His co-worker, Martha Barnett, shepherded it through the process.

Because there was no precedent for a compensation bill from another state, the attorneys patterned the claim after the Japanese reparations act, which established a limited account for victims to tap.

The legislature passed the bill on a 26-14 vote after members of the black caucus threatened to withhold support on other legislation.

"It was an enormous amount of work," said Hanlon, who heads Holland & Knight's community services team. But as legal work goes, it doesn't get much more rewarding.

"I've got the best job in the firm," Hanlon said. "No question about it."

rreras will attempt to
13.3 feet, aided only
a lift balloon to help



PHOTOS

"Pipin"

3"

200 pounds

13.3 feet

30

ety diver

COMPARISON



PUBLIC AUCTION

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SATURDAY, DECEMBER 3RD AT 1PM

