



Phoenix resident Norris Barker said proceeds from the sale of South African election ballots from 1994, which feature Nelson Mandela as a candidate, could help him promote and build sculptures of the former president and South African icon. MARK HENLE/THE REPUBLIC

For Valley man, Mandela pride leads to bid for statues

By Beth Duckett
The Republic | azcentral.com

Phoenix resident Norris Barker remembers with striking clarity the day he met Nelson Mandela.

Barker, an American living in South Africa at the time, was driving from a funeral when he began to have car trouble. He went looking for help and found himself at a world-trade center in South Africa where Mandela was speaking at a banquet.

"He had such a gentle voice, and he was so charismatic," Barker said of the Oct. 7, 1990, meeting with the anti-apartheid leader, who became South Africa's first Black president in 1994. "It was like divine intervention."

Barker, a Mandela enthusiast, later acquired 1.5 mil-



Barker fondly recalls the day he met Nelson Mandela in South Africa in October 1990.

lion official ballots that went unused in the 1994 all-races election that marked the end of apartheid.

The ballots, now considered collector's items, measure 8 by 18 inches. They feature color photos of the candidates, including Mandela, and their 19 parties and flags.

Barker, a math teacher at Ombudsman-Charter West online high school, continues to sell the unmarked ballots, which feature Mandela in the 12th spot.

Barker said proceeds from sales of the ballots could help him promote and build sculptures of the 94-year-old South African icon, who remained in the hospital Friday battling a lung infection.

See MANDELA, Page B4