

Bennie Lee Cunningham, Jr.



Athlete

Bennie Lee Cunningham, Jr., the first son of Carol and Bennie L. Cunningham, Sr., was born in Laurens, South Carolina. Following opportunities early in their careers, his parents moved the family to Spartanburg, Gaffney, Chesterfield, and finally Seneca.

Cunningham participated in football, baseball, and track at Seneca High School. In 1971, he was selected as a high school All-American in football.

Cunningham continued his academic and athletic career by attending Clemson University on a football scholarship. During his four-year tenure, he received numerous awards—foremost, the selection as a consensus All-American after his junior year. He was the first African American from Clemson University to receive the honor.

After his senior season, he was a repeat selection to several All-American teams. Additionally, he was two-time All-Atlantic Coast Conference ('74 and '75) and was selected as a member of the All-Atlantic Coast Conference 50th Anniversary Team, East-West Shrine Bowl Team, Hula Bowl Team., Japan Bowl Team, Kodak All-American Team, Playboy All-American Team and the All-South Team selected by *Southern Living Magazine*.

Cunningham was also the first African American to receive the prestigious “Frank Howard Award for Bringing Excellence to Clemson University.” Personally, Bennie says his “proudest collegiate honor” was earning a Bachelor of Arts degree from Clemson University. Later, he received a Master of Human Resources Development degree from Clemson.



The Pittsburgh Steelers of the National Football League selected Bennie Cunningham in the first round of the NFL draft after his senior season. He played ten years for the Steelers and was a member of two World Championship Teams, performing in Super Bowl XIII and Super Bowl XIV.

One of the most memorable moments for Bennie and many Pittsburgh fans came in a football game against the Cleveland Browns during the '78 season. In overtime, Bennie scored the winning touchdown on a 40-yard flea-flicker pass from Terry Bradshaw.

This play was selected as one of ten Fantastic Finish plays of the 1970s, and it is on video display in the NFL Hall of Fame in Canton, Ohio.

Cunningham retired from professional football as the Steelers seventh all-time leading receiver and is the all-time reception leader among tight ends for the Steelers, having totaled 200 catches and 20 touchdowns in his career. He was named to the Steelers 50th Anniversary team.

Currently, he is a career counselor at West-Oak High School in Westminster, South Carolina.

December

SUNDAY

MONDAY

TUESDAY

WEDNESDAY

THURSDAY

FRIDAY

SATURDAY

				<p>Rosa Parks refused to give up her seat on a public bus in 1955.</p>	<p>Historian Charles Wesley was born in 1891.</p>	<p>First issue of <i>North Star</i> newspaper published in 1847.</p>
				1	2	3
<p>American Anti-Slavery Society organized in 1833.</p>	<p>Mary McLeod Bethune, educator, founded National Council of Negro Women, 1935.</p>	<p>In 1971 Lewis Franklin Powell was confirmed as Supreme Court justice.</p>	<p>Lester Granger was named executive director of the National Urban League in 1941.</p>	<p>Entertainer Sammy Davis, Jr. was born in 1925.</p>	<p>Entertainer Redd Foxx was born in 1925.</p>	<p>Ralph J. Bunche becomes the first Black person awarded a Nobel Peace Prize, 1950.</p>
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
<p>P.B.S. Pinchback became the first African American governor of an American state, Louisiana, in 1872.</p>	<p>Joseph H. Rainey (S.C.) first African American elected to Congress in 1870.</p>	<p>First Black women complete officer training for the WAVES, 1944.</p>	<p>Congressman John Langston was born in 1829.</p>	<p>Maggie Lena Walker, banker, died in 1934.</p>	<p>Andrew Young of Georgia named ambassador and chief delegate to the United Nations in 1976.</p>	<p>Noble Sissle, lyricist and bandleader, died in 1975.</p>
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
<p>The 13th Amendment was ratified in 1865.</p>	<p>Carter G. Woodson, historian, born in 1875.</p>	<p>South Carolina seceded from the Union in 1860.</p>	<p>Motown Records established in 1959 by Berry Gordy, Jr.</p>	<p>Historian and author of <i>Destruction of Black Civilization</i> Dr. Chancellor Williams was born in 1898.</p>	<p>Alice H. Parker patented the gas heating furnace in 1919.</p>	<p>Irwin C. Mollison, first African American judge of the Customs Court was born in 1898.</p>
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
<p>Christmas Day In 1971 Rev. Jesse Jackson organized Operation PUSH (People United to Save Humanity).</p>	<p>In 1924, DeFord Bailey, Sr., became the first African American to perform on the Grand Ole Opry.</p>	<p>Pioneer of blood plasma research, Dr. Charles Richard Drew, established a blood bank in New York City, 1941.</p>	<p>Earl "Fatha" Hines, famed jazz musician and father of modern jazz piano, was born in 1905.</p>	<p>Thomas Bradley was born in 1917.</p>	<p>Blues composer and singer Bo Diddley was born in 1928.</p>	<p>New Year's Eve Odetta Feliious Gordon, the folk singer and activist known as "Odetta," was born in 1930.</p>
25	26	27	28	29	30	31