

Historic school desegregation ruling honored

WASHINGTON (AP) — Forty-five years ago, a landmark ruling ending school segregation led 6-year-old Betsy Vaughn-Jackson to the doors of an all-white school in Kansas City, Kan.

Today, Vaughn-Jackson, now a principal in the nearby Topeka district at the heart of the 1954 court case, sees little irony in the school system's current bid to be free of a longstanding court order to integrate.

"I know the efforts the district has put forth," said Vaughn-Jackson, who runs Lundgren Elementary, which is 14 percent minority.

"We are keeping the message that the '54 decision gave us, education for all children, equally and equitably."

The U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Brown vs. the Board of Education of Topeka* ended states' deliberate racial division in the nation's schools.

Two generations later, as more than 500 districts wrestle with court orders to desegregate, the direction of school integration remains uncertain.

On Monday, nationwide anniversary commemorations included a ceremony in Topeka, a speech by Education Secretary Richard W. Riley at the Charles Sumner School Museum and Archives in Washington, and the launch of a White House higher-education equality campaign.

Meanwhile, civil rights advocates argue the nation is moving backward, with schools more segregated than ever.

But the largest among the school districts under court-ordered plans claim progress as the high court of the 1990s frees them from busing and other remedies they consider costly and futile.

Observers from both sides say this decade, which includes those pivotal rulings, in some way marks the end of an era.

"There is none of the moral urgency of *Brown*," says Gary Orfield, of the Harvard Project on School Desegregation. "Federal courts are basically pressing lower courts to get out of the way and turn the authority over to local governments."

The *Brown* decision was

part of a federal legal tidal wave in the 1960s that dismantled institutions supporting racial separation.

The 1970s and '80s brought judicial action to cities like Boston, Denver and Oklahoma City, where hundreds of black children were bused to white neighborhoods, magnet schools opened to lure middle-class whites from suburbs into city centers and districts redrew residential boundary lines.

But schools systems like Norfolk, Va., and Atlanta negotiated themselves out of busing orders soon after plans went into effect.

In 1991 the Supreme Court paved the way for more districts opting out of busing when it declared Oklahoma City Public Schools "unitary," or free from their order because they had done as much as possible to integrate but could not be held responsible for the city's racially segregated neighborhoods.

Now, dozens of districts in areas such as Cleveland, Dallas, San Francisco, and Buffalo have won the release Topeka is seeking.

"Lawyers are trying to keep every case they can away from the Supreme Court," Orfield said.

He cited the establishment of a more conservative federal bench during the Reagan and Bush presidencies and explained that state courts are the battleground for more recent suits.

"They believe the Supreme Court is the worst enemy of school civil rights."

Not every district supports race-based remedies.

Prince George's County, Md., a predominantly black district, won the right to phase out an expensive busing plan that was created when the county was more integrated.

In Charlotte, N.C., site of the original busing-mandated remedy case, white parents upset over race-based transfers have filed suit seeking to release the district from its court order.

"You are going to see more parent groups, black or white, that are going to say this school district is unitary and should not be able to have race-based admissions," said Al Lindseth, an Atlanta defense attorney who has represented districts in

Hartford, St. Louis and Savannah, Ga.

Educational quality never should be compromised, said Barbara Arnwine, executive director of the Lawyer's Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, but there is social value in integration, she said.

"It's a mistake when we turn our backs on each other," she said.

"Children who are white, black, red or yellow are all going to meet in the workplace. If they don't know each other already, it's going to be hard for them to know each other as adults."

Schools freed from court orders usually send children back to neighborhood schools. In many cities and close-in suburbs, desegregation plans often have failed to stem "white flight," leaving more than two-thirds of the nation's black students in inner-city schools.

Some see economic desegregation being achieved through school choice.

Magnet and charter schools allow poorer students voluntarily to attend schools in better neighborhoods or draw wealthier students into

inner cities.

The Education Department, barred by Congress from handling busing issues longer than a decade ago, is supporting such efforts.

In districts freed of orders, magnet schools and other choice programs apparently have offset the financial and social cost of busing, said Lindseth, who has helped districts like Savannah design their plans.

"In Savannah it worked," he said.

"It reversed white flight and middle class flight and it brought some stability and educational enhancement to a system that needed it."

New areas of litigation find integration is imperfect. Gaps in test scores, choice of courses, and curriculum available to different groups of students are leading to serious examination of what happens to minority students within those schools and classrooms.

"Discrimination based on race has many forms and many names," said Norma Cantu, the Education Department's civil rights chief.

NAACP leaders to fight Fla. vouchers

MIAMI (AP) — NAACP leaders from around the country pledged Saturday to fight Florida's school voucher program and launch a campaign to defeat an anti-affirmative crusade.

"Vouchers siphon off money from public education," said New York NAACP Chapter President Hazel Dukes.

The board of directors of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People promised legal and legislative aid to the Florida chapter to help try and overturn the state's plan to

give parents money to send children to schools of their choice.

The Republican-controlled Florida Legislature earlier this year passed the nation's first statewide school-choice law.

"Education is the backbone for us, so we really have to monitor this new language — vouchers, charters, magnets," Dukes said. "All schools should be magnets. Public education is a civil rights issue. If a person wants to send their children to private school, they must pay for it. You can't use

public money for private education."

NAACP leaders also agreed to fight hate crimes, police brutality and racial profiling — police targeting blacks because of their race — during the three-day meeting that ended Saturday.

The organization pledged \$50,000 to fight the anti-affirmative action campaign of black California businessman Ward Connerly. Connerly wants voters there to cast their ballots to end affirmative action in public contracting, education and employment.

Dieters

(Continued from Page 15)

Foods that are fat-free are not necessarily calorie-free, so dieters need to keep tabs on calories as well.

"Some patients think 'fat-free' gives them the freedom to eat all they want of a particular snack," Scott said. "They can't figure out why they're still gaining weight if they're eating fat-free cookies. I have to remind them that the whole box is not a serving, and that just one fat-free cookie might have 60 or more calories. In fact, a number of fat-free foods have more calories than the regular versions."

People who want to lose weight can use nutrition labels to figure out how many calories they're averaging per day. They should reduce that amount by 500 calories each day to lose one pound per week, Scott said. "It takes a

deficit of 3,500 calories to lose one pound."

While cutting back on calories can help you lose weight, cutting back on saturated fats can help lower blood cholesterol.

A number of franchised restaurants have nutritional information available upon request, so it's possible to keep track of your calories and fat grams even when eating out.

"Nutrition labels conveniently provide the numbers you need to monitor your eating habits if you know what to look for," Scott said. In addition to reducing calories and fat, a weight-loss program should include regular exercise and sensible eating.

The DeBakey Heart Center is a joint program of Baylor College of Medicine and The Methodist Hospital supporting cardiovascular research, treatment, and education.

— PAID ADVERTISEMENT —

DO YOU WANT TO SUBJECT YOUR FAMILY TO THIS?

Harrison-Ross Mortuaries, a Las Vegas funeral home, was sued for negligence and intentional infliction of mental anguish after a body was allegedly embalmed without the permission of the family.

Norman Willis, a resident of Texas, filed the suit in District Court on behalf of his family against Harrison-Ross Mortuaries, Inc., 2071 North Las Vegas Blvd.

The suit says Willie Maddox Perkins died of natural causes while staying at Union Plaza hotel-casino on June 20, 1997. Her body was picked up from Palm Mortuaries and transferred to Harrison-Ross. The suit says the body was not properly embalmed and without the permission of the family, as a result, there could not be an open casket funeral.

In addition to the negligence charges, the suit alleges deceptive trade practices and breach of contract. By the time Mrs. Perkins body arrived in Texas the body was so decomposed and the stench of her remains was so overwhelming the casket had to be closed! This article appeared in the L.V. Sun on May 3, 1999. The family is asking for millions of dollars in damages!

CAUTION! CAUTION! CAUTION! CAUTION!
DON'T LET THIS HAPPEN TO YOUR LOVED ONE!