

Matriarch of interracial marriage in U.S. dies

Special to Sentinel-Voice
 RICHMOND, Va. — Mildred Loving, a Black woman whose challenge to Virginia's ban on interracial marriage led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling striking down such laws nationwide, has died, her daughter said Monday.

Peggy Fortune said Loving, 68, died Friday at her home in rural Milford. She

did not disclose the cause of death.

"I want [people] to remember her as being strong and brave yet humble — and believed in love," Fortune told The Associated Press.

Loving and her White husband, Richard, changed history in 1967 when the U.S. Supreme Court upheld their right to marry. The ruling struck down laws banning



Mildred Loving and husband, Richard, fought against the laws prohibiting interracial marriages in the 1960s.

She became pregnant a few years later, she and Loving got married in Washington in 1958, when she was 18. Mildred told the AP she didn't realize it was illegal.

"I think my husband knew," Mildred said. "I think he thought [if] we were married, they couldn't bother us."

But they were arrested a few weeks after they returned to Central Point, their hometown in rural Caroline County north of Richmond. They pleaded guilty to charges of "cohabiting as man and wife, against the peace and dignity of the Commonwealth," according to their indictments.

They avoided jail time by agreeing to leave Virginia — the only home they'd known — for 25 years. They moved to Washington for several years, then launched a legal challenge by writing to Attorney General Robert F. Kennedy, who referred the case to the American Civil Liberties Union.

Attorneys later said the case came at the perfect time — just as lawmakers passed the Civil Rights Act, and as across the South, Blacks

were defying Jim Crow's hold.

"The law that threatened the Lovings with a year in jail was a vestige of a hateful, discriminatory past that could not stand in the face of the Lovings' quiet dignity," said Steven Shapiro, national legal director for the ACLU.

"We loved each other and got married," she told The Washington Evening Star in 1965, when the case was pending.

"We are not marrying the state. The law should allow a person to marry anyone he wants."

After the Supreme Court ruled, the couple returned to Virginia, where they lived with their children, Donald, Peggy and Sidney. Each June 12, the anniversary of the ruling, Loving Day events around the country mark the advances of mixed-race couples.

Richard Loving died in a car accident that also injured his wife. "They said I had to leave the state once, and I left with my wife," he told the Star in 1965. "If necessary, I will leave Virginia again with my wife, but I am not going to divorce her."

Saggin' debate draws interest

By Kanita Mason
 Special to Sentinel-Voice

WASHINGTON (NNPA) — It is known for being a fashion that originated in prison. Some think it's cool while others believe it's indecent. What is this nationwide debate? The phenomenon is known as "baggy pants."

Some school systems and localities have policies against the showing of underwear, but no state has successfully passed a law or ordinance against "baggy pants."

That's not from the lack of trying.

In 2005 Delegate Algie Howell introduced House Bill 1981 in order to deal with "baggy pants" in Virginia. The bill failed in committee. In Atlanta, there is a "Saggin' Pants Task Force" that is currently in place. The city council has not decided what it should do.

Some believe that this is a much-needed law while others say that it's a personal expression and law shouldn't mandate it.

Wearing his pants low has become a way of life for James Baker. He's been in and out of the prison system since the age of 16 and explains that — despite rap and hop-hop artists who may have made it popular — this fashion originated in prison because inmates are not given belts.

"I'm going to wear my clothes the way I want to wear my clothes because they're my clothes," said Baker.

He said he would tell an officer questioning his 'saggin pants,' — "You can take that somewhere else."

But, the second time Baker was imprisoned he learned a valuable lesson. He was told by an older inmate that the lower you wear your pants, you are signaling your availability to the other inmates.

He thanked the man, but still believes the style should be freely worn in the streets.

Not everyone agrees with Baker.

Dwaine Caraway, deputy mayor pro tem of Dallas, is one who believes that young and old men alike need to pull up their pants.

"There is a need for greater self-respect for themselves [baggy pants wearers]... and society," Caraway said.

Caraway explained that in the Dallas and Fort Worth Metroplex area they did not seek to pass a law but took a different approach.

"We decided to create a PR campaign instead of trying to pass a law," he said.

He was referring to the numerous billboards that are currently in and around the Dallas and Fort Worth Metroplex area depicting different images encouraging young men to 'pull em up.'

He explained that these billboards show guys displaying their underwear and a grandmother telling them to pull them up.

"Next month, we'll be doing a different campaign," Caraway explained.

He said that they try to constantly change to keep it interesting.

Caraway even received the support of some who are

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racially mixed marriages in at least 17 states.

"There can be no doubt that restricting the freedom to marry solely because of racial classifications violates the central meaning of the equal protection clause," the court ruled in a unanimous decision.

Her husband died in 1975. Shy and soft-spoken, Loving shunned publicity and in a rare interview with The As-

sociated Press last June, insisted she never wanted to be a hero — just a bride.

"It wasn't my doing," Loving said. "It was God's work."

Mildred Jeter was 11 when she and 17-year-old Richard began courting, according to Phyl Newbeck, a Vermont author who detailed the case in the 2004 book, "Virginia Hasn't Always Been for Lovers."

Brooke mum over Walters affair

NEW YORK (AP) — Former U.S. Sen. Edward Brooke declined to comment about whether he had an affair with Barbara Walters in the 1970s.

"I have had a lifetime policy and practice of not discussing my personal and private life, or the personal and private lives of others, with the notable exception of what I wrote in my recently published autobiography, 'Bridging the Divide: My Life,'" he told The Associated Press in a phone interview from Miami.

A relationship with Walters wasn't mentioned in his book, the 88-year-old former senator from Massachusetts told the AP.

His memoir was published in 2006.

In an appearance on Oprah Winfrey's show that aired Tuesday, Walters shared details of her relationship with the married Brooke that lasted several years in the 1970s but was kept secret until Walters's book.

A moderate Republican who took office in 1967, Brooke was the first African-American to be popularly elected to the Senate. Walters



Former U.S. Sen. Edward Brooke declined to comment about whether he had an affair with Barbara Walters in the 1970s. He didn't mention a relationship in his autobiography.



said he and she knew that public knowledge of their affair could have ruined their careers.

At the time, the twice-divorced Walters was a rising star in TV news and co-host of NBC's "Today" show, but would soon jump to ABC News, where she has enjoyed unrivaled success. She said her affair with Brooke, which never before came to light, had ended before he lost his bid for a third term in 1978.

Brooke later divorced, and has since remarried.

Walters, 78, appeared on

Winfrey's show to discuss her new memoir, "Audition," which covers her long career in television, as well as her off-camera life.

On "Oprah," Walters recounts a phone call from a friend who urged her to stop seeing Brooke.

"He said, 'This is going to come out. This is going to ruin your career,'" then reminded her that Brooke was up for re-election a year later. "This is going to ruin him. You've got to break this off."

Winfrey asks Walters if

she was in love.

"I was certainly — I don't know — I was certainly infatuated. I was certainly involved," Walters says. "He was exciting. He was brilliant. It was exciting times in Washington."

Brooke served two full terms from 1967 to 1979, taking on the populist causes of low-income housing, increasing the minimum wage and mass transit. He received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 2004, an honor only 21 U.S. senators have received.