

OBITUARIES

Donald Gaines Murray Sr. dies at 72; sued, entered UM law school in 1935

Services for Donald Gaines Murray Sr., a retired lawyer who in 1935 became the first black to enter the University of Maryland Law School since 1890, will be held at noon today at the Madison Avenue Presbyterian Church, 2112 Madison Ave.

Mr. Murray, who lived in the 2000 block of Bryant Avenue, died Monday at Lutheran Hospital after a long illness. He was 72.

In 1935, just after his graduation from Amherst College, he sought admission to the Maryland law school only to learn that it did not accept blacks. He filed suit, contending that the state must admit qualified blacks and that providing scholarships to attend other schools, a common practice to steer blacks toward black-only schools, was not equal treatment.

A Baltimore judge agreed with him and ordered that his application be reconsidered, a decision upheld by the Court of Appeals.

Among his lawyers in that case, which was financed by the Baltimore branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, was Thurgood Marshall, now a justice of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Two blacks had graduated from

the Maryland law school, then a private institution, in 1889, the year before the adoption of an exclusionary rule.

Once in the school, the faculty treated him fairly, but he faced a cool reception from students, said his wife, the former Rosa Langley Walker.

After graduation and admission to the bar, Mr. Murray worked on many cases involving the NAACP, including a series of cases opening other UM graduate schools to blacks.

Robert B. Watts, a retired judge of the Baltimore Circuit Court who was associated with Mr. Murray on several cases, described him as a "pathfinder" and praised him for his community spirit.

A lawyer who was more likely to do legal research and prepare legal briefs than appear in court, he was described as "scholarly" by Judge Watts.

Until Mr. Murray's retirement about 15 years ago, he practiced law in Baltimore, and was a partner during the late 1940s in the firm of Douglass, Perkins and Murray.

He also held government jobs from time to time, serving as an inspector for the state liquor board during the late 1930s and for the

State Board of Motion Picture Censors during the early 1950s.

In addition to his work with the NAACP, Mr. Murray was a member of the Baltimore Urban League, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Monumental Bar Association, The Guardsmen and Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity.

During World War II, he served in the Army in Europe.

Mr. Murray was honored for his role in integration by the Afro-American newspapers, the national NAACP, the Black American Law Students Association and the University of Maryland Law School, which honored him last year in celebration of the 50th anniversary of his case.

A native of Philadelphia, he was raised in Baltimore by his maternal grandparents, Bishop A. L. Gaines of the African Methodist Episcopal Church and his wife. Mr. Murray was a 1929 graduate of Douglass High School.

In addition to his wife, Mr. Murray is survived by three sons, Alfred Walker Gaines of Baltimore, John Gaines and Donald Gaines Murray Jr., both of Washington; a sister, Margery Prout of Baltimore, and three granddaughters.