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George B. Parks, center, was the subject of a tribute by the Metro Choir during the Black History Month celebration February 27, 2008. The Metro Choir will pay tribute to his memory at services scheduled for Tuesday.

George B. Parks dies at 83; County Counsel legal eagle was a national figure on the basketball court and in the Court of Law.

- Funeral services will be held at 10. a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 30, in the Sanctuary of the First A.M.E. Church in Los Angeles

By GAYLE ANDERSON

(September 26, 2008) George B. Parks, an attorney who worked in his retirement years as a paralegal and law clerk in Metro's County Counsel office, died peacefully in his sleep Tuesday night at his home in West Los Angeles. He was 83 years old. Parks joined the County Counsel office in 1992 and served in various capacities under contract and as a County employee.

Parks was born in Lebanon, Kentucky on Feb. 18, 1925. He attended North Carolina College before enrolling at Howard University School of Law, graduating in 1948. He earned his Master of Laws (LL.M) at the George Washington University School of Law in 1951.

Entering private practice at the firm of Coleman, Parks and Washington, his first law partner was Walter Washington, who later became the first African-American mayor of Washington, D.C.

Daughter Paula Parks, a professor of English at Bakersfield College, describes her father: "He was a kind man, committed to his community and family." Growing up in Los Angeles, she recalls his playful, good-humored nature. "It was great my dad was so tall. When I was little, I would sit on his shoulders so I could see everything. And, I could always

find him in crowds. He'd raise his hand and go 'Toot! Toot!' You couldn't miss him."



George Parks with L.A. Marathon medals from 2002, at left, and 2001, below.

A lifelong athlete, Parks took on four L.A. Marathons in his later years, finishing the 2001 and 2002 marathons as a walker in under 8 hours.



Venice Division 6 Transportation Manager Cheryl Brown was Paula's roommate in college. She, too, has fond memories of her friend's father who later became a fellow employee at Metro. "He was a joy to work with. Good sense of humor! There was a lightness about him," she said. "When he knew I was in the building, he would bring me one of his roses he always brought in for everybody from his garden."

Everything is embarrassing in junior high and Parks didn't let his daughter off lightly. "Dad was driving the car pool, and there I was with all my friends in the car and he'd be playing his religious music really loud and singing along really loud," she said.

His love of gospel music and song continued throughout his life. Until his declining health held him at bay during the last few months of

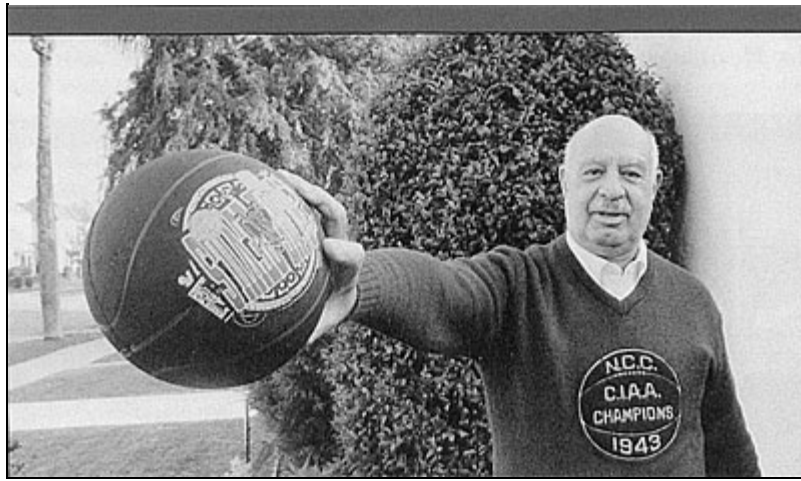
his life, he was an active member of the Metro Choir, who honored him in a special tribute at the annual Black History Month celebration in February 2008.

"Mr. George Parks was a gift to the Metro Choir," said Metro Choir director Renee Willis, appreciative of the clear baritone voice he brought to the choir. "For as long as I can remember, Mr. Parks took the time to bring us fresh roses every Monday. This weekly act of kindness made my day special."

While attending North Carolina College, Parks was a 19-year-old starting guard on the high-scoring North Carolina Eagles team. The Eagles, a basketball powerhouse in the southeast United States, was an all-Black team from a segregated college about to make history. Through a series of events that included a cultural exchange program with nearby Duke University, and against the state's Jim Crow laws that prevented contests between the races, a clandestine basketball game was arranged between the Eagles and the all-White Duke Medical School team in 1944.

The Eagles won the game — 88 to 44. But the precedent-setting event was a well-kept secret for 52 years until the story was uncovered in the *New York Times Magazine* and on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" in 1996.

George Parks
remembers
the historic
1944 North
Carolina



College basketball game against the all-White Duke Medical School team in the May 1996 issue of *MTA Family* magazine

As Scott Ellsworth, a former Smithsonian Institution historian and author of the *New York Times Magazine* article, described the game: "Henry 'Big Dog' Thomas was a top scorer, Parks was hot under the boards snagging rebound after rebound."

The Eagles-Duke game was not the only notable "first" achievement in Parks' life. He was the first African-American to enroll in the National University of Law Division of George Washington University. In the 1960s, he was the first African-American to teach Real Estate law at UCLA extension. And, he was the first African-American to be elected president of the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce.

When Parks was elected president of the Crenshaw Chamber of Commerce, the fight against integration of the community had intensified. As president, Parks bridged the gap of racial misunderstanding and bigotry, a local newspaper reported. "He had the quality, personality, patience and understanding that brought the competing forces together."

In his capacity as chamber president, Parks organized the first Neighborhood Watch Program in Los Angeles.

Parks had a long and distinguished career in law, education, and community service. He was a law professor and assistant dean of the Glendale University College of Law and the South Bay University College of Law and was a member of the Board of Regents of California Lutheran College.

He was the founder of the New Frontier Democratic Club and served the City of Los Angeles for 10 years as a member of the Quality and Productivity Commission.

Parks is listed in four editions of Who's Who: the National Registry of Who's Who 1999; Who's Who in America – 1994 Oxford Edition; Who's Who in American Law 1985-1986 and Who's Who Among Black Americans, 1985.

Parks is survived by his son William Parks of Los Angeles, daughter Paula Parks, son-in-law Dr. Bradford Anderson and grandchildren Christopher, 21, Alexis, 19, and Nathaniel, 16, of Bakersfield, California.

Funeral services will be held at 10 a.m., Tuesday, Sept. 30, at First A.M.E. Church Sanctuary, located at 2270 S. Harvard Blvd, Los Angeles, 90018. For directions and information: 323.730.7750 or www.famechurch.org.

In lieu of flowers, mourners may make a donation to the George Parks

Memorial Scholarship Fund / Howard University School of Law, 2900 Van
Ness Street – NW, Holycross Rm. 207 / Office of Development and Alumni
Relations, Washington, DC 20008.

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