

NewsObserver.com

[Previous Story](#)

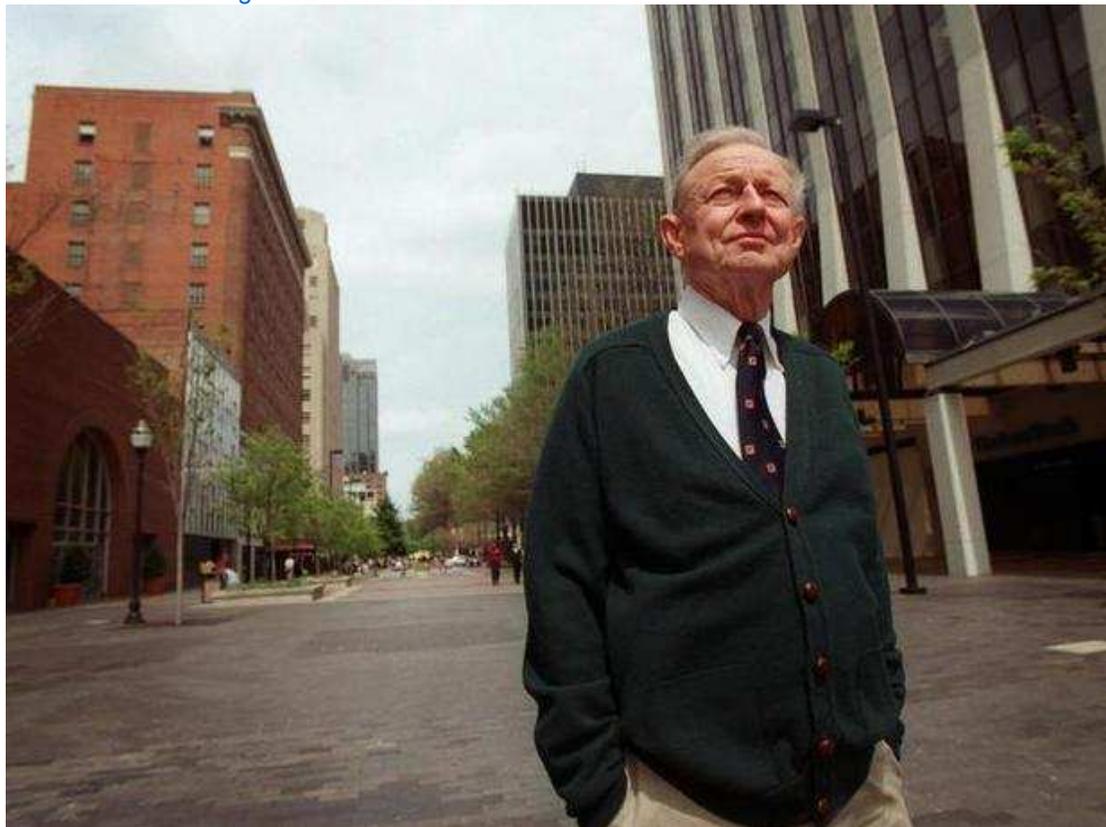
[Next Story](#)

Veteran Raleigh peace and justice advocate Cy King dies at 92

By Anne Blythe

ablythe@newsobserver.com June 26, 2014 Updated 18 hours ago

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Google Plus](#) [Reddit](#) [E-mail](#) [Print](#)



Cyrus King, who marched with civil rights demonstrators in the 1960s, on Fayetteville Street Mall in Raleigh in 2000. Protestors marched from Shaw University, north down what was then Fayetteville Street, to the Capitol.

SCOTT SHARPE — News & Observer file photo

RALEIGH — Cy King was a man of many causes – so many that when the nonagenarian reluctantly agreed to hang up his car keys for good a chief complaint was the coinciding loss of a place to display his gallery of bumper stickers.

Throughout his 92 years, King was a stalwart of the peace and justice movement. Never one to stand on the sidelines, King rallied for racial justice and civil liberties. He worked to rid the world of weapons, both domestically and abroad. He lobbied for liberal causes and was a prolific letter writer.

On Wednesday, after a brief period of declining health, King died at his home at Whitaker Glen.

“We’ve lost a giant,” said the Rev. Nancy Petty, pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church and a supporter of many of the same causes as King.

A World War II veteran who deeply felt the scars of the international conflict, King became a faithful advocate for nuclear disarmament. On the first Wednesday of every month, the Raleigh native was among the regulars holding vigil outside the Fayetteville Street post office, armed with fliers, pamphlets and pie charts to explain their peaceful campaign against war and the arms race.

He fought against the death penalty and held vigil with others outside Central Prison when executions occurred.

During the past two years, he was a regular at the “Moral Monday” demonstrations at the N.C. Legislative Building, protesting the cuts to unemployment benefits, the failure to expand Medicaid and much more. He was at the demonstration two weeks ago in a wheelchair.

Friends, admirers and peace-and-justice advocates picking up the mantle of their mentor describe King as a gentle man, unfailingly polite, who spoke from a place of authority but was never rude or loud about his convictions.

“It was always with this gentleness,” Petty said. “But the gentleness, his compassion, did not water down the passion.”

For the bulk of his life, King had a partner in his mission for social justice and peace – Carolyn, the wife he met at the University of Kentucky, who preceded him in death by two years.

The two were inducted into the Raleigh Hall of Fame in 2009 for their commitment to the causes despite their reluctance to bask in the limelight.

“I don’t know anybody who has put as much energy into various peace and justice organizations,” Collins Kilburn, retired director of the N.C. Council of Churches and a close friend, said at the time of the induction.

“Really, they were a team,” said Cy King Jr., one of the couple’s two sons.

Cy King Jr., a tennis player of great accolades, said on Thursday that he and his brother, Edward, could not remember a time when their parents did not have their yard filled with political signs or their home filled with discussions about one cause or another.

“Really, their social causes became their social life,” Cy King Jr. said.

The Kings settled in Raleigh in 1949. Cy King was the acquisitions librarian at N.C. State University Library.

Much of the Kings’ social justice work has been through the Community United Church of Christ, which they were members of for six decades. The church established the Carolyn and Cy King Peace and Justice Award on Carolyn’s 90th birthday.

In the early days, the Kings could often be found having picnics in parks and dining in restaurants with their many African-American friends to spread their message of racial equality.

In recent years, the couple fought for gay rights.

“The one thing I feel was their legacy was that so many people liked and respected them,” Cy King Jr. recalled. “In this age of kind of partisan politics, people might not always agree with them, but people liked them and it would make them stop and think about why such nice people are working for these causes.”

The Kings also were involved with the NC Stop Torture Movement and People of Faith Against the Death Penalty. They were part of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee, the Human Rights Coalition of NC and the Wake Chapter of the ACLU.

Carolyn King died in October 2012. Without his faithful partner by his side, Cy King continued going to demonstrations and writing to politicians and organizations.

“I’d come over and he’d be writing a letter to President Obama,” his son said.

A memorial service for Cy King is scheduled for 11 a.m. Tuesday at Community United Church of Christ, 814 Dixie Trail.

A visitation is scheduled from 5 to 7 p.m. Monday at Vaughan Fellowship Hall inside the church.

Blythe: 919-836-4948

[Facebook](#)[Twitter](#)[Google Plus](#)[Reddit](#)[E-mail](#)[Print](#)

Join The Conversation

News & Observer is pleased to provide this opportunity to share information, experiences and observations about what’s in the news. Some of the comments may be reprinted elsewhere in the site or in the newspaper. We encourage lively, open debate on the issues of the day, and ask that you refrain from profanity, hate speech, personal comments and remarks that are off point. Thank you for taking the time to offer your thoughts.

[Commenting FAQs](#) | [Terms of Service](#)

[Today's Circulars](#)

