



# Brigette Marie King

SEP 18, 1918 - SEP 11, 2002



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# Table of Contents

<b>Obituary</b> .....	Page 3
-----------------------	--------



## **Brigette Marie King**

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**B**rigette King dies at age 83, longtime nurse in East Bay. Sight of poverty in Cuba led to choice of career. By STAFF REPORTS Brigette Marie Cooley King, an Oakland-based nurse and hairdresser and among the first African-American residents of Hayward in the early 1960s, died on Sept. 11. Mrs. King was 83. She had been suffering from a number of health problems and fell at her home in Hercules on Sunday and was taken to Doctor's Medical Center in San Pablo. Mrs. King worked at the Hayward Convalescent Home on B Street and then as a visiting nurse for Kaiser from 1984 until she retired in 1991. In the 1960s she worked at Our Beauty Shop, at 84th Avenue and what was then East 14th Street. "Brigette had a sense of humor, and she was a real professional and was loved by everyone," said Moloura Clanton, 84, of Oakland, a co-worker at the shop. Nicknamed "Jitter" after the once-popular dance called the jitterbug, she often worked two jobs to support the family, even cleaning homes as a domestic. In the early 1960s, Mrs. King and her family moved to Hayward's Kelly Hill and were among the city's first blacks. Their home on Byron Street was the target of a hate crime when someone burned a small cross on the front lawn. The major issue of the day was Prop. 13 and open housing. Some supporters believed that real estate agents were under no obligation to sell homes to blacks. The ballot measure passed by a 2-1 margin but was later declared unconstitutional by the California Supreme Court. Born in Reserve, La., to Gaston and Marie Duhe, Mrs. King and her brothers and sisters learned the value of hard work by doing farm chores and working the family's orchards. Proud of her French Creole roots, she once traveled to Cuba and was moved by the poverty there. She decided to become a nurse and attended Bennett College in North Carolina. She served in the Women's Air Corps in the Second World War, stationed in Oregon and Riverside, where she met Chauncey W. Bailey Sr. of Des Moines, Iowa. They married, but later divorced. She settled in Des Moines, where she raised her family. She often



traveled by train to visit her mother in Oakland before deciding to move West to escape the harsh Iowa winters. In Oakland and Hayward, where she was married to John Cooley, the family attended Iowa Picnics hosted by blacks who also relocated to the West Coast. Cooley died after they divorced and she moved to Seattle where she met and married Brennan King, a football coach at Franklin High School. Mr. King died and Mrs. King moved back to Oakland and lived in the Toler Heights community with her son, Stephan Bailey, who died in 1993. Mrs. King moved to Hercules, where she remained an avid reader of The Oakland Tribune. She also enjoyed sewing and gardening, cooking shows, soap operas, “Jeopardy” and “Who Wants to Be a Millionaire?” She was also a big fan of all Bay Area professional sports teams. Mrs. King is survived by a brother, Gaston Duhe of Oakland; a daughter, Lorelei Waqia of Georgia; three sons, Mark Cooley of Hercules, Errol Cooley of El Sobrante, and Chauncey Bailey of Oakland; 12 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. The family will have a private memorial Sunday in El Sobrante.



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