

Naming Ceremony for Harold J. Lockett Park

June 25, 2022

It was a beautiful day -- quite warm with a pleasant breeze and blue sky crossed by dramatic streaks of clouds. The grass was freshly mowed. The attire was casual and relaxed. Smiles and handshakes and hugs were frequent. Those attending included Mayor Christopher Taylor, City Council member Julie Grand, Park Advisory Commission (PAC) members Stephen Borgsdorf, Paige Morrison, Rachel Skylis, and Praveena Ramaswami, and many good friends of Harold Lockett and his daughter Cherie Lockett. Well-represented were many of the diverse community-spirited groups Harold Lockett was a part of during the 1960s, 70s, 80s, and 90s.

Mayor Christopher Taylor gave opening remarks, welcoming those gathered and voicing his support for the naming process and the selection of Harold Lockett for the park's name. The President of the Ann Arbor Branch of the NAACP, William V. Hampton, spoke briefly about having nominated Harold Lockett as the person to be honored by naming the park after him. Parks Director Josh Landefeld spoke a few words about how special the event was to the Parks Department. Cherie Lockett gave the keynote speech, which speaks for itself below. Resounding applause followed.



Harold Lockett Speech Delivered by Cherie Lockett, June 25, 2022
On This Day

Cherie Lockett

First, I want to thank the city of Ann Arbor for bestowing this honor on my father.

On this day we honor and dedicate the naming of this park to my father Dr. Harold James Lockett formerly of 319 Brookside Drive. My dad passed in 1994 but I'm thankful that today his memory and legacy lives on and is now **memorialized** in the naming of this park.

I remember my father as a quiet person who was a skilled and a keen observer in the art of **deep listening**. Highly trained, I suspect some of this inclination toward quietness was handed down from his father. A migrant from Georgia, I remember, grandfather as silent and quietly determined to create a better life for his family in their new home in Delaware.

Perhaps another explanation for my father's quiet manner was because he had six strong vocal sisters. Anyone with siblings will tell you that you learn to tread lightly with this many sisters. He used to say "I've always been dominated by women.

Harold was a kind person and very sensitive to the needs of others. He was Well-read, analytical, and endlessly curious about people and the world.

He had a knack for making **everyone** feel comfortable, regardless of who they were, or their position in life. Everyone was welcome at Harold's table.

Despite his reserve and his deliberate manner of speech, Harold had a huge sense of humor and he could laugh till he cried. At his funeral, a fellow board member on one of the umpteenth boards he served on, mentioned how she loved his belly laugh.

For years he remained very active in Ann Arbor's rich cultural life including being an avid U of M football fan but when it came to basketball and Indiana was our opponent, well, his alma mater mattered more. A tennis player, a skier and, even yoga, he engaged in activities that were not available to him as a child.

He held many roles and received recognition for his contributions. These included:

- being elected and serving as a Trustee for the Ann Arbor Board of Education from 1965 to 71, **and in 1971** becoming Ann Arbor's First **African American** School Board President. **As a board member** he advocated and helped guide the Ann Arbor schools through the process of desegregation. **And simultaneously fought** for greater equity of education for all students.

Other community civic roles included:

- board member of the Michigan theater,
- board member of the Ann Arbor Holocaust Foundation,
- board member for the local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU).

As a clinician he was:

- Diplomate of the American Board of Neurology and Psychiatry- in Psychiatry and Child Psychiatry,
- Clinical Assistant professor at the **University of Michigan Medical School and Wayne State University School of Medicine,**
- Senior child psychiatrist for the State of Michigan Department of Mental Health, **and**
- Member of the Michigan Council of Child Psychiatry.

Early in his career, he was one of a handful of Black Child psychiatrist in the country

He also served his country in the Medical Corps as a Second Lieutenant during World War Two.

His enthusiasm and his strong belief that we need to **improve the lives of all children** grew out the United States' desire **to rebuild after the trials of the Great Depression and the second World War.**

A rebuilding that led to the **1954 Brown vs Board of Education decision** and **President Lyndon Johnson's inspirational 1964 speech -The Great Society** -given here in Ann Arbor. Both helped to fuel the call to action that excited my father and mother and many, many friends and neighbors particularly on the Northside of town who stepped up to play a role in that change.

As I pay homage to my father, I wish to openly acknowledge these **like-minded people** who believed in social justice and found traction at this point in our nation's history. With the ongoing student anti war demonstrations at the university; civil rights demonstrations in the public schools; **the state's discourse on funding** for education; **and the national outcry for change, all served as the backdrop for the conversations they were to hold.** The dialogue amongst this group was continuous – there was a buzz in the air.

My father carried **his torch** into the room with these community conversations in mind knowing that, he had the **love and support of this uniquely special group.** **Amazingly,** the timing for these game changers was perfect. They were in that perfect moment in time and place to **galvanize their ideas and energies.**

In addition to all his professional and community involvements, he found time to mentor youth and adults alike.

In the words of Dr. Richard English former Associate Vice President of Academic Affairs at U of M, and a dear, dear friend, Harold, he said will be remembered “as a consummate caring person, brother, friend, and father.”

- I hope this park will be a playground for all children and their adult pals.
- I hope it will be a place to learn new skills, socialize, and bring people together from all backgrounds to host a variety of conversations.
- I hope that this park will be a place to have quiet conversations about things that matter.
- I hope that this park will foster teams of people of goodwill to plan for a better tomorrow and for a better Ann Arbor.
- I hope that somehow those that enter this park for play or reflection will in some small way appreciate the legacy of a great man whose life was about service to others.

In closing, once again thanks to the City of Ann Arbor and all who came out. Our family is deeply touched. Before I leave, I want to share an abridge version of a poem I found in my father’s the brief case.

On This Day

Mend a quarrel,
Search for a forgotten friend
Dismiss a suspicion and replace it with trust,
Encourage a youth who has lost faith,
Keep a promise,
Forget an old grudge,
Fight for a principle,
Express your gratitude,
Overcome an old fear,
Take two minutes to appreciate the beauty of nature,
Tell someone you love them,
Tell them again, And again, And again.
Thank you all for this wonderful honor!



