



## Mrs. Mildred L. Harpole

December 2, 1934 - October 24, 2019

On Thursday, October 24, 2019, Mrs. Mildred L. Harpole (nee Cowan) passed away in hospital with her husband of sixty years, Reuben K. Harpole, Jr. lovingly by her side.

Mildred was born and raised in Cleveland, Ohio; however, she attended St. Frances Academy's boarding school in Baltimore, Maryland for a few years for grade school. She returned to Cleveland where she attended high school at St. Joseph's Academy. Mildred moved to Milwaukee to attend Marquette University where she graduated in 1956. After graduating from Marquette, she continued her education at Howard University Law School in Washington, D.C. for one year. Mildred completed her law education at Case Western Reserve University Law School in Cleveland, Ohio to receive a Juris Doctor degree. Mildred met the love of her life, Reuben, during her undergraduate years and they continued their relationship after she moved away, ultimately marrying in 1959. They established their home in Milwaukee, WI where they raised their daughter and son. They engaged in community activism work as a couple.

Beginning in the early 1960s, Mildred was actively involved in the struggle to end de facto segregation in Milwaukee's schools. Mildred helped form several "Freedom" schools as documented in two publications: *More than one Struggle: The Evolution of Black School Reform Milwaukee* (2004) by Jack Dougherty and *The Selma of the North: Civil Rights Insurgency of Milwaukee* (2009) by Patrick D. Jones. These grassroots schools offered improved

educational opportunities for the children of southern, African-American migrants to Milwaukee who were both underprivileged and underserved by the school system. She went on to become one of the earliest administrators (principal) of the Harambee Community School in Milwaukee which prepared generations of students for more than 40 years.

By the early 1970s, she turned her attention from public education and applied her legal training as director of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) - Milwaukee Regional Office (Wisconsin) - Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity. Mildred received broad recognition from policymakers, developers and community groups for her engagement. She became a tireless advocate for fair and open housing practices as well. She retired in 2002.

Mildred's community engagement was extensive. She was the 11th National President of Eta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. (a national business and Professional Women's organization affiliated with the National Council of Negro Women), member of the Milwaukee County Cultural Artistic and Musical Programming Advisory Council, member of the City of Milwaukee Arts Board, Founder/President of North Central Service Club (a civic engagement organization), Executive Committee member for Community Brainstorming Conference; lifetime member of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) - Milwaukee Branch, past Board Member of Family Services of Milwaukee, Milwaukee Forum, TEMPO Milwaukee, a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. and Charter Member of Cream City Links, Inc.

In the 1970s, Mildred served as the chairperson of the Harambee Health Task Force in Milwaukee. She submitted a detailed grant proposal to the Robert Johnson Foundation and members of Fisk University for the strategic growth plan that became the genesis of the MLK Heritage Health Center and Isaac Coggs Health Center. They were awarded a grant of more than \$5 million to provide health services for the City of Milwaukee.

Faith was very important to Mildred. She remained an active Roman Catholic

all of her life. She was a long-time member of All Saints Catholic Church in Milwaukee; however, Mildred and Reuben joined their daughter at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in the last few years. They also attended St. John's Cathedral Church from time to time.

Honors and awards received include:

1969 Master's Capstone Paper: Role of the Teacher Aide in the Secondary School

1988 Milwaukee Times Black Excellence Awardee

1993 Received Vatican II Award from the Milwaukee Archdiocese with her husband, Reuben Harpole, for Service in Society.

2000 Reuben and Mildred Harpole were featured on the cover of Milwaukee Magazine in February for an article on love stories.

2002 Received the Lifetime Fair Housing Award by the Wisconsin Fair Housing Network.

2012 Reuben and Mildred Harpole received The Southeastern Wisconsin Chapter of the Association of Fundraising Professionals National Philanthropy Day - Todd Wehr Volunteer Award

2013 Reuben K. Harpole, Jr. and Mildred L. Harpole received the City of Milwaukee's Frank P. Zeidler Public Service Award

2015 Distinguished Educator of the Year Award by UW- Milwaukee School of Education Dean - Reuben Harpole and Mildred Harpole

2018 Reuben K. Harpole, Jr. and Mildred L. Harpole, Esq. received a Legacy Award at the 42nd Annual Milwaukee Community Journal Award Ceremony & Scholarship Luncheon.

Mrs. Harpole is survived by her husband, Reuben; her daughter, Annette; son, John; two grandchildren, Velma (Bailey) King and Larry King, both of Alabama. She was preceded in death by her parents, John and Nettie (Wheeler) Cowan; John Gerard; sister, Ann Marie Cowan of Ohio; Frank Bailey of Ohio; Billy White of South Carolina and Joseph, Conway of North Carolina.



# Previous Events

## Visitation

NOV 1. 4:00 PM - 8:00 PM (CT)

Northwest Funeral Chapel  
6630 W. Hampton Ave  
Milwaukee, WI

## Service

NOV 2. 12:30 PM (CT)

St Francis Cathedral  
1927 N. 4th Street  
Milwaukee, WI

# Tribute Wall

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“ *Alan Shoho and the School of Education purchased the Serene Retreat for the family of Mrs. Mildred L. Harpole.*



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**Alan Shoho and the School of Education** - October 31, 2019  
at 08:21 PM

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“ *Your friends and colleagues at Pomona College purchased the Serene Reflections Bouquet for the family of Mrs. Mildred L. Harpole.*



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**Your friends and colleagues at Pomona College** - October 30,  
2019 at 02:28 PM