

CICERO B. BOOKER, SR.

"I was able to open the door for Black people to become police officers in this city. It is now up to you and the other young Black officers to open those doors now closed to you."

— Cicero Booker, Sr.

Cicero B. Booker Sr., born in Corapeake, N.C. on April 6, 1908, was a trailblazer. He was the first Black police officer to work for the Waterbury Police Department.

There were no Blacks wearing a Waterbury police uniform when Booker was appointed to the supernumerary force in October of 1943. Around that time, Blacks in the community formed a committee to promote the hiring of someone for the police force. Numerous Blacks were encouraged to seek employment at the Police Department, eliminating the claim that there were no qualified Black applicants. Booker was chosen from among seven or eight candidates and he was admitted to the force in January of 1946. "Some officials didn't think it was time for a Negro on the force, but it was," he said.

Booker walked a beat in the North End for twenty-two years, finishing his career with three years in the South End before retiring in 1971. He served as a patrolman for twenty-seven years and helped pave the way for others who followed. The husband of Addie (Harrison) Booker, he resided in Waterbury from 1926 until his death on October 4, 1986 at the age of 78.

He was an activist and became a role model for many people including his son, Cicero Jr., who followed in his footsteps to work for the Waterbury Police Department.

Booker was a member of Grace Baptist Church. He attended local schools and in 1957 received a diploma from the Institute of Applied Science in Chicago for a correspondence course in criminal investigation and identification.

Booker actively served many local organizations. He was a member of the Central Naugatuck Valley Task Force Board, the Naugatuck Valley Development Corporation Board of Directors, the Northwestern Area Agency on Aging Advisory Board, the Walnut, Orange, Walsh Board of Directors, the Mt. Olive Senior Citizens Board, the Retired Senior Volunteer Program Board, the Community Development Rehabilitation Board and the Waterbury Housing Coalition Board. He was a president of the Pearl Street Neighborhood House and, in 1981, he was chairman of the Need Action Council Inc.

On October 29, 1983, Booker received an award from the Waterbury Flaming Knights for his public service to Waterbury and on March 26, 1983, he was presented the Professional Award by the Waterbury Chapter, National Association of Negro Business and Professional Women's Club Inc. He is honored with a plaque at both the Waterbury Police Department and the New Opportunities for Waterbury building.

As a community leader, Booker was constantly involved in social issues and his legacy is etched with the breaking down of racial barriers.

