

March 20, 2022

Honorary Street Sign Committee  
City Hall - Room 205  
200 East Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

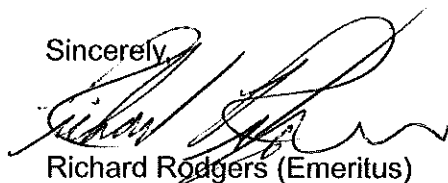
To Whom It May Concern:

I had the extraordinary opportunity of working directly with the late Retired Brigadier General Robert Andrew Cocroft for over 45 years during his quest to help veterans, particularly veterans of color to receive the much needed benefits and services they deserved. He was a visionary and a giant before his time. Before his untimely transition, General Cocroft was instrumental in overseeing the development of Vets Place Central, Veterans Manor, Center for Veterans Issues all on the west side of Milwaukee and several other multi-million dollar projects throughout the State of Wisconsin which were established to assist veterans and their families. Worth noting is not only did General Cocroft serve as the President and CEO for the Center for Veterans Issues, he also served as Deputy Secretary for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs and finally as the National Commander for the National Association for Black Veterans Inc. where he helped thousands of veterans to secure much needed benefits and services.

It is therefore my extreme honor and pleasure to recommend the name of Brigadier General Robert Andrew Cocroft for placement on the street of Wisconsin Avenue in Milwaukee. To begin West on Wisconsin Avenue from 27th Street and ending at 35th Street. This request is being respectfully submitted by Richard Rodgers, Emeritus, and Mike Beal, Regional Director for the National Association for Black Veterans Inc., Milwaukee, Wisconsin and is supported by the National Commander, Lt. Col. Richard Kingsberry.

For questions please contact Richard Rodgers at either (262) 202-0453 or ricjew@gmail.com.

Sincerely,



Richard Rodgers (Emeritus)  
Lifetime Gold Member  
National Association for Black Veterans Inc.  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53223



## HONORARY STREET NAME SIGN APPLICATION

City Hall, Room 205  
200 East Wells Street  
Milwaukee, WI 53202

PLEASE NOTE: A \$100 PAYMENT MUST ACCOMPANY THIS FORM  
(Checks should be made payable to "City Treasurer")

### 1. Applicant information:

Applicant's Name Richard Rodgers / Mike Beal  
Organization or Company NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR BLACK VETERANS INC.  
Street Address 3400 W. WISCONSIN AVE City/State Milwaukee, WI Zip 53208  
Telephone 262-202-0453 Fax — Email rijew@gmail.com

### 2. Honorary Street Name Request

Street name requested Brigadier General Robert A. Crocrot Avenue  
Location of proposed designation: (for example, West Main Street from North 12<sup>th</sup> Street to North 15<sup>th</sup> Street)  
West Wisconsin from 27<sup>th</sup> to 35<sup>th</sup> Street


### 3. Required Submittals:

- Refer to Chapter 113-3, Milwaukee Code of Ordinances (attached)
- A typed statement containing no fewer than **500 words** describing the significance of the person, place, or event being honored. The statement should indicate why a particular section of street has been requested for the honorary designation.

### 4. SIGNATURE OF APPLICANT:

My application consists of the following items necessary to complete the application. Please check:

- \$100 fee (check made payable to "City Treasurer").
- Completed Application Form.
- Autobiography or statement regarding the person, place, or event being honored.

Signature  Date 3/14/2022  
Printed Name Richard Rodgers

# A VIDEO INTERVIEW WITH BRIGADIER GENERAL ROBERT ANDREW COCROFT

FEBRUARY 25, 2021 /  BLOG, ORAL HISTORIES

Written by Oral Historian Luke D. Sprague

Robert A. Cocroft graduated from North Division High School, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in 1965. While attending and playing football at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh, the United States Army drafted him on October 24, 1966. At Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri, Cocroft passed the qualification tests during basic training and decided to become an Army officer. After completing Officer Candidate School (OCS), Cocroft was commissioned on June 13, 1967, and branched infantry and began his active-duty career.

After OCS, Cocroft reported to Fort Ord, California. At Fort Ord, he first served as a training officer with HHC, 4th Battalion, 2nd Advance Individual Training Brigade. August 1968, Cocroft received orders for the 101st Airborne Division in Vietnam. Later, at Fort Ord, he served as the executive officer, D Company, 1st Battalion, 4th Combat Support Training Brigade, and then company commander. During this time, the Army offered him his second branch choice, military intelligence. Cocroft declined to branch military intelligence and decided to stay with the infantry.

En route to Vietnam, Cocroft attended Airborne School at Fort Benning, Georgia. The Army then gave him a choice between Ranger School and Warfare Training in Panama. He chose jungle school. After being struck down by illness in Panama's jungles, Cocroft returned to the United States several months. He applied for a one-year extension to make the rank of captain.



*Brigadier General Robert A. Cocroft, at the time of the photo also Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs*

In 1969, his next duty station was S-1 for the special troops of 8th Army Headquarters at Yongsan Garrison, Seoul, Republic of Korea. While there, Cocroft became familiar with the personnel and human resources for an army headquarters. After serving in Korea and four years on active duty, he returned to Wisconsin and joined the 84th Division in the reserves. Cocroft completed his Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business Management and then received his master's degree in Public Policy at the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Cocroft focused on helping veterans. In particular, he observed that minority and less educated veterans received a disproportionate number of less than honorable discharges from the military, usually after accepting a summary judgment instead of a general court-martial. These other than honorable discharges meant veterans could not receive the housing, health care, or employment benefits of an honorable discharge. Cocroft spent much of his professional life trying to correct this issue for veterans.

In the mid-1970s, then-Vietnam Coordinator for the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) Cocroft networked with the Wisconsin Vietnam Veterans Coalition (WVVC) headquartered at the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. The WVVC included Wisconsin Veterans organizations from Oshkosh to Milwaukee: IVOC/NABVETS, WACVO, Vets for Vets, Vets House, VIS, WDVA, and WVU. Cocroft was a founding member and a later president of the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS), originally called the Interested Veterans of the Central City (IVOCC), Milwaukee, Wisconsin.

Simultaneously, Cocroft continued his Army career in the reserves, A Company Commander and then C Company Commander, 1st Battalion, 84th Regiment, 4th Brigade, 84th Division, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Later, he attended Army Command and General Staff College, preparing Army field grade officers to take command and staff roles at the battalion level and above. Following Command and Staff College, Cocroft was executive officer and then took command of the 84th Basic Training Battalion, 84th Division, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Cocroft went on to take command of the 2nd Brigade, 84th Division, Beaver Dam, Wisconsin.

Meanwhile, on the civilian side of his career, he served as Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (WDVA) from 1994 to 2002. He was responsible for the day-to-day operations of a state agency that included hundreds of full-time employees, multiple loan and grant programs, skilled nursing facilities, and a museum. These veteran's assistance programs included mortgage loan programs, home improvement loan programs, and economic assistance loan programs. While at WDVA, Cocroft attended the United States Army War College in preparation for a senior leadership role in the military and received a master's in strategic studies. During this time, he also served as Assistant Division Commander, 84th Division, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and later as the Assistant Division Commander (Operations) for the 98th Division, Rochester, New York. Brigadier General Robert A. Cocroft retired from the Army in 2006.

Before his Army retirement, Cocroft worked on plans to create America's Freedom Center. To be located at the Milwaukee County War Memorial Center, planners envisioned America's Freedom Center as an interactive experience with multimedia content displaying the entire context of a veteran's story using oral histories, touchable objects, and visual content to drive engagement. Perhaps even more significantly, Cocroft was the president and CEO of the Center for Veterans Issues (CVI), a statewide non-profit focused on providing housing and support services to improve



quality of life for all veterans' families and their communities. Cocroft sought to get veterans benefits they earned, including transitional and supportive housing. He held positions on numerous boards, including the National Coalition for Homeless Veterans. While at CVI, Cocroft appeared on the Milwaukee Public Television series 4th Street Forum, Veterans: Battles Faced on the Homefront.

Brigadier General Cocroft passed September 12, 2018, and is interred at the Southern Wisconsin Veterans Memorial Cemetery. In 2019, CVI announced their intention to name their new veterans' resource center after Cocroft. One thing remains clear. Brigadier General Cocroft held a lifelong commitment to helping veterans. With the most profound respect and gratitude for Cocroft's service to Wisconsin's veterans and African American history month, the Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program presents a video interview with him from February 24, 2000. Please note, this recording has physically deteriorated over the years, and we have done our best to restore it and make it available online. The unpreventable background noise ends at about nine minutes into the recording.

This interview uses an interactive research tool called the Oral History Metadata Synchronizer (OHMS), where you can watch or listen to an interview while exploring the content. OHMS allows you to use the prepared "Index" as a table of contents, similar to chapters in a book, by clicking on them. On the right side of the screen, you may also "Search this Index" for topics or keywords using the keyword search box on the right side of the screen. Within a segment, the "Share Segment" icon allows you to share the URL with other people, and the "View Transcript" icon toggles between transcript and index views. Back on the upper right, moving the selector switch to "Transcript," you may "Search this Transcript" by word and then jump to that red-lettered word by clicking on it. While in transcript mode, pressing the blue time stamps to the left of the transcript allows you to jump to that location in the interview. There is also a printer icon in the upper right corner of the screen that will enable you to generate a printable document for download that includes the metadata, summary, citations, index, and transcript.

Wisconsin Veterans Museum  
James Michtoch, Interviewer | OH 00330  
Wisconsin Veterans Museum Oral History Program

OH00330Cocroft\_OHMSvideo  
From Wisconsin Veterans Museum

1:02PM  
38:33 / 2:00:00

Transcript Index

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*Click the above image to get started*





## Brigadier General Robert Andrew Cocroft

November 16, 1946 - September 12, 2018

Brigadier General (Ret.) Robert Andrew Cocroft, US. Army, was born to Willie Tilmon Cocroft and Louise Cocroft (Gee) on November 16, 1946, in Conway, Mississippi. He entered into eternal life on Wednesday, September 12, 2018.

At an early age, Robert professed his belief in Christ and was baptized at Center Hill Missionary Baptist Church in Conway, MS. In 1947, during the Northern migration of African-Americans in search of opportunities, his family settled in Milwaukee, WI.

Robert joined Metropolitan Missionary Baptist Church under the leadership of the late Rev. E. M. Kelly. The Cocroft family became a driving force in the formative years of the church where several family members remain today.

Robert received his formal education in the Milwaukee Public Schools and graduated from North Division High School in 1965. In 1966, while attending the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh on a football scholarship, he was drafted into the US. Army.

Upon completion of US. Army Infantry School (OCS) and while training at Fort Ord, California he met his wife. On May 3, 1969 he married Jacqueline Hunter and to this union two children were born, Dianna Killins (Cocroft) and Robert H. Cocroft.

He was a Vietnam-era veteran who served overseas duty in the Republic of Korea. He returned to Wisconsin and joined the 84th Division of the Army Reserve while working and going to school full-time. He continued with his military education, including graduating from the US. Army War College and climbing the chain of command to Brigadier General. At the conclusion of his military career, Robert was the Assistant Division Commander of Operations for the 98th Division. Throughout

his entire career he commanded at the company, battalion and brigade levels. Robert had 40 years of active and reserve military service and officially retired in 2006.

Robert served as Deputy Secretary of the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs from 1994 to 2002. He had the overall responsibility for the Department's day-to-day operations, which included administration and management of 900 full-time employees, five loan programs, eight grant programs, a 750-bed skilled nursing care facility, and departmental administrative services. As a member of the senior management team within

(deceased) the National Association for Black Veterans (NABVETS) was established in 1973, and currently has chapters in 80 cities throughout the United States. He was the previous National Commander. NABVETS continues its advocacy on behalf of its membership with Congress, the federal administration, state, county, and city legislators, and is certified by the US. Department of Veterans Affairs as a claims representative for veterans.

As demonstrated by his extensive commitment to veteran affairs as well as numerous community-based organizations, Robert was a genuine servant leader. During the time of his transition, he was President and Chief Executive Officer of the nonprofit Center for Veterans Issues, Ltd. (CVI). In addition to advocating for the needs of veterans, CVI services include housing for low-income, homeless, minority and women veterans including their families. CVI is distinguished as the largest private provider of transitional housing and permanent supportive housing for veterans in Wisconsin.

Educational achievements include: Bachelor of Science in Agricultural Business Management, Master of Arts in Public Policy and Administration both from the University of Wisconsin-Madison; US. Army Infantry School (OCS), US. Army Paratrooper Airborne School, and the US. Army War College at Carlisle Barracks, PA.

Throughout his career he also served on numerous boards and committees both locally and nationally.

He was preceded in death by his parents Willie Tilmon and Louise Cocroft; brother, Mark A. Cocroft; father-in-law, Command Sergeant Major Grover D. Hunter, Sr., USA, Retired; brother-in-law, Grover D. Hunter, Jr.; niece, Natasha S. Hampton; and great-niece, Ana Moffett.

Left to forever cherish his precious memory: his beloved wife, Jacqueline D. Cocroft.

Children - Dianna R. (Willie) Killins, Robert H. (Teresita) Cocroft, and his adopted daughter Annette (Michael) Miller. Grandsons - Devin Tyree Cocroft, Isiah H. Cocroft, Robert T. Cocroft, Jonavan M. Cocroft, Michael A. Killins, Malik A. Killins, Mekhi A. Killins.

Granddaughters - Arianna 1. Cocroft, First Lieutenant Michelle

A. Killins, USAR. Great-grandchildren - McKayla A. Killins and Morgan A. Killins. Siblings - Phyllis T. (Woodrow) Coleman, Wanda D. Cocroft, Judy L. Cocroft, and Timothy D.

Cocroft. Mother-in-law, Osie M. Hunter, San Jose, CA. Sisters-in-law - Marlene Butler, Cathedral City, CA, and Demetria Brown, San Jose, CA. Aunts- Lorene Cocroft, Dorcas D. Denton, Helen F. LeFlore, Lorraine Gee, and Callie Gee. Uncle - Alton Campbell. And many, many nieces, nephews, cousins, and friends.

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels,

nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,

Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love if

## Receipt of Street Naming Fee

Date:	3/24/22
Received Of:	Richard Rodgers
Received By:	LME
Check # (If Applicable):	1300
Amount Received	\$100.00