

Killion Day At Park Celebrates Life and Legacy Of Late Community Activist

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - The Annual James Killion Day at Killion Park at Salu turned out to be everything that was planned and much more to honor the Alton community activist. Alton Mayor David Goins said it was a great honor and privilege to recognize the birth, life, and legacy of the late James H. Killion Jr.

“Killion’s family attended and were humbled by the festivities,” he said. “The weather was perfect and the event was well attended. I would like to thank the committee and the volunteers for organizing a wonderful ceremony.



Alton Fourth Ward Alderwoman Rosetta Brown was the emcee.

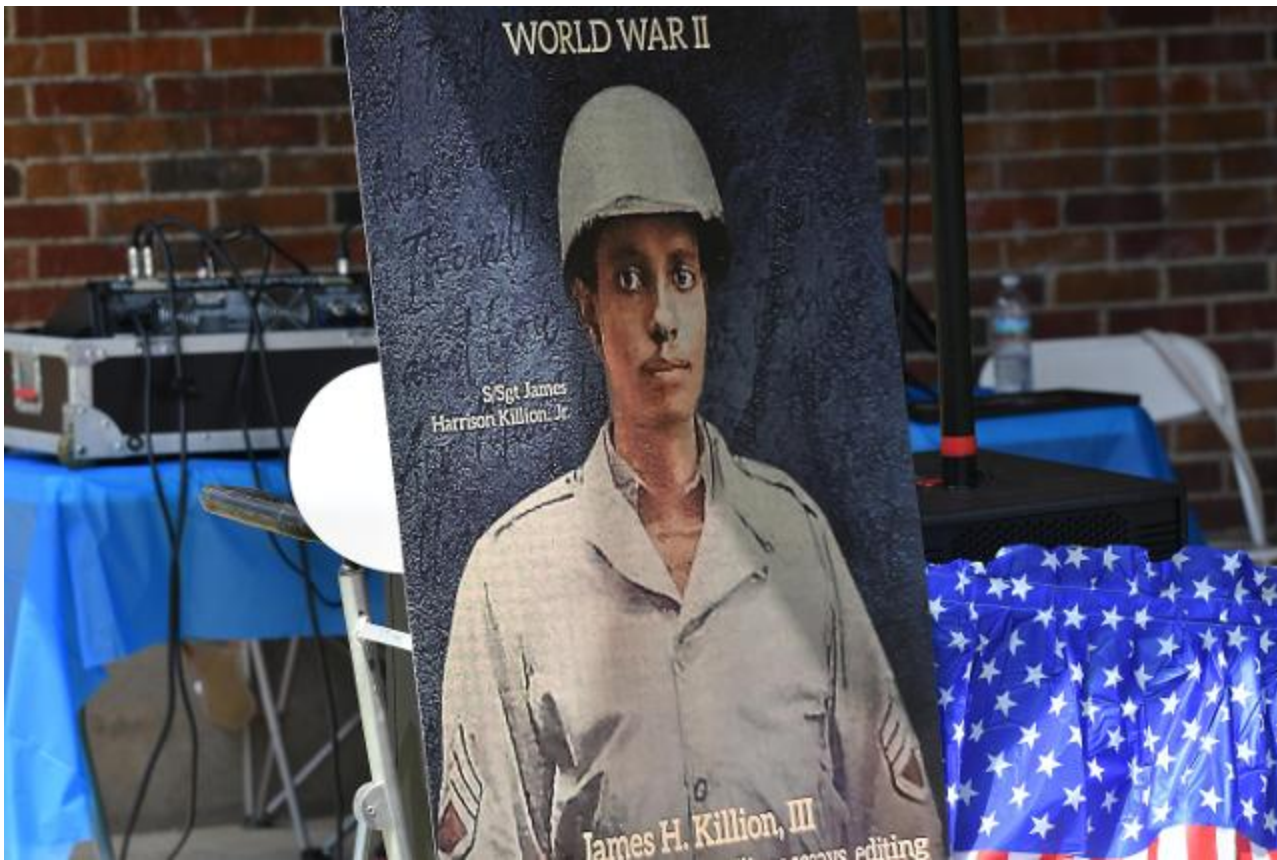
First Lady Sheila Goins also played a big part in the celebration and she said: “Gene Baldwin’s keynote address was superb.

“It seemed all were captivated by his address and the speeches of the others,” she added. “It was a lovely day and honor to pay tribute and honor the Killion family.”

There was a presentation of colors and music, plus acknowledgment of sponsors and dignitaries. David Frye, Mary Hyndman, and Gene Baldwin, an author and family friend, were dynamic speakers on the day. More on the keynote speakers in a story to come. The Riverbend Community Gospel Choir also performed.



Baldwin is a playwright, essayist, journalist, poet and fiction writer. His play “Water Brought Us and Water’s Gonna Take Us Away,” about the Underground Railroad in Illinois and commissioned by the National Park Service, was produced at the Prop Theater in Chicago. Baldwin was a producer/interviewer for the Chicago segment of the National Tuskegee Airmen Oral History Project. Gene and his friends Lorenzo Small and Charlie Baird raised money for the monument in Alton City Cemetery honoring George and Arnold Cisco, Tuskegee Airmen brothers and Jerseyville and Alton residents. His current project is a book in progress: “There Is No Color In Justice,” about the civil rights struggles of Alton and the history of racism in Illinois.



Baldwin mentioned that he dedicated his book to his late great-great-grandfather William Holman Jones, who was a conductor of the Underground Railroad.

Several members of the Killion family will be in attendance. Alton Mayor David Goins presented a proclamation. The Williams Family had a dove release, and Sheila and Brown provided closing remarks, then TAPS will be played by the VFW.

Alderwoman Brown said the event Saturday was to kick off many great events to come at Killion Park this year.

“Mr. Killion did great things in our community and was well respected,” she said. “Our veterans served our country proudly and because of that, we celebrated them as well with free food, good singing, and great people to connect with.”

“Abe Lee Barham, another organizer, said Killion did a lot for Alton, and it was great to acknowledge a man who was part of Alton’s rich history.

“It was another day we can celebrate one of our biggest community activists,” he said. “The park has been named for him and everyone who comes and goes from Alton sees it, so we need to have a beautiful park for people to see.”