

Oral History Project-Revolution Park. UNC-Charlotte Department of Public History

Interviewed: Paul Harris (PH)/Robert Brown (RB)

Paul Harris and Robert Brown have been friends since grade school. They both were caddies at the Bonnie Brae Golf Course (now Revolution Park Golf Course) in the 1950s. Mr. Harris was born in 1942 in Mecklenburg County. He has been a resident of Southside Park ever since he can remember. Although he was not a resident of Revolution Park, he says he “grew up” on the 6th hole (at that time it was part of Southside Park). Mr. Brown was born in Chester, South Carolina in 1940. At a young age, his family moved to Charlotte where he lived in Brookhill and later moved to Southside Park (after the building of I-77). The two friends crossed paths in York Rd elementary school. Here they were a part of the Caddy’s Club, a club that allowed young men to caddy for the Bonnie Brae Golf Course during school hours to earn a little money for their families. These two men make an important contribution to this project because they give insight to what it was like at the golf course and how that differed from outside the clubhouse. The following is a summary of the interview:

- The fondest memory of the Revolution Golf Course is the first day they opened it up in 1957.
- We started as caddies as teen agers in the 1950’s.
- We could already play the course at Albemarle Road which was not considered part of the city then. But we couldn’t play at Revolution/Bonnie Brae.
- When I was a caddy I was slapped, kicked and ran off the golf course. I got mad when the other golfers started laughing.
- We held tournaments in the early 60’s. Turnout was very good.
- Almost all of the black golfers played at Revolution Park.
- Charlotte always had the highest fees to play golf.
- Most of the white people stayed in the neighborhood until after the course was desegregated. They started selling their houses.
- When I was 7 years I was arrested for killing the dog of a white family who would sick the dog on us going to school every morning. I got tired of it so I killed the dog. Two police officers pulled guns on me. RB
- The city did not spend any money on the Revolution golf course after 1957. City leaders claimed they did not improve it because black golfers did not ask, but they kept it before. PH
- When the golf course was integrated they took out the locker room and showers. PH
- They removed the bar and lounge area as well. We had to hang out in the parking lot or outside the club house. I don’t understand why they had to take out the locker room. RB
- We suffered a lot of misery just to play golf. It didn’t spill into outside the golf course as long as we stayed in our place. PH
- We play out of town now because the prices are cheaper.
- I worked the Carolina Golf course for 7 years. We could play on Monday’s only, caddy day. They would shoot at the caddies, the private club members did. RB
- There is a ghost story that if you left your ball on a hole too long the ball would disappear. I say, it was probably the losing player who put it in his pocket! PH
- I-77 affected the 4 and 6 holes on the 9-hole course, they had to be relocated. They planned to expand the course to 18 holes but never did. RH
- During the I-77 construction everybody on my street had to relocate. We moved to Southside. RH