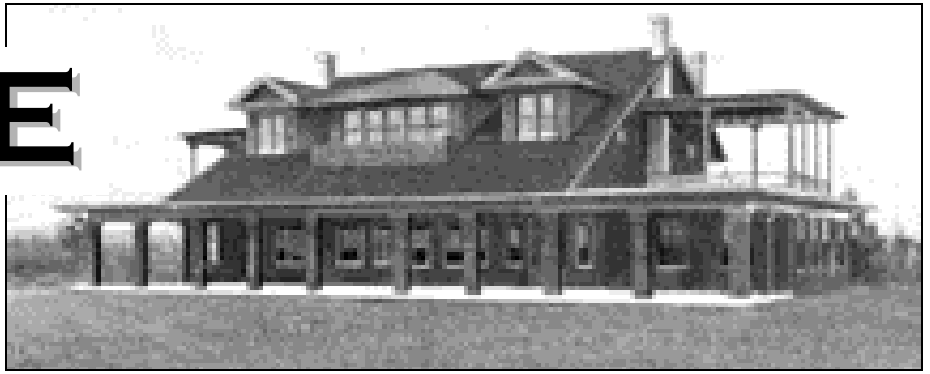


# PARADE

The old Durham Country Club used to stand on the north side of W. Club Blvd. in the 2500 block.



March  
2005

THE WATTS HOSPITAL-HILLANDALE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION

*"Set not your house on fire to be revenged of the moon." ---Thomas Fuller*

## JOHN SPRUNT HILL AND THE HISTORY OF HILLANDALE GOLF COURSE

BY TOM MILLER

*(EDITOR'S NOTE: In 2008, The Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood will celebrate its 100th anniversary. Plans are already in the works to commemorate this milestone. This article, the history of our beloved greenery that calms and buffers our hood, is the first of several historic pieces that will be published in this newsletter.)*

Hillandale golf course is one of North Carolina's oldest golf courses in continuous use. It was the creation of John Sprunt Hill, one of Durham's richest men and one of the state's earliest enthusiasts for the game of golf.

Hill was a lawyer, a banker, a real estate developer, an investor, and a farmer. At the turn of the 20th century, he married Annie Watts, the only daughter of George Washington Watts, partner of the Dukes, a millionaire, and a great philanthropist. Watts's magnificent mansion, Harwood Hall, once stood on South Duke Street on the site now occupied by the colonial-style Blue Cross Blue Shield building. Hill's splendid Spanish Mission-style home, Hill House, still stands next door. In addition to their many joint business ventures and their love of Annie, Hill and his father-in-law shared a love of what was then the relatively new game of golf.

Both men regularly traveled to the new resort at Pinehurst and even as far as Palm Springs just to whack the little white ball. But in the early years of the last century, even these places were still somewhat rough and traveling in the era before automobiles was laborious. What was needed was a good course in Durham where Hill and Watts could indulge their passion any time they wished and where they could introduce their friends and business associates to the game. Since Hill owned more the 7000 acres in and around Durham, finding land for a private course hardly presented a problem.

So, in 1908, Hill had a nine-hole course staked out on his "Hill 'n' Dale" farm north of what was then called "the Hillsboro road." Hill selected Donald Ross to design the course and soon mules and dredges were moving earth to make fairways and greens. The course meandered through pastureland along bed of Ellerbe Creek, the principal natural feature the course and hazard for Durham's new golfing set. The year 1908 is important to the neighborhood not only because of the golf course. It is also the year that marks the cornerstone of the new Watts Hospital at the other end of Club Boulevard. Of course, that institution was made possible by the philanthropy of Hill's father-in-law and golfing partner, George Washington Watts.

*(Continued on Page 7)*

## FOCUS

### NEIGHBORS MAKE NIGHT OF LIGHTS A SUCCESS

BY MARILYN BUTLER

Our neighborhood glowed beautifully with luminaries on Night of Lights, December 19, in spite of a brisk breeze that put some candles out and left others burning even brighter. Thank goodness for the sand! And thanks to all of you who participated to make this year's Night of Lights so magical.

Heartfelt thanks also to our many, many volunteers who braved the cold and wind to sell the luminaries and make this Night of Lights a success. Dean Michaels, back in his old role as coordinator, went above and beyond for the volunteers when he stapled plastic sheeting up around three sides of the picnic shelter and supplied kerosene heaters and lanterns for warmth and light.

As usual, we opened our pocket-books and cupboards. We donated a truckload of canned goods and \$1500 to the Community Kitchen. We sold almost 4000 luminaries and added 162 members to WHHNA for 2005.

Thanks again to all of you who participated in lighting our neighborhood!



If you know someone who has moved into or moved from the neighborhood, please call Jean Savage or send her an email.

Telephone: 815.7980;  
email: [savageje@mindspring.com](mailto:savageje@mindspring.com).



## In Memoriam

*The Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood  
Announces The Passing Of  
Fran Lynn*

*Fran died in her home on Virginia Avenue on January 18. For over 20 years, Fran devoted much of her busy life to helping improve the Watts-Hospital neighborhood, participating in innumerable activities, events and meetings, and was a special friend to our Ellerbe Creek.*

*The creator and director of the Environmental Resource Program at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Fran was the first woman faculty member at UNC's Department of Environmental Science and Engineering.*

*Environmental activist, political activist, nature lover, mother and good friend, Fran's rich life had a significant and special impact on the many friends, family and co-workers she leaves behind.*

*Her son, Theo, and family request that donations be made to the Eno River Association  
[www.enoriver.org](http://www.enoriver.org)  
477-4549  
to honor her memory.*



# A WORD FROM WHHNA PRESIDENT, GUILLO RODRIGUEZ

"Since this edition of the Parade is coming out in March - and I'm writing this before Valentine's Day - I'm crossing my fingers and hoping that the worst of winter has passed and that no ice storms have interrupted our electrical service. I do miss a good snowfall, though. It seems to bring out the kid in all of us. I love to watch the kids, and some adventurous others, on sleds and tromping around in their snow gear. Alas, perhaps next year we'll get more of the white stuff to play in. I always remember a line from the quirky movie 'Snow Day'. "Miracles happen on snow days."... Indeed they do.

I do have some updates to report, all good news. First, the City's Transportation Division has contacted me about the next steps in the Club Boulevard Traffic Calming Plan. They've contracted with Martin Alexiou Bryson (MAB) for the final design work and construction specifications. MAB did the preliminary master plan and are being brought back to design Phase I. Phase I was funded last year and includes the planted median and pedestrian crossings at Oval Park. Alison Carpenter, the City's Bicycle and Transportation Coordinator, informs me that she'll have met with the consultants by the time this newsletter goes out and they will coordinate a final community meeting with us. We will make sure the word gets out using the list serve and putting plenty of signage along Club. Be on the lookout.

And here's some more good news: The Parks and Recreation Department (DPR) has funds to renovate the play area at Westover Park. Their plans are to begin construction in the Fall of this year. They've contracted with the landscape architectural firm of GNA Design Associates out of Charlotte to work with the neighborhood to develop a master plan. William Royston, a Park Planner with the DPR, says that the city wants to make sure the play area is renovated with new equipment and safety surfacing. They also are required to make the park accessible for people with disabilities. He also mentioned new picnic facilities since Westover seems to be attracting a lot of group picnics since the trail was installed. Although the first meeting will have already taken place by the time this edition of Parade gets to you, we will make regular announcements for upcoming meetings through the list serve, as well as place signs at all of our parks and along the West Ellerbee Creek Trail.

Speaking of which, expect to see brand new signage along the West Ellerbee Creek Trail. During February and March, the General Services Department will be installing new signs made from recycled plastic lumber. They will match the signage on other trails in Durham. Major Entrance Signs will have an overall map of the Durham Greenways and Trails system, a close-up of the West Ellerbee Trail and its environs, and rules and contact info, of course. Minor Entry Signs will have directional arrows, cross street names, and stop signs.

I want to close by saying that I have the pleasure of working with a newly invigorated board. We have new directors with exciting ideas and the potential for developing neighborhood leadership. Our demographics are changing and we must adapt as an organization in order to survive and remain effective. Change is a constant and I believe that we're up to the challenge. Thank you to all who have taken an interest in, and supported the work of, the neighborhood association. There are still committees to sign up for and special events to volunteer for. We're here to make a difference. Join us!

---

## *Calendar of Events*

*Meetings begin at 7:30 PM, 3rd Tuesday of the month unless otherwise stated:*

**Mar. 15** Neighborhood Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.

Guillo Rodriguez,  
2111 Pershing Street

**Apr. 19** Neighborhood Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.

Ken Steen,  
1102 Virginia Avenue

**May. 7** Neighborhood Board Meeting  
7:30 p.m.

Ellen Ciompi,  
2423 W. Club Boulevard

*Everyone is invited to attend  
Neighborhood Board Meetings.*

*Your input is important to us. Call for a ride!*

---

**PARADE READERS AND ADVERTISERS!  
THE DEADLINE FOR OUR NEXT ISSUE IS MAY 1.  
PLEASE EMAIL ALL COPY TO PARADE EDITOR  
KAREN STARK KSPCI@JUNO.COM**

# The Heart of the

Visit Watts Hospital-Hillandale on the Web at <http://www.whhna.org/>

## Will Tennis Courts Light Up The Hood?

By JUM LISTER

The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics (NCSSM) has announced plans to build two tennis courts with lights on Maryland Avenue, between the baseball field and the gymnasium. The primary concern of the neighbors residing directly across the street from the tennis courts is lighting. The originally proposed complex at NCSSM would consist of two courts, with a total of four 40-foot light poles, each with 3 light fixtures, for a total of 12 light fixtures.



Initially, neighbors were optimistic that these lights would keep glare and spill to a minimum. However, when neighbors visited tennis courts with similar lighting systems at North Raleigh Christian Academy (NRCA), they found the lights produced an intolerable glare. At a distance of 100-110 feet from the courts (the same distance as the living room windows of neighbors directly across the street), the entire football field at NRCA was illuminated. In response to their disappointment with the proposed lighting system, neighbors and a representative from the NCSSM explored alternative lighting systems specific to tennis courts. After several visits to lighted tennis courts in the Durham area however, it became apparent that any type of lighting would be disruptive to the lives of those whose houses border the school. Neighbors walked away from those visits feeling that lights were not an acceptable option for the proposed site.

Neighbors were initially informed about the construction of the tennis courts just prior to the WHHNA annual meeting on October 19, 2004. On October 21, 2004 neighbors and some board members met with the president of the NCSSM, Dr. Gerald Boarman to express their con-

cerns directly to the school. At that time, Dr. Boarman agreed to a moratorium on construction while an effort was made to address the concerns of the neighbors.

On February 9, 2005, residents living on the 1400 block of Maryland finally had another opportunity to meet with Dr. Boarman. The school informed neighbors of the upcoming construction phases: surface prep and infrastructure, construction of the actual courts themselves, and finally installation of lighting. These phases would come one right after another. Despite the direct request of neighbors to forego the installation of lights on the tennis courts, Dr. Boarman stated that lights would be installed. Ed McBride, Director of Operations at NCSSM, who has been involved in the field trips to visit local lighted tennis courts, stated that the lights at NRCA, which were the types of lights the school had originally planned to use, did seem very unreasonable. Although Dr. Boarman has the final word on lights, as well as anything regarding the tennis courts, he did state that he would love the input of the neighbors on any and every aspect of the tennis courts. "I want your advice on everything", he said. Dr. Boarman stated that he is willing to look at and even use (within reason) any lighting or landscaping solution requested by the neighbors. The neighbors will continue to explore whether there is a solution that includes lighting that would also be acceptable to them.

## WHHNA Board Does the Neighborhood's Business

By ELLEN CIOMPI

Here's a rundown of what transpired at our last WHHNA board meeting. A listing of WHHNA Board meetings, times, and places, along with an invitation for residents to attend is always contained in this newsletter.

Maybe you'd like to attend but you think our board meetings are boring or useless. Far from it! Board meetings feature live-

ly discussions about timely issues that affect the day-to-day quality of life of everyone in Watts-Hillandale. (We also have great food!)

Here are some of the things we've grappled with the past few months:

### November:

The large turnout of trick-or-treaters on Halloween presents serious issues of safety for children and adults. A committee was set up to look at options for Halloween 2006.

Neighbors on Forest Drive sought the Board's help in addressing continuing zoning violations by the owner and tenants of a house on their block. Photographs were emailed to the proper city officials, along with a formal complaint by the board.

Neighbors near NCSSM expressed concerns about the proposed tennis courts on Maryland Avenue, and a committee was set up to work with them and NCSSM administration on this and other issues.

### December:

Organizing Night of Lights.

Newsletter: should we allow commercial inserts? Possible compilation of a neighborhood directory of trades and crafts people who have been recommended on the listserv.

Discussion of infrastructure issues: how can we get the city to appropriate money to repair/replace broken sidewalks, etc.

### January:

Organizing annual membership drive--hope to meet our goal of 700 WHHNA paid memberships.

Neighbors attended talked about issues with off-leash dogs, especially near Indian Trail Park.

Discussion of possible neighborhood Earth Day (4/23) projects.

Discussion of activities of WHH Centennial Committee, which is organizing celebration of our 100th anniversary

*(Continued on next page)*

# Neighborhood

NOTABLE HAPPENINGS  
IN OUR NECK OF  
THE WOODS

(Continued from Page 4)  
in 2008.

Follow-up on NCSSM issues.

I hope this gives you some idea of the range of our discussions and interests as an active and involved neighborhood association, and sparks your interest in coming to a board meeting this year.

We need the input of residents in dozens of ways throughout the year. Coming to a board meeting is the best way to make your voice heard! Call any board member if you need a ride, or consider carpooling with a few of your neighbors on the block. Hope to see you soon!

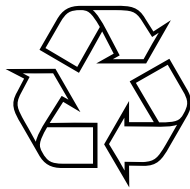
## Membership Roundup

Your neighborhood association is winding up its 2005 membership drive. Puhleeeez! -if you haven't renewed your membership since September last year, do it right now. If you're new to the 'hood and haven't joined yet, welcome and please, join us. The Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood Association has been around for more than 20 years. It is an entirely voluntary organization devoted to preserving that special Watts-Hillandale way of life that attracted us to the neighborhood in the first place. The dues are just \$5 per adult and membership is open to homeowners and renters alike. Membership runs from October to October each year.

Your membership in your neighborhood association doesn't buy any special privileges. It's just the best way to pitch in and say "I'll help. I'll do my part." Your membership is your endorsement of the idea that together, as neighbors, we can influence the quality of life we all share. When you join or renew your membership you encourage the work so many in the neighborhood volunteer to do, from the Fourth of July to the Night of Lights, from zoning problems to traffic-calming.

The Watts Hospital-Hillandale

Neighborhood Association isn't the oldest neighborhood organization in Durham, but for the last twenty years it has consistently been one of the strongest and most effective. That strength and effectiveness is due entirely to a very strong membership. So help out. If you haven't joined or renewed, fill out the little form included with this newsletter and send it in with your dues to The Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood Association, Marilyn Butler, Treasurer, 2110 Englewood Avenue, Durham, NC 27705 Thanks!



## Recycle Your Batteries, Electronic Stuff

BY ROB NICHOLS

The A-1 Stop Mail Shoppe on Ninth Street is providing a community service by collecting and recycling disposable electronics that are otherwise hard to send on to their next stage in life. Sam Sawaya, the owner, will take any type of battery (and there are many types, most of which contain some type of heavy metal), inkjet or laser printer cartridges, copier cartridges, and cell phones. And all this in addition to the fact that they'll be glad to reuse your extra packing peanuts. Support a good local business!

## Watts-Hillandale's Lazy Garden Club Prepares for Another Season

Want to volunteer in the neighborhood, but are afraid of missing a meeting and being voted chairman of something? Interested in gardening, actually doing it maybe or perhaps just smelling your neighbor's roses? Try the Watts-Hillandale Garden Club -the one neighborhood committee that promises you won't have stuff envelopes, stand in the cold, or attend city council meetings

until 1:00 a.m. Instead, the garden club goes on outings. We visit gardens and listen to advice from experts. If time permits, we follow the visits with a nice lunch and maybe a glass of wine. It's true, last year we got off to a slow start, but slow is sort of our theme -like grass growing or flowers opening. This year we hope to have a very ambitious program of just three outings.

Interested? Call Dean Michaels, 286-2601, or Tom Miller, 286-3730, and give us your name, address, and phone number. We'll put you on the list. Everyone who signed up last year is already on the list. This is fun only. Nothing strenuous, we promise.



# COMMUNITY NEWS

## Trinity Park Neighbors are Cookin' With Gas

Hooray for our neighbors in Trinity Park! They have just published a new cookbook called Good Taste, The Trinity Park Cookbook. It's got hundreds of recipes lent by neighbors from Lamond Ave. to Dollar, from Buchanan to Ruffin Street. Lee Ann Tilley contributed her famous Nannie Belle's Brunswick Stew and Nancy Tuttle sent in her Lamb Shanks with Garlic and Herbs. 'Kinda makes you hungry, don't it. Especially enticing is Tante Eka's Honigkuchen, or honey cookies, submitted by Mrs. Max Rogers. Max is dear to our hearts in Watts-Hillandale because back in 1984, when we were struggling to create the Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood Association, Max joined our steering committee meetings to explain how Trinity Park had done it.

Tips on cooking and saving the neighborhood are sprinkled throughout this wonderful little book. When it comes to neighborhood organizing, our friends in Trinity Park are usually out in front. The book is a great idea and a great fund-raiser for a great neighborhood. Good Taste is available for just \$14 a copy plus an extra \$4 for shipping and handling. To order, write to the Trinity Park Neighborhood Association, attn: Cookbook Orders, P. O. Box 725, Durham, N.C. 27702.

## NCSSM Launches Odyssey Campaign

The North Carolina School of Science and Mathematics Foundation's \$10,000,000 Odyssey Campaign was launched on December 3rd and has already generated demonstrable momentum toward its seven-year goal. To date, \$5,000,000 has been raised through the generosity of alumni, parents, corporations and friends of the School.

More than 100 people joined NCSSM faculty and staff at the home of Executive Vice President Mike Reidy for the event that marked the beginning of the School's largest capital effort to date. The campaign's goals focus primarily on Campus Enhancements, Technology, the Annual Fund and Outreach. Endowment and academic programs are also targeted to benefit from the campaign.

The Odyssey Campaign will be the catalyst in providing the School with the necessary resources to remain at the fore-

front of math and science education for high school students. Long a model for other schools, NCSSM plans to remain on the cutting edge, exploring new possibilities and breaking new ground.

According to Dr. Gerald Boarman, NCSSM's President, "Because of the continuing leadership and support of NCSSM's friends, the future of the School and the Campaign is highlighted with a kaleidoscope of opportunity. Our students will continue to be on a positive and challenging journey of growth and discovery, both in and out of the classroom."

## Board Members, 2004-2005

### DIRECTORS

#### President

**Guillo Rodriguez** guillo@nc.rr.com  
2111 Pershing St. 286-9637

#### Vice-President

**Gus Beck** gusbeck@mindspring.com  
2202 Sprunt Ave. 416-1199

#### Secretary

**Ellen Ciompi** deal5@earthlink.net  
2423 W. Club Blvd. 286-1871

#### Treasurer

**Marilyn Butler** mkbutler@mindspring.com  
2110 Englewood Ave. 286-3584

#### Immediate Past President

**Tom Miller** kimberly.miller1@worldnet.att.net  
1110 Virginia Ave. 286-3730

### AT LARGE MEMBERS

**Joshua Allen** allen.joshua@gmail.com  
2417 W. Club Blvd. 416-3288 (home) 225-8914 (cell)

**Steve Cohn** stevec@duke.edu  
1406 Pennsylvania Ave. 286-3672

**Rick Hanford** 286-1017 (home) 880-0097 (cell)  
2207 Englewood Ave.

**Debra Kelly** debrakelly@hotmail.com  
1105 Alabama Ave. 286-3621

**Steve Matherly** vfeignmatherly@nc.rr.com  
2022 W. Club Blvd. 286-5707

**Sherri Rosenthal** szrcoho@mindspring.com  
2205 Wilson 286-9929

**Jean Savage** savageje@mindspring.com  
2116 Englewood 286-9665

**Ken Steen** steen@ncssm.edu  
1103 Virginia 416-9536 (home) 416-2864 (work)

**Eric Wolfe** ericw@clinedesignassoc.com  
1103 Oakland Avenue 416-3288

**Mike Woodard** mwoodard@duke.edu  
2209 Woodrow Street 286-0188

## JOHN SPRUNT HILL—continued

In 1911, Hill and other representatives of Durham's great and good such as Julian Carr, Jesse Erwin, Benjamin Duke, E. K. Powe, and James Stagg organized the Durham Country Club, Durham's first. An architect was hired to design a clubhouse on land Hill owned at the end of North Road, as Club Boulevard was known at the time (between Georgia Avenue and Hillandale). Construction began right away and in 1912, the new building opened for use by the club's members. Hill, Watts, and their friends celebrated the new club with an inaugural round of 18 holes on April 8, 1912. Hill took the trophy with a score of 114 -remember, back then the clubs had wooden shafts and names like "niblick," "spoon," and "mashie." Second was the Reverend E. R. Leyburn of First Presbyterian Church. He shot 115. His Scottish heritage had to have given him an advantage. Hill's father-in-law, Mr. Watts, was third with 116.

In the beginning, the country club and the golf course were separate, but closely related entities. John Sprunt Hill was the central figure in both, however. The golf course was operated by the Hillandale Golf Club. The course was expanded to 18 holes and Hill hired a New York golf pro, Alex Pirie, to manage the course, give lessons, and operate a pro shop.

The clubhouse was shingle-clad in the fashionable bungalow style and had a wide front porch 90 feet long. A long, circular drive connected it with the street. According to the Durham Morning Herald, the building cost an amazing \$15,000. That doesn't sound like much today, but in 1912, a middle class family might expect to pay \$2,500- \$3,000 for a new house. Male members of the country club could play on the links for \$4 a month or \$6 a quarter. Lady members could play the course for free. The club hired Mr. L. A. Newnham to be its manager. Newnham and his wife lived in the clubhouse and operated the cafe, arranged social events, and scheduled private parties. Newnham also gave golf lessons for a small fee. The initiation fee for country club membership was \$25 for men and \$10 for ladies. Annual dues were \$24 for men and just \$6 for ladies. The 1915 club brochure declares, "...all inquiries relative to the Country Club, its privileges, dues, etc., will be cheerfully answered by the officers or Mr. Newnham, the manager, whose telephone number is No. 6." In time the country club and the golf course merged and came to be known together simply as "Hillandale."

Mr. Hill's interest in the neighborhood was by no means limited to golf. His real estate ventures included the development and sale of a large number of lots along Club Boulevard in the 'teens and twenties. In 1916, his Durham Realty & Insurance Company ran a large ad in the newspaper which read, "THERE IS EVERY REASON WHY YOU SHOULD OWN A HOME ON CLUB BOULEVARD,

THE BEAUTIFUL RESIDENCE SECTION BETWEEN WATTS HOSPITALAND THE COUNTRY CLUB." The ad extolled the new neighborhood's "pure, fresh air," "good car service," (referring to the street cars operated by the Durham traction company), "electric lights," "city water and sewerage," and "cement sidewalks." It ended with the plea, "GIVE THE CHILDREN A CHANCE." With the country club and golf course as attractive amenities, Durham's professional class snapped up the lots and built fashionable bungalows, foursquares, and period revival houses all along the street. It did not take long for "North Road" to become "Club Boulevard," although the name did not become official until 1925.

Until the mid-1920s, the Durham Country Club and Hillandale Golf Course were a Durham golfer's only outlet for the game. Then the developers of the swank Forest Hills subdivision built a nine hole course and clubhouse on University Drive, but the venture went bankrupt in 1929, just a few years later. Interestingly, John Sprunt Hill bought the property and donated it to the city of Durham for a park. The old clubhouse, designed by Geo. Watts Carr, Sr., was converted into a community center, a job it still performs. In 1927, the Mebane Company started the Hope Valley development and soon Durham had its second 18-hole, Donald Ross golf course. There was a healthy rivalry between the older Hillandale club and the HopeValley upstart. There were regular tournaments between the members of the two clubs and there was even an annual caddies' tournament. Tom Coble, a long-time Watts-Hillandaler and the first president of the neighborhood association, was one of those Hillandale caddies who defended his club's honor in the yearly contests.

The Great Depression hit Durham's golfing community hard. Not only did the Forest Hills Club fail, so did Hope Valley and Hillandale. A successor developer saved Hope Valley and John Sprunt Hill bought the Durham Country Club after it declared bankruptcy. He kept the facility and the golf course in good repair and hired a pro to keep golf alive in Durham. In the 1930s, he gave the clubhouse to the city to use as a recreational facility and deeded the golf course to a trust with strict instructions to operate it as public course for the benefit of the people of Durham. The old club building, stripped of its wide porch, was for a time the home of the Durham Children's Museum before it moved to Murray Avenue and became the North Carolina Museum of Life and Science. The old clubhouse was torn down in the late 1950s and the land where it stood was developed for new homes. The golf course has been changed many times, but under the guidance of Mr. Hill's trustees, it has served the community very well.

*(Continued on Page 8)*

The Watts Hospital-Hillandale neighborhood owes not only its name, but its principal institutions to John Sprunt Hill's and George Washington Watts's entrepreneurial spirit, philanthropy, and love of golf.

Much of the material in this article came from the new book about Mr. Watts and the Hill family entitled, Favored by Fortune by Howard Covington. The book was published by the UNC Press and is available at the Regulator Bookshop on Ninth Street.



John Sprunt Hill, left, with George Washington Watts, addresses the ball.

## Hillandale Golf Course Today— Our Oasis in a Desert of Highway

BY DEBRA KELLY

Roy Clark may have the best office in Durham: 110 acres of rolling hills, perfectly-manicured grass and one of the best locations from which to watch a sunset. Mr. Clark is Superintendent of the Hillandale Golf Course. He's been in the golf business since the late 1960s when he worked as a mechanic for Hope Valley Country Club. He left Hope Valley Country Club to work as a mechanic for Hillandale Golf Course in 1970 under the direction of the then-current General Manager, Luke Veasey. Thirty-five years later, he works for HGC's current Director, Zack Veasey (a distant relative of Luke Veasey's), overseeing a full-time staff of three, in addition to some part-time help. Mr. Clark is responsible for maintenance of the entire course, including golf carts, heavy equipment, wetlands, trees, and grass. The irony is that he doesn't play the game!

Regardless, it is obvious Mr. Clark admires the hearty enthusiasm and zest HGC golfers have for the game. He understands completely why someone who works in an office all day would plan, plot, schedule, and scheme to hit as many rounds as possible as often as possible. He enjoys the course 7-days a week, 364 days each year (HGC is closed on Christmas), and enjoy it he does, even when it means making sure the greens, tees, roughs, and fairways are mowed and manicured everyday during the warmer weather.

Mr. Clark is proud of the effort HGC makes to attract new players and offer new services. He is disappointed that golf faces challenges such as the high number of courses, lack of growth among beginners and financial constraints put on many during tight times. HGC distinguishes itself from most of the other courses in the area by maintaining its status as a public course. The trust that has owned and operated HGC since the 1930s operates HGC for the benefit of the people of Durham.

HGC holds two golf clinics each summer for 8- to 14-year olds as a way to encourage young people and families to get involved in the sport. This year, HGC will sponsor "Play Golf America" on May 14, an all-day event that will include clinics, skill challenges and equipment shows. The Annual Herald-Sun Tournament is usually the big event of the year, when HGC peaks out in all its glory. This year's Herald-Sun Tournament will be held June 20 – 26. Spectators are welcome!

Rates at HGC reflect the mandate of the trustees: to make the game of golf accessible to the common man, woman and child. HGC is a wonderful public asset – and it just happens to be in our backyard! Green fees range from \$13 to \$21 (family rates are available) and 45-minute lessons are between \$55 and \$75.

One of the biggest challenges facing HGC is the expansion of I-85 and what that may mean for Hillandale Road. Mr. Clark thinks it is inevitable Hillandale Road will be widened soon after I-85 is complete. One of three options is the most likely scenario: 5, 4 or 3 lanes. Five lanes would provide two lanes in each direction, plus a turning lane that could be used for ambulances going to Duke University Medical Center. Mr. Clark is hoping the 3-lane approach will be considered seriously, leaving the maximum number of beautiful trees along Hillandale Road intact. With this approach, two lanes could be open to southbound traffic in the morning and then used for northbound traffic in the evening.

Pedestrian crossing will be the evil twin of the Hillandale widening project. Again, HGC has considered at least three approaches to this problem: tunnel, bridge or lights. Unless Hillandale could be elevated, it is unlikely a tunnel will be built because of the flood plain. Likewise, a bridge is unlikely because of the expense and dimensions necessary to allow trucks to pass under. Right now, the most attractive idea is to move the HGC entrance to Indian Trail and put pedestrian-crossing lights at intervals along Hillandale.

The Watts Hospital-Hillandale Neighborhood Association has voiced strong opposition against the plans to widen Hillandale Road, especially out of a deep concern for the negative impact such a move would have on HGC.

"As long as people play golf and support Hillandale Golf Course, this oasis in a desert of highway could go on forever the way the trust is set up," says Mr. Clark. If you love having HGC as the great lawn of Watts Hospital-Hillandale, please think about showing your support for this beautiful oasis in any way you can. And don't forget Bogey's, the café located next to the Pro Shop! The burgers, hot dogs, lemonade, and ice cream are delish!