
NEWS

Reminiscing in print Cleveland Park memories Book unites generations

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For some people, just to think about the Cleveland Park of their childhoods evokes a sense of loss.

There are good reasons for that. The park's hilltop zoo. An Olympic-size swimming pool. The pavilion where people danced or roller-skated. A tiny train you could ride for a quarter. The fountain full of goldfish. And boat rides on the lake. More than a hundred Spartanburg people who can recall days they spent in the 43-acre commons on the city's north side have shared their recollections in the newly published book, "Memories of Cleveland Park." "As a child growing up in our family home on Cleveland Park Drive, overlooking the park, I recall the beautiful expanses of green grass covering the park grounds in the summer," wrote former resident Nancy L. Rooney, who now lives in Greenwood. "On those occasions when it snowed, the park became a winter wonderland beneath a blanket of white." Work on Memories of Cleveland Park began a year ago. In anecdotal style, the book's older writers share stories that date back to the start of the park in 1920, while 50 fifth- and sixth-graders from Cleveland Elementary School offer a view through the eyes of another generation. Christopher McCollum's story published in "Memories of Cleveland Park" won the school's top prize in a writing contest and guaranteed him a place in the 112-page book. Though decades separate Christopher's play time in the park from those of the book's elder writers, their memories were drawn from a common well. "The greatest benefit of Cleveland Park is that it is a place where families can come together, have picnics, birthday parties and family reunions," Christopher wrote. "In the park, trees cast their shade, while birds and animals go

about their business of living." The book's front cover features artist Alexander Turnage's painting of the Southern Railway miniature train as it crosses the trestle, just below the dam. Cleveland Park, for years only a flicker of its original shine, is in the midst of a \$4 million renovation that county park and recreation officials say will renew its radiance. The proceeds from the sales of Cleveland Park "Memories" will be used to help pay for the construction. Completion is scheduled for early next summer. Writers in this newly printed memory book contributed their time and talents without remuneration. A project of Spartanburg's Stop the Violence Collaboration, efforts to publish the Cleveland Park book fused residents of the park neighborhoods with north-side apartment dwellers in a spirit of cooperation. The community-led effort has been a source of pride for the north-side neighborhoods and for the writers who shared their memories about a place that has touched them deeply. "When the word got out, everyone wanted to write something," said Sheila Dogan, the book project coordinator. "We could have made the book 350 pages, if we could have afforded it. We had more (stories) than we could take." Dogan said the project also brought people together that otherwise might never have spoken. "The book broke down barriers," Dogan said. Twice next week - Tuesday and Thursday from 3:15 p.m. to 6 p.m. -- writers of the book will gather at Cleveland Elementary School on Franklin Street to sign copies of their work. And on Dec. 9, writers of Cleveland Park "Memories" will join a large number of the authors of the new Hub City Writers Project release, "The Place I Live: Hub City Kids Write About Home," for a book-signing and party at the Spartanburg Arts Center on South Spring Street. The public is invited to all three events. Mildred Lancaster, a writer whose story appears in the book, was born in a house overlooking Cleveland Park 75 years ago. It's the only place she's ever lived. "The park has been a focus of beauty and fun for us Lancaster children," she wrote in her story. "And later for my nieces and nephews when they came to visit."

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