

History of 405 West Greenway North

Home of Larry and Gerry Pike

We have lived at 405 West Greenway North for 40 years. It has been our home since July 1966. We are the third family to own the house. The house was built about 1928 by Judge Edwin Earle “Scrubby” Rives and his wife Mary Wheaton Tankersley Rives. They had three children—Frances, and Earle, Jr. and Rose. Judge Rives died in 1953. Mrs. Rives died in 1951. Rose died in January, 2003. Frances and Earle, Jr. still live in Greensboro. We haven’t met Frances—just communicated with her by mail and phone. We met Rose in the 1980’s and Earle in the 1990’s.

Judge Rives got his nickname “Scrubby” because he was not large or fast enough to play football at Carolina, but he played on the scrub team, hence, the name “Scrubby.” After he broke his collarbone, he went out for cheerleading, and “Scrubby” really stuck with him when he became head cheerleader.

When built, it was the only house in the block. The house originally had living room, dining room, den, kitchen with breakfast area and one-half bath downstairs. There were four bedrooms and full bath upstairs. It had an open porch off the living room. The Riveses made it a screened porch sometime in the 1940s. The house was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Gilbert Hutchison in 1953. They enclosed the screened porch around 1955, making a sunroom downstairs and added a bath and bedroom/study upstairs over the sunroom. Also, they added on to kitchen and den downstairs. Mr. Hutchison died in 1965. The house was rented to the Spain family prior to our purchasing it.

Our neighbor, Mrs. Addison Smith, at 401 West Greenway, who died in 1981 at the age of 86, told us the Hutchisons’ elderly aunt lived in the bedroom added on. She loved birds and had a number of bird feeders outside the windows. The bird feeder hooks were still outside the windows when we moved in.

The two-car garage has butler’s/servant’s quarters (one room-no bath). The Riveses had two butlers. According to Earle and Frances, the first was Ed Marsh, “a wonderful black gentleman,” followed by George Washington Hart, known as “Little George,” because he was barely five feet tall. They lived in the servant’s quarters in summer and in the basement in cold weather. However, the servant’s quarters has a chimney and must have been heated by a pot-bellied stove that we still have stored in our basement. They bathed in the basement using a big galvanized tub. Frances said, “We used the expression ‘lived on the lot’—not an uncommon thing to do at the time.”

Ed took care of Judge Rives’ bird dogs on the lot behind garage. He worked at the railroad but was available to serve dinner at night. He also stoked the furnace, and there’s a room in the basement (coal bin) where the coal was stored. Later, according to Earle, when he was old enough, he and his dad shared coal-stoking duties when George was not available.

The house was originally steam heated with coal. When we moved in it was steam heated with fuel oil. We had a natural gas furnace and air-conditioning installed in 1984.

Judge Rives and his wife had three maids: Mamie Sampson 1930s, Pearlee 1930s-40s, and Annie. They lived off the premises. The maid the children most remember with love and affection was Mamie Sampson. According to Frances, she ruled the house and they were grateful.

One interesting feature about the house is a buzzer that was installed in the center of dining room floor under the table which Mrs. Rives used to signal the kitchen during meals. The house has other original features that make it a special home to us.

In addition to Judge and Mrs. Rives and their three children, there was their great grandmother, an aunt and an uncle who lived with them. The house had four bedrooms, but the great grandmother's bedroom was in the den. The telephone was in her room and her chair was where she could listen to all calls. The bookcases were also in her room and, if they wanted to look up something, they had to talk to her *forever* it seemed, according to Frances. She died in 1941 at the age of 100.

Another interesting fact—Earle says he accidentally shot out a prism in a chandelier in the living room with his BB pistol at Christmas around 1940.

Since the park in front of the house had swings, a sand box, and a wading pool, it was a great drawing card and made the house the neighborhood hang-out for Rose's, Frances's and Earle's friends. When we moved to the neighborhood 40 years ago, the sandbox and wading pool were still in place. There were no swings. The wading pool was removed in the late 60s. The sandbox still remains. Swings were added near Friendly Avenue about five years ago. They are where the kids used to play softball. The basketball court was there when we moved here.

We have enjoyed living in the house and the neighborhood. In the 40 years we have been here, many people have moved in and out of the neighborhood, particularly on East and West Greenway, from Friendly to Market. That is the part of Sunset Hills with which we are most familiar. Every house on both Greenways, except maybe one or two, has sold once, twice, and some have sold three times. There have been changes made to some of the homes since they were built years ago. Two new houses have been built—one on East Greenway and one on West Greenway.

Our neighbors at 407 West Greenway were Al and Min Klein. Al died in 1972 at the age of 72 and Min continued to be our neighbor until she died in 2000 at the age of 94.

When we moved to West Greenway with our three children in 1966, there were LOTS of children on the Greenways and surrounding streets. Some of the families were the Bowdens with 5 children, Nussbaums-9, Frazers-5, Wrights-5, Hodgeses-9, Comers-5. Several years later came the Antons-4, Cashions-4, Collinses-4, and other families with 2 or 3 children. But all grew up and moved away. It is nice to see families with children moving back into the neighborhood.

We obtained much of this information about the early years of our home from Rose, Frances and Earle. They loved living here and, at the time, there were lots of children their age in the neighborhood. Some of those friends still live in Greensboro and, according to Earle and Frances, they could share their growing-up knowledge about Sunset Hills as they experienced it. There are many stories to tell about the neighborhood.

We feel very fortunate to have met Rose and Earle. We first met Rose, probably in the early 1980s. She saw our yard sale ad in the newspaper. What a great surprise for us when she told us who she was. We talked for over an hour.

We had another yard sale in the 1990s, and she came and called Earle, because Larry had a lot of computer software for sale. Again, we talked for a very long time. It was nice to meet Earle and his wife, Jeanne, who also grew up in Sunset Hills. Her parents were Laurence and Edith Skees and they lived at 2202 Pinecrest Road, just around the corner from the Riveses.

After talking with Earle and Rose years ago and Frances and Earle recently, and hearing their stories, it has made us appreciate the history of our house. From all accounts, Judge Rives knew a lot of people, and his memory lives on even today. Here are some examples:

In 1974 our son was shopping for an engagement ring for his fiancée. He bought her ring at Schiffman's Jewelers. Mr. Arnold Schiffman, Sr. was helping him and, when he asked for our son's address, Mr. Schiffman said, "That's 'Scrubby' Rives' house. I was there many times."

Our son did his graduate work at Purdue University in West Lafayette, Indiana. Our daughter-in-law worked at the Purdue Memorial Union. In late 1975, Purdue was holding a Water Resources Conference and, as she was checking in Hobart Souther from Greensboro, she remarked her husband was from Greensboro. He asked, "Where did he live?" She told him 405 West Greenway North. He said, "That's 'Scrubby' Rives' house. I've been there on numerous occasions."

In 1985 our daughter needed day care for our grandson. Someone gave us Gail Steele's name. She had a vacancy and, shortly after Michael was enrolled, Gail found out we lived at 405 West Greenway North. She said, "That's my grandfather's house. My grandfather was Judge Rives."

The Hamburger Square Post, probably in the 1990s, had a "The Person Most Likely" segment in one of their issues. In their description of the person, they mentioned the nickname of this person was "Scrubby." Of course, Gerry guessed the person and told them we lived in his home. She won a historic map of Greensboro as her prize.

Needless to say, we would love to have known Judge Edwin Earle "Scrubby" Rives.

Larry and Gerry Pike
November 16, 2006