

A Look Back:

50 years and counting for Broadmoor subdivision

By Dorothy Trick

In the post-World War II era, Baton Rouge experienced vast industrial growth at the many plants located north of the city. Families were growing, industry was thriving in the post-war petrochemical era and suburban growth east of Airline Highway was just around the corner.

In the late 1940s, Broadmoor became the first subdivision in southeast Baton Rouge. The decade of the 1950s witnessed a major population explosion in Baton Rouge. In 1957, the Chamber of Commerce reported that 200 new families per month were moving into the Baton Rouge area. The city was outgrowing itself.

The W.J. Sharp family originally settled much of the land that is now Broadmoor subdivision in 1863. Broadmoor resident J.D. Sharp, grandson of the original homesteaders, said he is the oldest surviving member of the Sharp family. The area, bounded by Airline Highway, north of Florida, Flannery Road and Old Hammond Highway, was used mainly for cattle farming after the Civil War, Sharp recalled. The sons and grandsons of the Sharp family sold much of the family's original land holdings in the late 1940s and 1950s to developers who subdivided the land into residential lots.



J.D. Sharp

Sharp, who recently celebrated his 90th birthday, talked about the land where he lived through the depression and two world wars. "During the depression, we raised everything we needed and traded with nearby farmers for things we didn't have," Sharp said recently from the kitchen of his Lonita Drive home. "Chickens, eggs, vegetables; we lived off the land. In fact, the land was the only thing we had of any value after the depression."

He credited the early Broadmoor developers, Jules Landry, W.R. McGaw, Allison Bogan, Alton B. Lea and himself, as the "pioneers" of the Broadmoor



Marye and Landry Kirk

area. Sharp is also the oldest living member of the former Baton Rouge Police Jury, the governing body that preceded the present city-parish form of government. "We cleared the way for the plans to develop the area," Sharp said.

Sharp recalled that much foresight and planning took place prior to the development of the area, when the developers set aside land for parks, schools and public roads. One of the biggest assets of the subdivision were the building restrictions that limited the sites to residential development only, Sharp noted, and that pattern has been maintained up to this time.

Among the many interesting facts Sharp shared about the history of the area were the street names, many of which get their names from the developers, their wives and children. Cora Drive, for example, was named for Jules Landry's wife, Cora, while Frances Harriet was named for his daughter. Mollylea was named for the wife of Alton Lea, a former postmaster, and Lonita was named for the wife of George R. Sharp. Allison, Barbara, Elizabeth and Marilyn get their origins in the families of Broadmoor's developers. And, Sharp added, "Elite Drive is named for my wife!"

Al Atkinson built the third house in Broadmoor on Broadmoor Avenue, just off Airline Highway, in the late 1940s. The roomy, custom-built, 1,200 square-foot home cost \$10,275. Atkinson said he soon bought 12 lots in Broadmoor as investments because he could see that the potential for development was eminent. He later built three more houses in Broadmoor.

"Broadmoor was developed during a period of heavy industrial growth at the area plants," Atkinson said. "Many families came from up north to work here. It was a dynamic neighborhood. Many successful people -- from doctors and lawyers to CPAs -- were raised in the Broadmoor area. There were fine schools in the area, and crime didn't exist. We never locked our doors and never locked the car."

Marye and Landry Kirk bought their lot in 1954 on North Parkview for \$1,800. They custom built their home on the 100 x 200-foot lot they have known for the past 46 years. When they reminisce about their years in the subdivision, they remember supper club and the La Mousse Garden Club. They said living in Broadmoor was especially convenient, with two major grocery stores, a drug store and a five and ten store, all nearby. When the grocery stores closed down, the Kirks said it truly became a source of frustration for many older residents of the subdivision because convenience had always been just a few blocks away.

"And, Mr. Jimmy at the Rexall Drugstore, he made the best burgers in town. It was just a phone call away. You could call up and order, and they would deliver," Mary Kirk recalled.

The drugstore is also a fond memory for Lynne Haase Marye, a Lake Sherwood resident who grew up in the Broadmoor area from the age of 5. "We used to walk down to the Broadmoor Shopping Center," Marye recalled. "There was the Rexall Drugs, A&P, National, T.G.&Y., Tic-Toc Shoes and McKay's Gifts. We'd go get

burgers, fries and a Coke at the counter at the drugstore. It was the hub of activity for the Broadmoor area."

Marye, a mother of three, said she can't replicate today the experiences she had while growing up in Broadmoor. "All your friends went to the same school. We walked or rode bikes home from school," she recalled.

For the past 44 years, Bobbie Reynolds has lived on the West Damuth cul-de-sac. She raised three sons in Broadmoor, all of whom now live on cul-de-sacs. "It was an excellent place to raise a family," Reynolds said. When she and her family first built their home in 1956, the area was still basically "out in the country," she said. "We could hear the night birds singing every night. It was so dark because there were no streetlights."

"Broadmoor has held up very, very well. The Broadmoor Residents Association deserves a lot of the credit." She also said she sorely misses the nearby grocery stores located in the Broadmoor Shopping Center and is among a group of residents attempting to revitalize the center.

While Broadmoor made its debut outside the city limits in 1950, it wasn't until June 1959 when the area was officially annexed into the city. Residents found they needed police, fire and other essential city services. When the subdivision became a part of the city, it included 18 miles of streets, 958 residences, 1,336 building lots and 3,427 residents.

Frank McLavy, the first principal of Broadmoor Junior-Senior High School, fondly remembered his 14 years at the helm of the new school on Goodwood Boulevard. "I was known as the friendly dictator," McLavy recalled. "We had a great school -- great kids, great parents, great teachers." The school opened its doors on Sept. 6, 1960, with approximately 700 students.

Without a doubt, Broadmoor is a mature subdivision, both in the residences themselves and its aging population. While most of the nearly 2,000 homeowners would probably agree that the subdivision has aged gracefully, they also believe a youthful spirit is emerging. The Kirks point out that younger families are now recycling the Broadmoor homes. Examples of this renewed enthusiasm for the subdivision abound throughout

Broadmoor...

Continued from page 4

ators
5-1270
om

Benefits Include:

- **Safety** - Stay securely in your car while your gate opens
- **Convenience** - Don't get caught in the rain again
- **Affordable** and easy for the homeowner to install



ates, We Make Gates Open"



Mark and Meg Fuselier

the area.

Just before they married nearly three years ago, Meg and Mark Fuselier bought their first home in Broadmoor Place. "We like being in St. Thomas More Parish," Meg Fuselier said. "When we looked in this area, many people had started updating their homes, and younger people were moving in."

Although they looked at new construction, she said they believed the homes in Broadmoor were built better than newly constructed ones.

"We liked the big yard, wide streets and sidewalks - a place for our kids to ride bikes and play. This neighborhood has a real family feel to it. We liked that," she added.

District 6 Metro Councilman Mike Tassin believes Broadmoor has maintained its stability and civic pride during the past 50 years for a number of reasons. "It has a very strong civic association to keep it residential and keep people from operating businesses in their homes," Tassin said. "They report

sewer and drainage problems very quickly. It's a good partnership with the city. It's brought the city and the subdivision a lot closer together." The residents also partner with the city to maintain the medians and, most recently, erected attractive signs at the entrances to the subdivision. Tassin said he also thinks the kind of people who live in Broadmoor care for their homes, yards, trees and shrubs.

Tassin, who was recently re-elected to a second term on the Metro Council, said that the subdivision faces a major issue with the Airline Highway widening plans. The six new lanes planned by the state would encroach directly into Broadmoor, bringing the traffic noise much closer to the residents. The alternative, which Tassin and residents support, is to build overpasses over the Goodwood-Airline and Old-Hammond-Airline intersections.

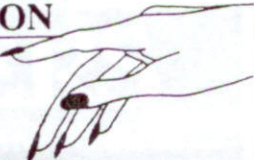
"We plan to vigorously oppose the state's plan and to promote our ideas," Tassin said.

e NAILS

VICE NAIL SALON

perienced Nail Technicians
& Individual Equipment

ertificate Available



ay Special

\$5 OFF

g on service selected

19 Coursey Blvd
368-8765

4710 O'Neal Lane
751-0072

MAKERS

nal Theatre for Young Audiences

CHRISTMAS CAROL

irea Mourot Tilley

the Louisiana Old State Capitol



Chronology of Broadmoor Subdivision

1948 First homes were constructed east of Airline Highway

1955 Broadmoor Methodist Church had its beginnings as a tent