



Hidden Gems: Gordon Moore Park

by Jackie Duty

July 19 2021 2:33 PM

On a beautiful Sunday morning, I sat on a bench watching the fish swim in a calm pond. Moments like these can catch you by surprise. They have the ability to take your breath away. In a time of quiet reflection, I paused to look around and enjoy the beauty of this area. Growing up in Alton, I would frequent Gordon F. Moore Park for a variety of events. Whether it was soccer games, softball tournaments, cross country meets, picnics, or walking my dog, there was never a lack of something to do. As I explored the area from my youth, I could picture my five-year-old self boldly climbing to the top of the tank feeling like I conquered a mountain. Today, I admire the time and investments that have been poured into this park to replace and build the new playgrounds. Exploring each area, I spoke with some of the people experiencing the many sections the park offers. Groundskeepers worked diligently to ensure every part remains beautiful for the public's enjoyment.



Hank Dunham took a few minutes to speak of how many different opportunities people have to take advantage of the features. With pride, he explained how families can rent the Pavilion for picnics, exercise through the nature trail, smell the heavenly flowers in the Nan Elliott Memorial Rose Garden or participate in a variety of sports. With so many top athletes that play games and tournaments, it can get very exciting. The River Dragons with Prospect League Baseball play on the Lloyd Hopkins Field. Last week, the turf field featured a semi-pro football game with the Central Illinois Cougars. Saturday nights, you might even catch a good firework show. “It’s a never-ending job, but it is such a beautiful park where I love the view with the freshly cut grass,” Hank explained.

As I strolled through the exercise trails, I encountered three lovely ladies fishing at the edge of the lake. Ginger Heindricks spoke of her favorite pastime as she fished. The best

catch of the day for her was early in the morning, but the evening creates a chance to watch a gorgeous sunset. On my way to explore the rest of the park, I paused to make two new friends. I'm not sure when the ducks arrived, but they leisurely strolled by the pond and watched the fish with me for a few moments. I don't think anyone has named them, but I would be curious if any readers have that information and would be willing to share it.



Driving past the extensive athletic fields and award-winning golf course, I found the back of the park with many players wrapping up an exciting pickleball match. With over 4 million active players, pickleball is the fastest growing sport in the United States. I remember taking tennis lessons as a child. It was a struggle to hit the ball over the net consistently. I was not aware of the rules for pickleball but couldn't help the fascination that came from watching very talented players in their element. While Jorge Salgeiro's favorite part of playing is the sound of the ball, Brian Lewis was more focused on the "non-volley zone". Brian shared a few of the rules with me as he explained, "This

format creates a level playing field, allowing every person the ability to play and excel.” After watching them for a time, I must admit, I’m intrigued. You might catch me back there in the next week to test this fun sport out.

Before I left for the day, I had to walk through the Nan Elliott Memorial Garden. It was hard to leave. As a recreational gardener, I recognize the hard work that has gone into taking care of these beautiful roses. Roses of every color bloom as you take in the fragrance that can only be experienced in person. As I slowly walked back to my car, the bells started to sing a familiar song. I could only smile in remembrance of a happy childhood in the park and admire the promise of a new bloom.

Each week I will share my explorations of hidden gems across the Riverbend area. If you want your favorite hidden gem or business to be featured, please email Jackie at: jackieshiddengems@gmail.com



