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Morgan Place in Englewood is 'a very different little neighborhood'

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CHRIS STEWART/STAFF PHOTOGRAPHER

Cecil and Lora "Ida" Morgan moved in 1961 to Morgan Place, the area that was once the work camp for builders of the Englewood Dam. Many of the area's homes first began as cabins for the workers, including the Morgans' home seen at right along Englewood Drive.

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By Doug Page, Staff Writer

Updated 9:58 PM Sunday, December 6, 2009

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ENGLEWOOD — Morgan Place lies hidden at the base of the Englewood Dam. The neighborhood, screened off from the rest of the world by trees and commercial building and dead-end roads, has its roots deep in the 110-foot high, 1-mile long earthen dam.

In the 1910s and 1920s, its original residents moved by horse and steam power enough dirt — 3.5 million cubic yards — to fill Egypt's Great Pyramid of Giza. They formed, poured and cured 27,391 cubic yards of concrete in and around 147 tons of steel. It was hard work by hard men, many from the hills and hollers of Kentucky and Tennessee.

Morgan Place is the lone remaining work camp for the men who built the Miami Valley Conservancy flood-control dams. Some of the temporary housing for workers and their families still survive after eight decades. The general store, the dining hall, the medical clinic, the community building, the 25-bed bunk houses for the single men are gone, rotted away or burned down.

When Cecil Morgan and his wife, Lora, arrived in the early 1960s, many of the workers or their families still lived in the houses. Like many of the longtime residents, the Morgans hailed from Kentucky.

Over the years, the Morgans gutted and renovated the house they "bought for a song," adding on as their family grew. They continued the tradition of the families before them. In some cases, the earliest residents jacked up the temporary houses to dig out a basement, poured a real foundation and jacked the house down on it. Others used dam construction storage bunkers, with its 18-inch concrete walls as foundations, and built their houses on them.

"It's a very different little neighborhood," said Judy Sullivan of Washington, D.C., by phone. "The saying was, 'Scratch anybody and you'll find a briar.'"

Last summer, Sullivan and her sister, former Montgomery County commissioner and recorder Vicki Pegg, came back to Morgan Place. It was Sullivan's first trip back to their neighborhood in more than half-a-century.

"Everything was the same, the houses were the same," Sullivan

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said, 'It took me right back to 1942. ... The names had changed, but the people were the same.'

Contact this reporter at (937) 225-2290 or dpage@DaytonDailyNews.com.

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i Live in morgan place, grew up there just as my mother, and her mother before her. And let me just say my eyelashes were only "burnt" when i played with a candle too closely, nothing to do with the "stench" from the center.

sarah 2:41 PM, 12/7/2009

REPORT ABUSE

I grew up on Englewood Drive and it was so nice to see a bit of spotlight on this neighborhood on the front page of the paper. Morgan Place meant that my single mother was able to buy her first home and enroll her kids in a great school system.

In my day, Morgan Place had sweet, elderly neighbors always keeping an eye out for the neighborhood kids, & a great creek to explore year-round. I remember biking many times to the Englewood Reserve, and walking to Empire for a snack. Good memories!

Eleanor 2:24 PM, 12/7/2009

REPORT ABUSE

I do believe that those that live in Brookville might also remember our little "burg" of poor folks....they lived in "Hollywood" which is now no more than empty overgrown foliage, underbrush near the bike trail...I can remember census takers being afraid to go back there and take the census. May even be things buried in the ground you want to know about or don't want to know about. Guess all towns at one time or another had these places.

Sunny 11:48 AM, 12/7/2009

REPORT ABUSE

I believe the Morgan House malts were called Monster Malts, and the huge hamburgers were Moron Burgers. You had to be a moron to try to eat all of one. Some of my best 1960's high school friends lived in Morgan Place. Good memories.

William 11:32 AM, 12/7/2009

REPORT ABUSE

This is a very rundown, unattractive neighborhood. The nature surroundings are wonderful, however the housing is very below par and neglected and the stinch from the Englewood Water Treatment Center can burn your eyelashes on a hot summer day. My suggestion is to find another neighborhood to spotlight.

Question? 11:05 AM, 12/7/2009

REPORT ABUSE

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