

## Connie Gorsuch Latest

When asked to reflect on her golfing heyday from four decades past, Connie Gorsuch's recollections tee off with a wry grin.

"I can't remember everything," the 63-year-old Roanoker says.

That's OK, Connie. There are others who haven't forgotten.

In testimony to her run as Roanoke's first dominant women's golfer, Roanoke Valley Golf Hall of Fame officials recently elected Gorsuch as the 28th member into the organization's Hall of Fame. Gorsuch becomes the third consecutive and fifth woman overall to be enshrined in the hall.

"I hadn't heard a thing about this," said the humble Gorsuch, who will be officially inducted in the Hall of Fame at the organization's November banquet.

"I'm very surprised. It's quite an honor to me."

Those who saw Gorsuch play in her prime contend she had no match in the local circles. The results supply strong evidence, too. In her first Roanoke City-County championships from 1959-61, Gorsuch won by 32 shots twice and by 14 the other year.

On the state level, Gorsuch was the qualifying medalist in 1959 and '60 at the Women's Amateur, shooting 76 and 77 at The Homestead. She was the runner-up in the '61 State Women's Am. Gorsuch also was the South Central Virginia women's champion in 1959 and '60, and captured the Mid-Atlantic title in 1963.

Before moving from her native Greensboro, N.C., to Roanoke with her family in 1958, Gorsuch won three straight Greensboro city championships from 1955-57, plus captured the Carolinas (North and



South Carolina) title in '57.

"Golf was so much fun to me," Gorsuch recalled. "I just went out and played."

Talk about a quick learner. Only two years after her parents, the late Tom and Mary Gorsuch, gave her her first set of clubs, Connie won the '55 Greensboro city championship at 15.

"My parents had to give me a set of clubs because I kept snitching some of out of my father's bag," Connie said. "He'd be out on the golf course and he'd be looking for something and he'd say, 'Oh, Connie's got it,' and he would be upset. So they gave me a starter set, and by the time I was 14, I was playing in my first national junior golf tournament.

"I never had a golf lesson. No, that's not true. Dick Mayer, the former PGA touring pro, showed me how to grip the club one time at the Greensboro Open. He showed how to hold the club and there went my hook ... I became a slicer ever since."

## Hall Of Fame Inductee

When Connie captured the Greensboro city title in 1955, her winning prize was a new car. Not from the tournament, but from her mother.

"My mother had told me that if I won a tournament that they would get me a car," Connie recalled. "So I took her seriously. But I was only 15 and I had to wait a year to get my driver's license.

"It was a brand new 1956 Ford convertible, black and white. It was a pretty good prize for winning your first tournament, you bet."

In 1958, Tom Gorsuch landed the club manager's job at Roanoke Country Club. He moved his family 100 miles north to the Southwest Virginia mountains, where Connie has made her home since. She is the senior social worker for the City of Roanoke, with more than 40 years on the job.

"I love Roanoke," said Gorsuch, a graduate of Greensboro's Guilford College.

Befitting her humbleness, Gorsuch said she had an edge on many of the women's players of her time. She won all of her golf titles from the ages of 15 to 24.

"There was a gap, but I had the advantage of being in school [at Guilford] and being able to play more often than the others," she noted. "Another thing was when I grew up in Greensboro I played with the boys. I played a lot of men's tees and that was a big advantage for me. Some friends of mine in high school, we'd go out early in the morning, carry our own bags, go play 18 holes in three hours and go on with our lives."

A family tragedy basically ended Gorsuch's tournament golf. Her younger brother, Johnny, was killed in a car accident at age 17 in 1965. The demise of her

younger brother, himself a budding star player, took the fun out of the game for Connie.

"Now he was the golfer ...," Gorsuch said of Tommy. "The weekend before he died he shot a 65. He was an Arnold Palmer freak.

"After Johnny died, I really wasn't interested anymore. I think I was just ready. I think it just took the whole edge out me. It was probably six or seven years before I even went back to the golf course."

Gorsuch eventually resumed to college to get her masters degree in social work and bought herself a home.

"I played a little more golf with some friends and stuff, but it's been 20 years now since I've played," said Gorsuch, noting her bad left foot.

That's OK. She got more out of the game from ages 13-24 than most do in a lifetime.

"Golf is wonderful," she said. "You can play a round of golf with someone and you can find out what kind of person they are.

"Golf was part of my life and I've gone on to other things."

Gorsuch said her parents would have been extremely moved by her Hall of Fame induction.

"My parents would have been very touched by all this," she said. "They were both very supportive of me and my golf.

"They basically supported me in everything I did."