



Prince Taylor, Sr.

Prince Taylor Sr. witnessed much of Chapel Hill and Carrboro's evolution from behind a microphone. A gifted vocalist, he's provided entertainment, celebration and solace to audiences all over town and the nation.

- Prince moved to Chapel Hill with his mother in 1936. He started singing in a little choir when he was about 5 and began performing in plays and operettas in school. One of his earliest memories of life in Chapel Hill is picking up soft drink bottles at UNC football games during the Charlie “Choo Choo” Justice years of the late 1940s.
- In 1959, Prince joined the infamous Doug Clark and the Hot Nuts, originally called The Tops. He performed with the popular R&B/rock group off and on for 28 years, playing at local fraternity parties and touring the nation. The band was often welcomed by fraternities at universities and colleges that wouldn’t enroll Black students, with fraternity members feeding the players and finding families for them to stay with. The Hot Nuts once shared the bill with Ike and Tina Turner in Durham, and are said to be the inspiration for Otis Day and The Knights, the party band featured in *Animal House*.
- Prince remembers a segregated Chapel Hill where he could order a sandwich at Sutton’s lunch counter, but not eat it there; where even the vaunted Duke Ellington wasn’t permitted to stay at the Carolina Inn. (The band leader and Lincolnton native stayed in the Mason Motel on Rosemary Street.)

Prince grew up on Sunset Drive, playing football and basketball with kids from the neighborhood and nearby Northside. The community was close-knit and children and parents knew each other, but Chapel Hill was still segregated. He’s happy that the town is more integrated now, and that people are more likely to get to know each other than they would have in his time. The Mason Street area where he now lives has many student residents, and Prince makes it a point to speak to them in an effort to be considerate and draw the community together.

He also brings people together with his music. While he occasionally performs R&B, jazz and soul gigs, Prince is best known around town as an inspirational vocalist. His beautiful baritone brings joy to family celebrations like weddings and reunions, and solace and comfort to funerals and wakes.

“My mother told me, ‘whatever you do, do all to the glory of God,’” Prince recalls. “I try to act that way and hopefully people will see that in me. People are always saying that they want me to sing at their wedding or funeral. If I do happen to be around, I will.”