

The Edwards Branch Tunnel Legend



Eastern (inflow) portal of Edwards Branch tunnel , near Woodland Drive in east Charlotte

a psecret psociety pshort pstory by Mike Bozart (agent 33)

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The Edwards Branch, a tributary of Briar Creek in east Charlotte (North Carolina, USA), flows through a tunnel, comprised of twin rectangular concrete culverts between the Sheffield and Amity Gardens neighborhoods. These twin culverts run underneath the Independence Expressway (US 74). This watery passageway is about a quarter of a mile (1,320 feet) in length. Typically, the water level is less than five inches deep.

You cannot see through the tunnel from one portal to the other. In fact, when one peers into this creek passage, there is no light at the other end, only an eerie darkness. Needless to say, no one should enter without a pair of waterproof flashlights and waterproof boots. Well, actually, no one should enter, period, as it is against the law. And we never want to encourage unlawful activity in the psecret psociety.

Ok, now that we have gotten the basic description and legal disclaimer out of the way, let's get this tale splish-splashing along.

Legend has it that back in 1976 on a Sunday afternoon in June, a man stole a box full of gold jewelry from under the display case in the K-Mart on what was then called East Independence Boulevard. (As of March 13, 2010, the building that K-Mart occupied was still in existence, but boarded up, awaiting probable demolition.)

The robber ran out of the store, heading west towards the adjacent (long ago defunct) Capri Theatre. However, before he got to the movie house, he disappeared from the view of the K-Mart security guard.

Now, where did he go? Did he have a getaway car waiting for him back there? Well, just hold onto your necklace for a minute.

First, a little geography. At the western edge of the parking lot is an average-size creek – the Edwards Branch. It curves back towards Independence (going downstream) and passes back under the highway at the Eastway Drive interchange, going through another culverted tunnel that is about 800 feet long.

Apparently our jewelry thief ran down and into the creek. Since the creek bed was about ten feet lower than the parking lot, the thief was out of the security officer's line of sight. He was able to advance undetected.

The young loss control officer (his official title) focused on the movie theater at first, thinking that maybe he had slipped into the theater via a rear exit door that had been possibly propped open. But, he quickly discovered that all of the exit doors were firmly locked to preclude outside entry.

The security guard then walked down to the creek on the western side of the Capri movie theater. He thought that the thief must have continued downstream. He called the Charlotte police and they had officers stationed at both ends of the tunnel under the Eastway Drive interchange. After waiting a few minutes, they decided to go in with bright lights, bullhorns and dogs to flush the thief out.

The police walked back and forth through the tunnel, but never found the jewelry heister. They never made an arrest. Soon they looked elsewhere.

Unbeknownst, the thief had fled upstream – not downstream – in the little rocky creek. When he saw the outflow portal of the Edwards Branch beside the movie house with no one on his tail, he must have sighed with relief. For this is where he entered the

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