

Crystal Bowl Lake



Roy and Colleen Pope on day of interview (USF)

The following narrative was derived from an interview with long time Crystal Bowl Lake residents, Roy and Connie Pope, on January 18, 2002. The Popes have lived on Crystal Bowl Lake for nearly fifty years. They share a great amount of passion for the lake and its surrounding area. This is their story.

Personal History

Connie and Roy met in the mid 1940s in Pahokee, Florida when she moved there from Winston-Salem, North Carolina. Roy was just getting out of the Navy at that point and Connie had just graduated high school. For their honeymoon, they traveled north to the vicinity of Casselberry. They thought the area was so beautiful that they later returned in 1950 to buy the property they still live on today. Roy shares:



Pope's beachfront property on Crystal Bowl Lake (Pope)

"We were looking around for a piece of property to buy. We went to the Casselberry Land Company and Mr. Casselberry himself brought us over on dirt roads out here. He was trying to get somebody to start building the first home and said, 'Mr. Pope if you build a foundation on this property by August 1st, I'll sell it to you for \$1500 in place of \$2000'. So, we told our contractor we wanted a foundation on the ground by the first of August. We called Mr. Casselberry and told him we were ready for him to come out, which he did and gave us a \$500 discount. We liked it, and shucks, we still like it."



Crystal Bowl Lake at time of interview (USF)

Since then, the Popes have enjoyed many happy years in the house they built. They raised three daughters in the house and have been host to their eleven grandchildren on a regular basis. The landscape of the property is beautifully kept. Over the years, the Popes have created and maintained a split-level backyard with a picnic/park area and 90 feet of a white sandy beach. Connie says: "It's our recreational area for swimming, playing games, picnics, and just having a good time out in the woods undisturbed." Both are currently retired and enjoying the life they have created for themselves. Connie retired from the YMCA five years ago, but spent most of her career doing public relations and business management in the arts and music entertainment industry. Roy retired from the University of Central Florida roughly three years ago where he did maintenance. About the welcoming nest they have built and maintained on Crystal Bowl Lake, Connie says:

"I can walk out here and sit down. If you feel stressed a bit, take a book or a cup of tea and just sit there and just do nothing but listen and it's just wonderful, so peaceful. We're going to age in place as long as we can."

Today, Roy, Connie, and their extended family continue to spend enjoyable times on the white sand beach in their backyard on Crystal Bowl Lake. Their daughter Janis Spalding lives in nearby Lake County with her eight children and their daughter Marsha Greathouse lives in Chuluota, FL with her family. Roy and Connie are very proud of their children and grandchildren and mentioned during the interview, that the family they have is "priceless".



Pope's beachfront on Crystal Bowl Lake (Pope)



Duck swimming in Crystal Bowl Lake (USF)

History/Information

Crystal Bowl Lake is a 9-acre lake located in the Gee Creek Watershed of Seminole County in the city of Casselberry. Its shores are natural white sand beaches such as the one owned by the Popes. Roy says at one time the lake was spring fed and the water was crystal clear, which according to Roy is how it got its name. It quite literally looked like a crystal bowl. About the pristine body of water, Connie says:

"But it's a safe clean lake and its good and we look forward to the spring time whenever the azaleas come out. The weather of course is nice today, but it is cool generally during the winter. We can rake up the beach and clean it up and put up the beach umbrellas and it's just wonderful. You don't even have to drive to New Smyrna and battle the traffic. I mean, what more could you ask for?"

In terms of wildlife supported by Crystal Bowl Lake, Roy and Connie say they have never once seen an alligator. However, other wildlife abounds. Occasionally, the couple spot water moccasins, but say they believe in a "mutual admiration society," meaning they do not bother the snakes and the snakes do not bother them. Animals spotted by the Popes over the years also include quail, fox, opossums, ducks, rabbits, owls, and wildcats. The Popes actually enjoy the wildlife that surrounds their home. Connie explains:

"This is a rustic setting and that's the way we like it because I like the environment, the wildlife, ducks in the lake, squirrels, we take care of all these little wild critters around here. We should probably get some acreage and have a farm. We're the outdoors type."

Roy says there are fairly big bass in the lake, although Connie is the one who most often fishes the lake. She reflects:

"I love to catch fish, although I haven't been fishing much this winter. The bass are very good eating. I know even how to clean them and lay them out. And they're so good broiled...delicious and its safe you know. This is good eating out of this lake."

Development



The Pope's backyard aka Pope's Park (USF)

Most of the development on and around Crystal Bowl Lake can be attributed to Mr. Casselberry, namesake of the town in which Crystal Bowl Lake sits. Roy says Mr. Casselberry inherited several million dollars from his grandfather, who was one of the owners of Hibbard, Spencer, and Bartlett, Co., a big hardware chain out of Chicago. With the inheritance, Casselberry bought up a great deal of land in central Florida known as Fern Park at the time due to its fern growing industry. Shortly thereafter, he started a fernery business, growing and shipping ferns while promoting real estate. About Casselberry, Connie says:

“He was very proud of his town and really tried to guide it in a certain direction. I think having the opportunity or distinction of building the first house on the lake, the very first house on the lake and dirt roads, woods, there were no schools and we watched each development, each house that went up. It was wonderful. It is just something so close to our heart:”

Roy says that they chose the property because it is “high and dry” and since 1951, the Popes have lived there. In terms of development, they have also experienced the growth of their own home:

“We started out with 950 square feet. We had three bedrooms and one bath, large living room, a fireplace, hardwood floors. Now, we’re pushing a little over 3,000 square feet. Now that we don’t need it, we got it! I’ve been fortunate enough to be in the building business so I knew how to build something. So, with Connie’s help we have added on. We have two apartments and we don’t rent either one of them out.”

The Popes say that they believe the overall growth of the area has been detrimental to the wildlife. Connie says, “as each house came on the lake and people moved in, we noticed that there were fewer and fewer animals around.” Although, the Popes love Seminole County and the excitement of how fast it has grown, they do not particularly enjoy the increase in traffic and dangerous road rage. There has been necessary adjustment made over the years. With nearby Disney themes parks and the growing University of Central Florida, development in the surrounding area has been tremendous.

The Future



Crystal Bowl Lake at time of interview (USF)

The Popes certainly do their part to ensure the environmentally sound future of Crystal Bowl Lake. A few years ago, a gentleman's agreement was made that no more speedboats would be taken out onto the lake. In response, the Popes and other Crystal Bowl Lake residents now use paddleboats, canoes, and such. The couple is very environmentally conscious as Connie reports:

"We purposefully have not paved our driveway because with all these nice pine trees we have which are good for pollution. When the needles fall, I rake them up and that gives me exercise and then I distribute them in the driveway so we have this nice circle pine needle driveway. We can recycle the pine trees, which is saving. I go around the lake and say can I rake your yard please for the pine needles because it takes a lot of pine needles to make the little paths going in and out of the park area."

It seems the Popes have made a pleasant lives for themselves on Crystal Bowl Lake. They are happy with where they are and enjoy each other's company. "We enjoy it, we help each other out," Roy says and Connie adds, "That's right, that's what it's all about." If they ever sell the place they have made their home sweet home, Connie says it would have to be to a buyer that "likes squirrels, ducks, the woods, and pine needle driveways".

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