

Lake Hayes



Lake Hayes (USF)

This narrative is based on an interview conducted with Lillian Jackson at her home on Lake Hayes on August 24, 2001. Lillian first came to the lake in 1940 and has seen many of the changes that have taken place at the lake and its surrounding area. This narrative includes her stories about the development of the area, as well as her concerns about the lake's current conditions.

Personal History

Lillian Jackson grew up in middle Georgia and moved to Florida in 1940 when she got married. She and her husband bought 20 acres at Lake Hayes, where they lived for a number of years. Both of Lillian's daughters were born at the lake. In 1950, the Jackson family moved to the nearby town of Oviedo. After seven years of living in town, the family decided to move back to Lake Hayes. Lillian says about their decision to return:

"We just loved the lake. We had the land on it and I just love waterfront. That's why we built here."



Lillian Jackson's garden (USF)

When the Jacksons returned to Lake Hayes in 1957, they built the house where Lillian still lives. The lake has played an important role for the Jackson family. When Lillian's children were young, they would spend a lot of time swimming in the lake. It continues to be important to her family, especially since her granddaughter is now living in a house near Lake Hayes.

Over the years, Lillian has seen and felt the growth of Seminole County. The once quiet road that her house was built on is now a congested state road that is scheduled to be expanded into a six-lane highway within the next few years. Additionally, within the past twenty years there has been major residential growth in the area. The increased traffic and influx of people, Lillian believes, have contributed to a decline in the quality of Lake Hayes. She feels as if the lake is "...being totally destroyed" and this saddens her greatly.

History/Information

Lake Hayes is located in the Howell Creek Watershed, west of State Road 434. It is between the town of Oviedo and the University of Central Florida, which is 2.2 miles south of the lake.

The lake has a surface area of 12 acres and its level has averaged 44.5 feet above sea level. According to Lillian, the water level usually stays about the same. She says, "It stays within a foot. That's a matter of two or three days and then it goes back down."



The algae on the eastern shore of Lake Hayes (USF)



The peninsula that has developed on the shore of Lake Hayes (USF)

The data collected on Lake Hayes since 1991 indicates that the Secchi clarity depth of the water has averaged around 5.6 feet. During the summer of 2001, the clarity depth reached 9.4 feet (Source: <http://www.seminole.wateratlas.usf.edu/>).

Lillian believes that the water clarity has decreased greatly during the more than sixty years that she has lived at the lake. She describes what the lake looked like before development began in the area:

“It was clear, crystal clear. You could see the sand bottom. We swam right down here and so did the people next door...I wouldn’t want to put my foot in there [now]. It’s messy.”

According to Lillian, Lake Hayes did not have any problems with aquatic vegetation until a nearby subdivision, “Stillwater,” was constructed about twenty years ago. She says that when this subdivision was being built, a pump was used to drain the land where the houses were to be built. The excess water was then pumped into Lake Hayes. Lillian believes that “...there must have been some sort of pollution with the pump.” She goes on to say that within two years of the pumping, there was algae on three-fourths of the lake. Additionally, lily pads started growing in the lake. When the algae first appeared on Lake Hayes, the neighbors around the lake contributed money to have the lake treated. They continued to get the lake treated for a number of years, but no longer do so.

Another factor affecting the health of Lake Hayes is nearby State Road 434. Lillian says about the changes on the road, “Everything stayed pretty much the same until the university went in. Nothing materialized much for the first ten years of that.” The construction of the University of Central Florida began in 1967. She goes on to say that only within the last five years has there been a “big boom on 434,” resulting in the major increase of traffic. Lillian believes that the run-off from the road has negatively impacted Lake Hayes. Around 1994, she noticed that a peninsula was beginning to form on her shoreline. She attributes its growth to materials that have washed into the lake from the road. Lillian says about the changes that she has seen occur at the lake:

“All that peninsula there and all these lily pads down here, they’ve ruined my shoreline totally.” She continues: “When you look at it, you’re going to cry, compared to what I know...it was before it got polluted...”

When Lillian first moved to Lake Hayes, the wildlife included what she calls “the average wild animals” such as squirrels, foxes, and otters. Many years ago, her husband had a pet otter named Slicker:

“He was like a little kitten. He would follow him. One day he was out fishing and ...Slicker would go in and out of the boat and come back and get into the boat. [He would go] with him in his pick-up. Then one day he just dived over the boat and never came back. When we see the little otters out there, we say ‘Oh, that’s Slicker’s family.’”

She has never seen any large animals, like bears or cougars, in the area. However, over the years there have been a few alligators in the lake. Lillian says that they were not very large, reaching a maximum of five feet.

Currently, Lillian continues to see squirrels and occasionally a red fox or an otter. She says that there are “a lot of birds” at Lake Hayes. There are a few egrets that visit on a daily basis to look for shells on the shoreline.

Development



Part of the canal that connected Lake Hayes to the Slavia Drainage District (USF)



Land where Lillian’s neighbors’ houses once stood (USF)



Lillian pointing out the trees that will be removed when SR434 is widened (USF)

In 1940, when Lillian first came to Lake Hayes, the area was very rural and wooded. She explains that the area was mostly used for agricultural purposes. The prevalent product was celery, although other crops were also being grown. Her back yard was once used to grow strawberries. According to Lillian, Lake Hayes was the head of the Slavia Drainage District. Slavia is a nearby town that was founded in 1911 by a group of Slovakian immigrants who migrated from Ohio. In the 1930s, landowners from Slavia, and the area around it, formed the Drainage District to bring 4,500 acres of land into celery production (Source: <http://www.geocities.com/yosemite/rapids/8428/hikeplans/oviedo/planoviedo.html>). Lillian says that the drainage ditch runs from Lake Hayes to the corner of Mitchell Hammock Road and State Road 434 and then into Lake Jesup.

When Lillian moved to Lake Hayes, the area was not yet developed residentially. She describes what the area looked like:

“In 1940, there were no houses here. 434 – you could only go to the Little Econ if you went on a horse because it was so sandy. A car wouldn’t go from the Little Econ to 50. You had to go by horse. Until ’57 there was one house across the lake and one house on the east side of 434.”

She goes on to describe what life was like at the lake:

“If you saw a car coming, you knew they were coming to your house because there was no point in going any further than your house because they couldn’t go any further than the Little Econ. So if you saw a car coming, you knew they were coming to visit you.”

In 1957, the Jacksons constructed their home on Lake Hayes. At the same time, Lillian’s husband built two additional houses so that she would have neighbors. The other houses on the lake were built in the 1960s and 1970s, and a new one was built in 2000. According to Lillian, there are currently about twelve homes on the lake. In the early 1960s, a subdivision with about seven homes was developed near the lake. Most of the homes in this subdivision have lake access.

Around twenty years ago, the “Stillwater” residential development was constructed on the eastern side of 434. This is around the same time, Lillian says, that the celery production decreased in the area. Farmers began selling their individual plots to larger farmers and much of the celery production then moved to the Everglades.

The recent plans to expand State Road 434 into a six-lane highway have directly impacted the residential area around Lake Hayes. As part of the plan to widen the road, five houses on and near the lake were removed. Two of these houses belonged to Lillian’s direct neighbors. She says about the recent actions to widen the road:

“Absolutely devastation. No one, absolutely no one, wanted to give up their home. There was three over here to the north of us that were took. My house is the only one that is left out here. I’m sticking out like a sore thumb. I begged them to take my house. Pushed, shoved, everything, but I was within the 66 feet. They’re taking 33 feet of my front yard. I objected strongly, but once the road decides to go through, they go through.”

These changes in the road and the neighborhood directly affect Lillian’s quality of life. Although she spoke with attorneys and lawmakers, she was not able to convince the Department of Transportation to buy her house or change any plans for the widening of State Road 434. According to Lillian, there are plans to build two retention ponds, which would filter the run-off from the road before it enters the lake. One pond is to be built where her next-door neighbors’ houses once stood. The other one is to be built on the eastern side of 434. Overall, Lillian is worried about the noise, traffic, and pollution this wider road will bring.

The Future



The northeastern shore of Lake Hayes (USF)

There are many issues surrounding the future of Lake Hayes. There will likely be an increase in traffic when State Road 434 is expanded, which, in turn, will lead to an increase in pollutants. Although there are current plans to build retention ponds, these do not guarantee that the lake will not be negatively affected by pollution. According to Lillian, the lake’s health has diminished since the increase of development in the area. The question for Lake Hayes’ future is whether the lake will be able to survive through even more development.

For Lillian, the imminent road widening will directly impact her quality of life. When her house on the lake was first built, State Road 434 was Alafaya Trail, a sandy road that was difficult for cars to drive on. Now it is a bustling highway with so much traffic that it is hard for Lillian to even get in and out of her driveway. The expansion of this road will likely make it even more difficult for her to drive around her neighborhood. Furthermore, the proximity of a six-lane highway to her house will destroy the tranquility that Lake Hayes once provided.

The changes that Lillian has seen in Lake Hayes, and the changes she expects in the future, affect her personal well being. The lake has been a part of her life for over 60 years. Watching what she believes to be its deterioration has been difficult for her. Lillian talks about her hopes for the future of the lake:

“I would like to see the lake cleared up. I would like to see the lake back to what it was 40 years ago. Clear, pretty water that people could swim in, that you could feel safe in. That would be my desire... That is what I...want...My wish for the lake is for it to be cleared up...I look at it as being totally destroyed.”

Without any actions or plans to protect Lake Hayes, then it is possible that the lake’s health will decline in the future. However, for Lake Hayes to regain the quality that Lillian once knew there will need to be concerted efforts on the part of many governmental agencies and local citizens.

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