

Lake Kiwanis



A view of Lake Kiwanis in October 2001 (USF)

This narrative is based on an interview conducted with Fran Freeman at her home on Lake Kiwanis on the morning of October 29, 2001. During this interview, Fran discussed the good times that she has had on the lake, as well as the changes that she has seen occur over the years in the area.

Personal History



The Freemans' old boat (Freeman)

Fran Freeman and her husband Jim, who is now deceased, moved to Lake Kiwanis on Valentine's Day in 1981. They had previously lived in Park Manor for about ten years. When Orlando's growth began to overshadow the rural nature of Park Manor, the Freemans decided to move further east to where rural areas still existed. They chose to move to Lake Kiwanis because they were looking for lakefront property and they liked the area.

Fran has enjoyed living on Lake Kiwanis. When her husband Jim was still alive, fishing and boating on the lake were some of his favorite hobbies. According to Fran, many of her neighbors continue to enjoy activities on the lake such as swimming, boating, fishing, and jet-skiing.

One of the most exciting things that Fran can see on the lake is when a Space Shuttle launches from nearby Cape Canaveral:

"What's awesome is to see...the Space Shuttle go up over that lake because it's straight behind me. I can look out any bedroom window. I can walk down to the lake. It comes up right up over the top of the back of the trees. It's awesome, especially a night launch...It just lights that lake up like it's daytime and then it just shuts back down to dark again...I have missed very few of them."



A plane that landed on the lake during high water in 1993 (Freeman)

History/Information

Lake Kiwanis is a 31-acre private lake within the Chula Vista development. The lake was formerly known as Lake Gore, but according to residents around the lake, the name of the lake changed when the developers bought the land for the housing development.

According to Fran, the lake is healthy and has not posed any flooding problems for her. However, with the recent drought conditions in the area, she believes that the lake level is much lower than normal. She says about the situation:



The low water levels in July 2001 (Freeman)



The water in Lake Kiwanis in October 2001 (USF)



One of the irrigation pipes going into Lake Kiwanis (USF)

"I don't think it's ever been this low since I've been here. It was very low the year we bought this property because we were in a drought situation back in '80. It was low back then, but it wasn't low like this. I've never seen it this low before...I've never been worried about it coming up too high."

In addition to the drought, Fran has concerns about the lake being used as an irrigation source for peoples' yards around the lake. For her own yard, she uses water from her well, which she believes will have fewer negative effects on the lake's health.

Fran says that in recent months, Lake Kiwanis' level has increased. Although she does not like the way the lake looks with low water levels, she understands that fluctuations in the level can be part of a healthy cycle for the lake.

According to Fran, the lake has not experienced many problems with overgrown vegetation. At one point, when Fran and Jim first moved to the lake, there were some cattails near their shore. To remove these, the two pulled up the cattails and their roots. Fran says that the cattails have not returned. She also mentions that many of the lakeside residents are aware of the negative consequences that fertilizer run-off could have on the lake. She says that many of the people who fertilize their lawns stay away from using it directly near the lake. However, according to a newsletter written by one of the lakeside residents, this fertilizer use has led to recent algae growth on the bottom of the lake.

When Chula Vista was developed, Fran says that many people retained the natural vegetation that existed rather than plant new trees. Currently, some of the trees around the lake include pine, turkey oak, live oak, water oak, and the Florida Holly.

Since moving to Lake Kiwanis, Fran has seen an increase in the numbers of some of the animals that visit the area around the lake.

"Twenty years ago we seldom saw a deer. Now we're seeing more deer. Twenty years ago there were maybe four to five ducks on the lake at the most. Now we have more ducks on the lake... There's no place else for them to go. All of the building that you saw between Oviedo and Chuluota has only been started this year. There's no place for them to go. They're coming out here where they can still get away. We've got a 35-acre field right down here around the corner, like + a block away and there's nine deer in that field. Probably as long as they've got a home down there, they're going to stay."

Other animals that Fran sees around Lake Kiwanis include red foxes, gopher turtles, armadillos, and an occasional alligator.



The Florida Holly in Mrs. Freeman's back yard (USF)



Low water levels in July 2001 (Freeman)

Development

Before the Chula Vista development around Lake Kiwanis began in the late 1960s, the area was likely used for agricultural production. Fran says that there are several lots in the development where there are remnants of tangerine groves. When Chula Vista was developed, the original plan was for a golf course community. According to Fran, a golf course was originally built, but it was eventually removed and the land was turned into residential lots. Fran says that there are 231 lots in Chula Vista with no more than 15 lots available currently. Twenty-nine of those lots are around Lake Kiwanis. She adds that the average lot in Chula Vista is 1.7 acres and continues to be zoned rural-agricultural. Therefore, people are allowed to have animals such as cows, horses, and chickens on their property.

Near Chula Vista is the town of Chuluota. According to Fran, a housing development for average income families was constructed there about 40 years ago. When Fran first came to Lake Kiwanis, Chuluota and Chula Vista were the only developments in the area. She says that this has changed in the past ten years with the growth of both commercial and residential development. Fran says about the changes in the area:

“Well, Chuluota was there, but, gosh, you could pull up to the stop sign and look both ways on 419 and then pull out; there’s no traffic. Now, you pull up to the stop sign and you wait for this one and then there comes somebody around the corner. A lot of traffic and a lot of building.”

According to Fran, there has been major residential development within the past year along State Road 419 between Oviedo and Chuluota. These lots are much smaller than what exists in Chula Vista, leading to a much higher density of people in the area. Fran says that the development occurring right near Chula Vista blends in better with existing structures because it has larger lots.



The shore of Lake Kiwanis in 2001 (USF)



The dock showing the low level of water in October 2001 (USF)

The Future

The future of Lake Kiwanis is positive, according to Fran. She believes that because of the development that already exists and the restrictions that are placed on the building allowed in Chula Vista, the lake is somewhat protected. She says:

“Because in the six miles of road the lake is kind of in the middle. Everything is already built up around it. What you’re going to have built way out on Snow Hill Road or Brumerly Road, I don’t see how it could possibly affect the lake. It’s just too far away...”

However, the surrounding area, with its rapidly increasing development, likely faces many changes in the future. These changes include not only increased traffic and resource use, but also the growth of the human population pushing out animals from their environment. These future issues are not unique within the area near Lake Kiwanis, but are often the result of growth and development throughout the state of Florida.

Written By: Christiana Schumann