

Lake Adelaide



Jack Kershaw at the time of the interview (USF)



Lake Adelaide in June 2002 (USF)

The following narrative was derived from an interview with Lake Adelaide resident Johan "Jack" Kershaw in his home on June 5, 2002. In it, he tells of his time living on the lake and what it has come to mean to him over the years.

Personal History

Now in his eighties, Jack Kershaw was born and raised in Canada on Lake Huron in Goderich, Ontario. He spent his life in various roles of aircraft maintenance engineering that include teaching and administration. He moved to Orlando in 1970 to change careers when he bought a golf course in partnership with a few friends; there he did billing and ran the bar. However, his involvement lasted only a couple of years. He soon went back into the aircraft maintenance business to work for Emerson and then Research Park, both in the greater Orlando area.

In 1973, Jack purchased property on Lake Adelaide. Actually, he purchased a house across the street from the shoreline, and included in the deal was a 25-foot strip of land on the lake and across from his house. In fact, when last appraised, Jack's home and property was classified as "lakefront." He moved into the house with his wife, now deceased. His two children, one son and one daughter, were grown and are no longer living with him at the time.

Jack has always had an affinity for water and said he has greatly enjoyed living on Lake Adelaide. As he pointed out: "It's been a very pleasant place to live. That's the whole thing. It's just a real nice place to live."

History/Information

Lake Adelaide is a 21-acre lake in the Little Wekiva Watershed of Seminole County in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Lake Adelaide is actually two water bodies connected by a narrow passageway. However, at the time of the interview the canal was dry and congested with vegetation. Heading north, another restricted waterway leads to Lake Florida. This is currently an animal and bird sanctuary. Jack said about the passage way connecting the two lakes of Lake Adelaide:

"When I first came here with a small skiff, you could go through the passage. You can't anymore. You can't get through there now. When I first came here, a small rowboat could get through, but now nothing can get through. It's too overgrown."

Over the years, Lake Adelaide has experienced great change. Beyond development, water quality and water level has been erratic, just as the wildlife has. About the lake when he moved to it, Jack said:



Property across from Jack's house, which leads to Lake Adelaide (USF)



Picture of black bear in tree near Lake Adelaide (Kershman)

"When I bought this property in 1973, I flew over here a couple of times and this was the clearest lake in the whole area. From the air, you can see depth. You could see the cleanliness of the water from the air. There were so many trees at that time; I couldn't even see any of this house from the air. There are quite a few trees down since then. You could probably see it now, but in '73 you couldn't see this house at all from the air and the lake was very clear."

Wildlife supported by Lake Adelaide is abundant. Connecting Lake Adelaide with Lake Florida is a sanctuary that provides a drainage area for both lakes. In it, Jacks says there are "all sorts of animals." Jack and his neighbor often spend evenings watching the wildlife for happy hour. Over the years, they have spotted opossums, otter, snakes, and raccoons. At the time of the interview, Jack reported having one alligator, although in the past that number had ranged from one to about four. Birds include owls, blue jays, ducks, hawks, redbirds, various types of cranes and on occasion a hummingbird. Once in a while, Jack spots a bald eagle eating fish in a tall pine tree near the lake. Recently, the friends and neighbors saw something unusual. Jack explained:

"We went out in the boat the other night and saw something I have never seen before. He's [a neighbor] been there for 13 years and he has never seen it. It was time for the birds to go to bed and the trees were white with cranes of some kind. There were hundreds of them. Just before dark. There are always a few of them around, but there were hundreds of them. I've never seen that many before."

Seven or eight years ago, Jack caught sight of a black bear. About this incident, Jack told the following story:

"I went out one morning to get the paper and my dog then was a pretty smart dog. He started to hang back and growl. I looked up and there was a big black bear walking...just ambling down on the lawn right in front of that house. He goes down there, keeps ambling on and finally goes down toward the lake. I called the police to warn them and they came by and he wasn't any place to be seen. They were circling around. He came up the other side of that house there. There was a fence and down it came. He ambled across the street and climbed a tree. We had all three television channels out here, the newspaper. But he was just a traveler. Fish and Game came in and just watched him up in the tree. He spent one day and one night up there. Then he came down and took off."



Kirchman Corporation buildings on Lake Adelaide (USF)



Kirchman Corporation buildings on Lake Adelaide (USF)

Over the years Jack has lived there, Lake Adelaide has experienced two significant fish kills. The first one was in the early 1970s. According to officials there was a great deal of road runoff coming off of parts of State Road 436 and draining into Lake Adelaide. In response to the problem, dirt roads were paved to reduce the silt and dirt content, and multiple retention ponds were built to help filter the water coming into the lake. The second fish kill on Lake Adelaide was fairly recent, about four years ago according to Jack. He said that time the “culprit” was lack of oxygen. He reported:

“They said it was lack of oxygen, but the city finally came in...filled a couple of garbage trucks full of dead fish out of the lake.”

In response to the latter fish kill, air is sometimes pumped into the lake from a floating air pump launched off the south shore of the lake near some office buildings. In some lakes, bacterial decomposition at the bottom consumes oxygen, which makes the water unfit for fish. “Aeration introduces oxygen into the bottom waters and creates artificial circulation which mixes the entire water column” (Edmiston and Myers, 1983), providing the fish population with oxygen and avoiding fish kills.

Development

Development around Lake Adelaide has been significant and can be traced back to the late 19th Century. In 1882, a group of Bostonians created the Altamonte Land, Hotel, and Navigation, Company, which bought 1200 acres between Lake Adelaide and Lake Orienta. There they built the Altamonte Hotel, which bordered Lake Orienta. When springs were discovered on Lake Adelaide, the company built a springhouse on its shoreline for pumping water to the hotel. Guests of the vacation spot were said to have included President Grant and Thomas Edison. In 1953, a fire destroyed the Altamonte Hotel. (Francke, 1995). Today, The Capistrano Condos stand where the hotel once was.

Jack pinpoints residential development on Lake Adelaide as early as 1940 and estimates the current number of homes on the lake’s shores at roughly 20 to 25.

Since the 1970s, both residential and commercial development near Lake Adelaide has accelerated. Currently, private homes, rental apartments, large office buildings, and a swim school all share the shoreline of Lake Adelaide. Willow Park Apartments and Palm Springs Apartments border the shallower northern part of the lake. Along the entire south end of the larger and southern section of the lake, on State Road 436 are three large office buildings owned by The Kirchman Corporation. According to Jack, Kirchman also owns the swim school operated by the Rose family. Recently, the family sold the property and school to Kirchman. The corporation's plans for the land are unknown, although there is discussion of building a large medical center.



Lake Adelaide in June 2002 (USF)

The Future

The future of Lake Adelaide is difficult to predict. A positive feature of the lake is the bird and animal sanctuary that runs between Lake Adelaide and Lake Florida. On the other hand, Jack believes development is sure to continue with possible negative consequences. He shared:

"Civilization has crept up on us. It's going in the wrong direction, let's put it that way. That would be my prediction."

Another adverse attribute of Lake Adelaide is the lack of formal organization on the part of its residents. According to Jack, because the homes were built individually as opposed to built together as a development, a homeowner's association never formed. In this sense, Jack says, "there should be more control over it, but there isn't. So, the lake does deteriorate somewhat on account of that. It's too bad." When something in direct relation to the lake must be done, Jack says homeowners will act individually. Luckily, this has worked in the past, which gives Jack hope for the future.

Endnotes:

Edmiston, H.L. & Myers, V (1983) Florida Lakes: A description of lakes, their processes, and means of protection

Francke, A.E. (1995) Early Days of Seminole County, Florida Seminole County Historical Commission

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