

Duck Pond



Duck Pond at the time of the interview (USF)



Ducks swimming on Duck Pond (Zeek)

The following narrative presents the story of Valentino “Val” Zeek and his neighbor Alan Ware, long time residents of Duck Pond. It derives from an interview with the two friends in the home of Val on April 19, 2002. In the narrative, the men tell of their experiences of living on the small water body and stories about the town it is in – Casselberry, Florida.

Personal History

Val Zeek has lived on Duck Pond since 1975. He is originally from the Pittsburgh area. During his time in the military he was stationed in Orlando, which he enjoyed. Once Val retired, he decided to find a place close to where he had been stationed and ended up on Duck Pond, where he raised four children – two boys and two girls. He shared:

“I had been stationed here at the airbase as a bachelor and lived on a lake and water-skied. So, I wanted to get back to water. And the pool is here... and the price was right and all those kinds of things. And I was just retired, with four young kids. So, we couldn’t spend a lot of money on a big place or anything. But something I could work on. That’s one of the reasons I picked it.”

He reflected on those early days when the children were young:

“You know how kids are. Out there catching bugs and trying to catch frogs. They did all that stuff and of course, we have a pool here so all the neighborhood kids would come over...and swim in the lake a lot. That was their summer entertainment back there. And we have the woods across the road and like I said, catching all kinds of frogs and coons and possums and all that stuff.”

Alan Ware has lived on Duck Pond since 1964 and is originally from Tennessee. He moved to Central Florida at an early age. In Longwood he met his wife who had come from California to live on the pond. He explained:

“My wife, she bought the place unseen. She lived in California. She sent for a brochure because she wanted a place on a lake. And what they sent her there, they had this [pond] in the book you know. She saw it and she liked it. And so she bought it and then she came to Florida in ‘62 or ‘63 and I met her in Longwood. We got married in 64. But there were only three or four trailers in here when she bought hers.”

History/Information

Duck Pond is a one-acre pond located in Seminole County’s Gee Creek Watershed in Casselberry, Florida. Alan described it as a “little wet-weather spring that never goes dry.” He shared the following about the pond’s history:

“I knew it before it was pumped out. Before, there was just this little spring there and they called it the Mosquito Hole and that’s where the spring was. So, they pumped it all out and it filled up.”



Duck Lake at the time of the interview (USF)



View of Duck Lake from Val's house (Zeek)

According to Val and Alan, it is likely that Duck Pond got its current name from the duck population it supports. In the early years, there were muscovies, but mallards have since replaced that population. Once, Duck Pond was home to a small alligator about which Val told the following story:

"I knew a guy who worked at a water plant and he gave me a small alligator and I put him in the pond. And in about 6 months, he was about 3 feet or something. But all the little ducks were disappearing because as they'd swim by, the last one would be snatched up. And they were gone one after the other. So, we had to take him out and took him to another pond."

Other wildlife around Duck Pond consists mainly of small mammals such as raccoons, squirrels, and armadillos.

Development

Val and Alan were well aware of the development history of their town. Val reported:

"I have the whole history of this development. The town is called Casselberry. And Mr. Casselberry is the guy that developed this area. He owned everything in Casselberry. All of the land."

Alan added: *"They named the town for him, Casselberry. It's his town."*

Before even Alan moved to the area, Hibbard and Martha Casselberry ran a fern growing business. Although the names of these businesses reportedly changed over the years, Val said they have been known to go by "Gladiolus Gardens, Inc.", "Winter Park Gardens", and "Casselberry Ferneries".

Early on in the 1960s, when Alan and his wife moved to Duck Pond, only a few trailers surrounded it. At that time, the road that circles the pond was called Duck Pond Circle. It's now called Lakeshore Drive, like so many other streets that border water bodies. By the time Val moved to Duck Pond in 1975, all of the lots were developed and most of the trailers had been expanded both in number and size, resulting in roughly 25 homes of mixed trailer/home origin that have stayed fairly consistent ever since. Val explained:

"This was a trailer area and as you can see most of the trailers are half trailer, half house. That is because they started out as trailers and everyone added on, made it a real house or whatever. So, that's like the basic old history."

The Future

The small size of Duck Pond and the fairly close-knit neighborhood ensures the health and future of the pond. As Val described, "The word gets around pretty quick if something is happening." Although there is no formal organization surrounding the pond, the few households that live on its shores make sure the water stays clean and that overall the pond is healthy.

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