

Lake Florida



Marty Stebbins at time of interview (USF)



Lake Florida in May 2002 (USF)

The following narrative was derived from an interview with Lake Florida resident, Marty Stebbins in his home on May 2, 2002. In it, Marty tells of his years of living on Lake Florida and enjoying the peacefulness and quiet it provides.

Personal History

Marty Stebbins was born 62 years ago in New York, but moved to Orlando in 1969. His mother owned a house on Lake Florida in Altamonte Springs that Marty inherited and has been living in for roughly 15 years. In that time, Marty has been involved in the broadcasting industry mostly, working as a reporter and then a meteorologist. Most recently, he worked at WESH TV, an NBC affiliate, until he semi-retired in February of 2002.

Marty's mother was a snowbird who would live in New York during the warmer months and then head south to her house on Lake Florida for the winter. On and off, Marty would housesit for her, so he has been acquainted with the lake and the surrounding area since he was a young man.

About living on the lake, Marty said: "I can't say anything negative. It's not a bad place to live." He continued: "It's pretty quiet. It's actually quite tranquil...very pleasant." Over the years, Marty has enjoyed swimming in the lake, but little else besides enjoying its beauty from his home. He reported: "I jump in it every once in a while."

History/Information

Lake Florida is a 25-acre lake located in the Little Wekiva Watershed of Seminole County in Altamonte Springs, Florida. Lake Florida is a private lake with no public access. On the northeastern side of the lake is an area owned by the City of Altamonte Springs, but there is a "No Trespassing" sign posted to remind the public that Lake Florida is not open to the public. However, Marty shared that "a lot of people come by from time to time and ask if they can fish." He often times does not mind them.

In terms of wildlife at Lake Florida, over the years Marty has spotted squirrels, various turtles, ducks, and a few snakes. There are reportedly no alligators in the lake, but Marty said that, "a three-legged raccoon came by one time." Currently, there are also fresh water otter and a cooper's hawk pair that is nesting in a tree near the lake. In the past, but not so much anymore, bear have even been observed as well.

Although there is no formal organization whose main focus is Lake Florida, Marty says that those living on its shores are good about making sure the lake stays clean. He said, "I don't think there is any problem with the abuse of the lake." The only current issue facing Lake Florida, according to Marty, is the below average water levels it was experiencing at the time of the interview in May 2002, which were up from the summer of 2001. Marty attributes this to the natural cycle of things because over the years water levels have gone up and down depending on the rainfall. According to Marty, water quality has stayed fairly consistent.



Orange trees on Marty's property (USF)



Lake Florida in May 2002 (USF)

Development

Traditional land use around Lake Florida was primarily citrus groves, but there have been homes in the area as far back as Marty can remember. Residential development around Lake Florida has remained consistent in the time that he has known it. He reported:

"I don't see a big change on the lake as far as the building is concerned. Most of the lots were occupied during the time period I've been here. I haven't seen any new construction. Maybe some additions, but no one that has come in, knocked it down and put in a huge two or three story. Otherwise, it hasn't changed in the period of time that I know. And as far as I know, I don't think it's changed much in a number of years. I think this house here is a 1940s house and I think that is the majority of them, maybe some in the '50s I guess."

Currently, there are roughly 45 homes on the shores of Lake Florida. At the time of the interview, there was only one lot still not built upon on the lakeshore. That was roughly three years ago, and the owner has still not built a home.

The Future

According to Marty, the future of Lake Florida will likely be a stable one. One positive impetus is the LAKEWATCH volunteers that in collaboration with the University of Florida monitor the well being of the lake. In Marty's opinion, not much will change with Lake Florida. He explained:

"It won't change much at all because I don't think the real estate is going to change as far as people knocking down a house and building a larger house. I think it is probably going to remain very much the way it is. It's not a big lake. If you were looking for lakefront property where you could see a long way off across the lake, this is not it. It's just kind of a nice spot."

Along with some of his neighbors, Marty does his part to ensure a healthy future for Lake Florida. Roughly two years ago, Marty decided to begin using a reclaimed water system called Apricot. In this system, he pays six dollars a month for reclaimed water that he uses to water his lawn as opposed to pumping water out of the lake. Marty explained:

"In the spirit of conservation and just speaking for myself, I decided that I didn't want to pump out of the lake. I wanted to use the reclaimed water for six dollars a month. It may be just that little bit of water I'm taking out of the lake that could lower the lake level. So, I said nope, not me. I want to go ahead and take that Apricot water and help conservation. Conservation is the best... it really is the best."

Written By: Deanna Barcelona, M.A.