

Lake Minnie



Twyla and George Norman (USF)

The following narrative is based on an interview with Lake Minnie residents Twyla and George Norman at their home on August 29, 2003. This narrative provides their perspectives on twenty-seven years of lakeside living.

Personal History

When Twyla and George Norman married twenty-seven years ago, they merged their two separate households by moving into their current home on Lake Minnie. George remembers looking for a house in the area without much success:

“This guy [a realtor] calls and says, ‘I’ve got the house for you.’ And I’d just been over there that morning and drove around [and there were no ‘For Sale’ signs]. And I said, ‘Oh, they’re not for sale.’ He brought me right to this house here that was for sale.”

Although there were never more than three children living in the house at one time, both Twyla and George brought children from previous marriages to the union—Twyla three and George two. George built an addition onto the house with help from their sons.

The Normans and their children spent a lot of time on the water. They owned a ski boat, and all of the children learned to water ski on Lake Minnie. Twyla learned too; she was forty-five when she skied for the first time. Although the Normans, like many other lake residents, no longer water ski, they still enjoy fond memories of these times. Twyla related an amusing story about a neighbor whose poodle kneeboarded:

“The minute somebody came [to kneeboard], he was on the board already. He loved it...He’d swim after them if he didn’t put him on that. And he was quite neat to watch.”

In the past, Twyla and George drank their morning coffee at a lakeside table and watched the lake’s alligators. Although both have enjoyed living on Lake Minnie, Twyla was especially vocal about the benefits:

“I just like the water and I just like not having a house behind me. I know that sounds strange but if you look out of our window...literally nowhere could you see another house...You just see green. And it’s green all the time.”

She used to spend time reading in a hammock near the water and could frequently be found floating in the lake in a beach chair with two of her neighbor friends. Currently the heat keeps Twyla and George inside much



View of Lake Minnie in 2003 (USF)



A dock on Lake Minnie in 2003 (USF)



Shoreline of Lake Minnie in 2001 (Seminole



Some of the vegetation in Lake Minnie in 2001 (Seminole Coujnty)

of the time, but their grandchildren love spending time in the water when they visit. In fact, Twyla's middle son and his family recently bought a house on Lake Minnie.

History/Information

Lake Minnie is a 42-acre lake in the Lake Jesup watershed of Seminole County. The Normans reported that the lake's water level is consistently high, especially compared to other lakes in the area. According to the Normans, water quality is also fairly high, although the water is a brown color due to a high level of tannic acid. Twyla joked that the water's murky color has helped her get over her fear of alligators: "I figured if the gator can't really see, he can't see me either."

Based on the Normans' observations, the lake supports numerous alligators, catfish, bass, carp, otters, water moccasins, Canadian geese, and Muscovy ducks. In terms of wildlife in the lake area, Twyla and George frequently see opossums, raccoons, and a family of armadillos that consistently digs up their yard.

Over the years, residents have worked hard to keep harmful vegetation out of the lake. Soon after Twyla and George moved to Lake Minnie, the lake experienced an extreme overgrowth of hyacinth. At first, residents tried to remove the vegetation by hand. As George recollects:

"We [George and a neighbor] must have hauled fifty loads out of it one day....Anyway, we hauled them off and hauled them off. He was out there and I said, 'I think we need to find some other method of doing this.' So he says, 'Yeah, I think so too. And my back's killing me'"

After lake residents were told by the county that it was their responsibility to remove the vegetation, they collected funds from all seventeen houses on the lake and the adjoining canal to have the hyacinth removed. Residents continue to contribute regularly for a service that sprays the lake to prevent the growth of unwanted vegetation.

Development

In terms of changes in the area over the years, the Normans have heard that the lake was part of a navy recreational base at one time. Additionally, although the number of houses on the lake and canal has remained the same since the Normans moved to Lake Minnie, Twyla and George have seen a great deal of residential and commercial development in the surrounding area over the years. The widening of Lake Mary Boulevard in the mid to late 1970s is one of the first major development projects that the Normans remember. Twyla related:

"Lake Mary Boulevard was just a two-lane road and there was so much traffic going between...It was pitch black. It was dark, completely dark from the time you left I-4 to get on Lake Mary Boulevard to come home. PITCH black. And now it's all built up and, you know, it's just crazy actually. But it was just, there was nothing here."



Lake Minnie's shoreline in 2003 (USF)



View of Lake Minnie in 2003 (USF)

The Future

The Normans hope that future residents of Lake Minnie will be able to care for the lake as successfully as current residents do. While Twyla is concerned with who, in the future, will take responsibility for collecting fees from residents to have the lake sprayed—a task she currently handles—George wishes for the county or state to take more responsibility for Lake Minnie's health.

Written By: Ashley Spalding