

Spring Lake



Art Herbert at the time of interview (USF)

The following narrative was derived from an interview with Spring Lake resident Art Herbert in his beautiful home on February 22, 2002. In it, Art tells of his years of living on Spring Lake and being involved in its well being through contributing time to his homeowner's association, local researchers, and LAKEWATCH.

Personal History



Dock in private park at Spring Lake (USF)

Art Herbert has lived on Spring Lake since 1976. He is originally from New Jersey, but moved to Melbourne, FL in 1956. He also spent some time in Fort Lauderdale before ultimately moving to his current home, all the while involved in early high-tech start up companies. Finding and buying the home on Spring Lake was natural to Art, as he explained his affinity to water:

"Every time I bought property, it's been on water. I spent years in the Navy and have participated in the support of the America's Cup races. When we moved up here to Orlando, there wasn't any ocean, so we found this house because we wanted something on the water. The reason for the water is there is that it maintains the value of your home. So, first of all, I like it and second, it does maintain the value of your home."

At the time Art moved to the lake, he had with him his late wife and the youngest of three children. His other two children were off at college by then. Over the years, Art became very involved in the management of lake affairs. At one point, he established a technical subcommittee called Spring Lake Quality Control that was part of the homeowner association to which he belongs. He has also been in constant contact with a local professor of Biology and lake researcher, Dr. John Osbourne, who holds graduate classes on the lake. Art says this arrangement is a win-win-win situation, as the lake is closely monitored and cared for, students are provided with experiential learning, and Art receives relevant and quality data on Spring Lake. He documents the information collected by the students and can share data on such topics as water quality, biodiversity, and fish count.

Although, no longer directly involved, Art tries to make contact with each group of people serving on the Homeowner's Association Board to share the knowledge he has accumulated over the years and "bring them up to speed on what is necessary and what has been done." Currently, Art enjoys semi-retirement as a high-tech business consultant, travel with friends, and helping run two Florida based wineries – Lakeridge Winery and Vineyards in Clermont and San Sebastian Winery in St. Augustine of which he was one of the founders.

History/Information



Spring Lake on day of interview. View from Art's second floor home office (USF)

Spring Lake is an 88-acre lake in the Little Wekiva Watershed of Seminole County. Art said Spring Lake was named for the high amount of spring activity the lake once had. A topographical survey revealed numerous springs once active and now stopped up by leaves and muck. Art reported:

"As you look with a depth finder, you can see muck where there was originally springs. Over the years, leaves and a lot of silt get in there and it sorts of blocks the flow. You can see it bubbling, but it was much more active 30 years ago."

According to Art, Spring Lake has changed over the years. During the interview he shared neighbors' stories of how they could remember flying over Spring Lake in small planes and seeing a deep, clear blue lake. Today, visibility has been greatly diminished, most of which he attributes to a change in algae type. Art supposes the growth of the algae might be due to the high nutrient content in the lake. He reported that sometime between the late 1960s and early 1970s, a significant amount of sewage was dumped into a canal that emptied into Spring Lake. As Art explained:

"That was really one of the things when people were concerned as to why was the lake changing. Well, it normally will change but over 20, 30, 40, 50 years. But this one got such a shot of nutrients that it accelerated dramatically the growth of certain kinds of algae. So, that's why the deep blue water changed."

Another experience Art has watched Spring Lake endure was an invasion of hydrilla roughly four to five years ago. Art said the plant sprig initially came off someone's outboard motor and began growing uncontrollably. Two actions were taken to combat the problem before it got out of hand. The first was State approved biocides and the second was the introduction of state controlled triploid carp. Art explained how introducing triploid carp requires the approval of every single homeowner living on the lake. Seemingly, a formidable task; Art took the challenge and was remarkably successful.

In terms of wildlife supported by Spring Lake, Art was proud to share the fact that he has kept his home so that it is conducive to the variable critters. Neither he, nor his late wife preferred manicured grass and instead have let the property go wild. About this, Art shared:

"That whole rough area as you came down the driveway is really an animal preserve. It's filled with everything from rabbits to owls, flying squirrels to gosh knows what's in there and I don't bother them and they don't bother me."

Some of the land animals spotted by Art over the years are bears, raccoons, rabbits, opossums, and not only "regular gray squirrels," but flying squirrels as well. Wildlife seen in the lake includes otters, alligators, gopher turtles, bass, and other fish. Also home to Spring Lake are numerous species of birds including hawks, blue heron, osprey, and blue jays. Art enjoys the various critters:

"I'm sure by the time I move out of here, someone else will come in and want lawn. What is all this underbrush here that looks like somebody forgot to clean up, but that is what the animals like to live in and I don't need it so the best you can do is encourage them. I don't bother them and I enjoy having them around."

Development



Canal off of Spring Lake that leads to the Little Wekiva River (USF)

Spring Lake is a fairly developed private lake with three communities bordering its shoreline – Spring Valley Club, Spring Lake Hills, and Spring Valley Farms, although not all homes in those developments have lakefront property. Art estimates the number of homes directly on Spring Lake to be 40 or more. Branching out from the shoreline, however, “There is development everywhere.” There is a park on Spring Lake that houses a playground, a pavilion, a dock and boat ramp, and small beach that all homeowners of Spring Valley Farms share. In this sense, there is no public access to lake, only private because those in Spring Valley essentially own the park.

Traditional use of the land that surrounds Spring Lake was primarily citrus groves. According to Art, after the citrus froze in the mid 1980s, the trees never truly recovered. He explained:

“These were all citrus groves that were frozen back in 84. They never have really recovered tremendously. The whole area here was set up for citrus groves. When they started to develop it originally, they were going to have horse trails all through this area, although horses never really materialized. But what has is quiet suburb.”

Before the use of land for citrus groves, Art believes Native Americans inhabited the area. He said, evidence in the form of artifacts is often found.

The Future

There are number of factors that help to ensure a positive future for Spring Lake. First is the fact that Professor John Osbourne from the University of Central Florida holds classes on the lake. This activity keeps tabs on the lake’s quality and fish population and provides information with which homeowners and other local activists may make informed decisions. Second is the homeowner associations’ vested interest. Art described:

“We’ve always had in our community association for the past fifteen years someone who is responsible for the lake and they have the responsibility. We have donated to the John Osbournes’ program. Spring Valley Farms makes a modest contribution every year to his biology program.”

For this, Art is grateful. He explained:

“You know, a lot of community associations have all kinds of inside battles going on. In this regard, Spring Valley has been very fortunate. We have wonderful cooperation from everybody here and that has made the job of appreciation of this valuable asset much easier. It says a lot as to the quality of people that live here in that they have recognized what is necessary in maintaining the facility.”

Written By: Deanna Barcelona, M.A.