

# Lake Faye (Rebel Lake)



Lake Faye in 2002 during interview (USF)



Dirt road leading to Coflins home (USF)



View of Rebel Ranch in 2002 (USF)

*The following narrative has been written based on an interview with Lake Faye resident Eleanor "Ellie" Coflin in her home on August 13, 2002. In it, Ellie talks about growing up on the lake and about how she and her husband, Emmette, have made a life out of living on land strategically located between Lake Faye and Lake Wood.*

## Personal History

Ellie Coflin, then Eleanor Carlton Davis, first came to live near Lake Faye in 1938 when her parents moved to the shores of Lake Wood, a lake that borders Faye. Ellie did not stay long as she had just graduated from high school, and shortly thereafter moved on her own to nearby Tampa. There, Ellie met Emmette Coflin and the couple soon married.

When Emmette was released from military service in 1946, the couple decided to move back to Ellie's parents' house. At that time, Ellie's parents were temporarily living in Arizona so the house on Lake Wood was available for Ellie and Emmette to stay in while they saved money for a place of their own. It did not take long for the young couple to gather enough resources to begin construction. Upon Ellie's parents return from Arizona, Ellie and Emmette built a small home on the family property in a spot that borders both Lake Wood and Lake Faye. As Ellie described their home's ideal location: "The length of the lake [Lake Faye] is on our property and then we also have frontage on Lake Wood. So, we're between lakes." Ellie's father owned 40 acres of land around the lakes, from which Ellie inherited half or roughly 20 acres of her father's property. Ellie reflected on those early days:

*"We didn't even have a phone when we first came out here. And when we did get a phone, there were 24 of us on the fire line. So that when anybody had a drowning or a fire, they rang all 24 phones and we all went to wherever it was to help find the person in the lake or help put the fire out."*

At 84 and 81 years of age respectively, Emmette and Ellie still live in their home between Lake Faye and Wood Lake, continuing to run their ranch called Rebel Ranch. In that home, the couple raised two sons, both of whom live nearby and continue to visit. About her family Ellie boasted:

*"We had two boys [Charlie and Danny]. They're both wonderful boys and they've married wonderful wives. And we have wonderful grandchildren. We have been so blessed."*



Rebel Ranch in 2002 at time of interview (USF)



The Coflins' miniature horse (USF)



Faye Lake in 1980s (Coflin)

At present, Emmette continues to care for the couple's 20 acres, enjoying gardening, and taking care of the cattle and miniature horse they own. The couple has always enjoyed the view of the lake and every once in a while they will spend time paddling around the water in their small paddleboat. Ellie related: "We have enjoyed everything about being on the land." The couple, although in their 80s, continue to utilize its resources and their extended family continues to visit and enjoy what the lakes have to offer.

## History/Information

Lake Faye is a 9-acre lake and part of the Brooker Creek Watershed of Hillsborough County in Odessa, Florida. Lake Faye also goes by the name Rebel Lake, the name originally given to it by Ellie and Emmette when they first moved in. The couple named the lake Rebel Lake after their ranch that ran along its shores Rebel Ranch. Ellie explained:

*"We named the lake. It was Rebel Lake. It was on the maps in the County as Rebel Lake. And we went in about two years ago, I guess to look up something at the Courthouse, and the lake has been changed. The name is now Lake Faye. We thought Rebel Lake because we were Rebel C. Ranch. And so, we called it Rebel Lake."*

According to Ellie, water quality of the lake has changed somewhat over the years. When Ellie was younger, she said: "The water was so clear, that you could see the bottom. It was beautiful. Grass grew down on the bottom and you could see straight down." However, Ellie related, "It's not that way anymore." Like water quality, water levels of Lake Faye have also fluctuated over the years. As Ellie explains it, nearby Pinellas County pumps water from the Keystone area, which includes Lake Faye. In Ellie's opinion, this has been detrimental to the lakes in the neighborhood, including Lake Faye and Wood Lake. She discussed the matter:

*"Back in 1960, I was on the Board of the League of Women Voters and my portfolio was the water problems in Northwest Hillsborough County back in 1960. And our County Commissioners could have done something then to have stopped St. Petersburg from over pumping, but they didn't. And St. Petersburg had their own well field, but they over pumped it and salt-water intrusion came in. So, they just moved over to Hillsborough County and started pumping there. And we can see a difference in the lakes."*

Ellie was also quick to point out that there are also natural causes to the water level fluctuations, but that in her experience, natural wet and dry cycles do not cause the lake to rise and fall as rapidly as pumping. Another consequence of the water pumping of Pinellas County is a deterioration of drinking water that Ellie and Emmette can pump from their personal well. Ellie described the situation:

*"We had the best water out here you ever tasted. It was so cool and fresh and clean. We can't drink our water now. And that's because, they've drawn the water out so quick that it goes through so quick that it picks up all the minerals and everything; it's hard. And it's just different."*



Part of the Coflins' 20 acres of land (Coflin)



Part of Stillwater development (USF)



Stillwater development in its infancy (USF)

Wildlife supported by Lake Faye was once abundant, but has diminished in recent years according to Ellie. She enjoys watching wildlife and remembered fondly about the days when “it was nice and wild” and she could easily spot fox, deer, barn owls, whippoorwills, and a local bobcat. Ellie also reported spotting an alligator occasionally and many various fish. Sadly though, she reported: “We haven’t seen the bobcat or foxes for a long time. We don’t hear the barn owl anymore and you know, that is so disappointing.”

## Development

Traditional uses of land surrounding Lake Faye consisted primarily of ranching and orange groves. The agricultural feel of the surrounding area has changed little, due in large part to its citizens that often fight overgrowth of the community. As Ellie shared: “Most everybody that lived out here, had pastures, cows, and chickens...things like that.” The land continues to support orange groves, although much less so now than in the past. Ellie explained about the impact of development on the orange groves:

*“We’re losing them [orange groves] because they’re turning into subdivisions and development. We had the hard freeze and it ruined a lot of them, but we still have quite a few.”*

In Ellie’s opinion, development on the shores of Lake Faye and the surrounding area, both residential and commercial, has been significant during the time she and her husband have lived there. In fact, Ellie and Emmette were the very first to build a home on Lake Faye, known then as Rebel Lake. Since then, the only other building on Lake Faye has been Stillwater, a housing development. Like the trend mentioned by Ellie, Stillwater replaced what was once an orange grove. Ellie explained how this subdivision has impacted the lake:

*“The homes are humongous. I think they cover the whole lot that they have them on. And they’ve cleared down to the lake...and it’s not clear and pretty like it used to be. It’s a closed gate community and I think that people that move into a place like that, don’t realize how they change the area...you know they’ve got their lights on at night and it’s just a different view now.*

The Keystone Civic Association was successful in getting implemented regulations that prohibit the use of powerboats on Lake Faye. They felt this was important to preserve the lake as new people gained access to it, unaware of the negative consequences that could result from high powerboat usage. Also, the Keystone Civic Association, a local watchdog of development, was instrumental in limiting the number of homes on the lakeshore from eight to four. There are currently only five houses on the shores of Lake Faye the Coflins and four from Stillwater.



Lake Faye in 2002 (USF)



Lake Faye in 2002 (USF)

Further development in the area of Faye Lake includes a car wash that is to be built. There were plans for the construction of a major supermarket across the street from Ellie and Emmette on Gunn Highway, but attempting to keep their community rural, the couple joined other citizens to stop the project. Ellie shared:

*"So far, we have stopped them from building a supermarket across Gunn Highway. Right there where the tree farm is. And that's all right. Of course, it's commercial, but it's all right. And out here, we have wells and we have septic tanks. And can you imagine what a major supermarket would have for a well and for a septic tank? You know. They have a lot of fish. They have a lot of vegetables that they fix up. And it would be terrible."*

## The Future

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Ellie's main concern regarding the future of Lake Faye and the surrounding area is continued development. During the interview, she expressed how difficult it is to carefully balance planned development with environmental concerns. As she stated:

*"I know people want to come out and enjoy it the same way we do. And that's all right. But I just wish they would be reasonable about how they let this area develop."*

Ellie and Emmette have attempted to do their part in preserving a positive future. Ellie's civic involvement with the Keystone Civic Club is one example and although Ellie and Emmette have cleared land for their pasture, they have made a point not to clear on the lakeshore preferring to keep it natural. The couple was also involved, as mentioned, in preventing a major supermarket to be built on Gunn Highway. For the two of them, it is difficult to witness the slow disappearance of much of what they have attempted to maintain for so many years. Ellie expressed:

*"You know you read so much now about your sense of place. And all of us who have lived here for so long, this is our sense of place and we don't want subdivisions just on every bit of land they can find. It changed the whole place... And I think that this area is so unique that it ought to be protected in every way." Ellie concluded: "We just love this place."*

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