

Lake Pretty



Lake Pretty in 2002 (USF)



The Halls' home on Lake Pretty (USF)

The following narrative has been written based on an interview with Lake Pretty resident Lloyd Hall one afternoon in October 2002 in a house he owns on the lake. In it, Lloyd shares what he has learned about the lake in his many years of vacationing on it with family and friends.

Personal History

Lloyd Hall raised his family in Tampa and when his children were younger, the family regularly drove out of town to camp near and water ski on lakes in central Florida. Often, Lloyd would dream of owning a piece of lakefront property of his own. In 1968 that dream came true when he bought land on Lake Pretty. During the interview, Lloyd shared the following story:

“My brother-in-law read this ad about a piece of property on a lake that was for sale. He came and got me...we didn’t live far from each other in town. He said, ‘Let’s take a ride. I want to show you something.’ So, I didn’t ask what or where. We jumped in the car and came out here. You couldn’t see anything from the road. It was all brush, ten foot high. Thick and loaded with snakes...we walked around and found at least three of the stakes. We said, ‘OK, let’s try and buy it.’ So, we decided we’d go downtown when they had the sale and we would bid on the property.... The tax collector put this piece on the auction block and he said, ‘Does anyone offer the number that I say the property is worth?’ And I said ‘I will’. So, they said ‘OK, anyone else?’ And nobody else bid on the property. So, they sold it to me.”

For years the extended family shared the land for recreational use. Serving as a summer escape for Lloyd’s family, the lakefront property on Lake Pretty was well utilized over the many years the family has owned it. Eventually, the land was formally divided in two with each half going to each couple – Lloyd and his wife, and Lloyd’s sister and her husband.

On his half, Lloyd built a house that would eventually become his retirement home. However, before that, while skiing and enjoying the lake, the Halls stayed in a small travel trailer. There, family and friends enjoyed barbeques, parties, skiing, boating, and fishing. Lloyd said, “Every summer, as soon as school was out, my wife and children would move into the little trailer.” Skiing was a regular activity. Lloyd reflected:

“Years and years ago, my wife and I learned to water ski with my sister and her husband, my brother-in-law. And we would spend the better part of an entire summer water skiing. We’d burn up 30 gallons of gas every weekend pulling water skiers. All of our kids skied. My daughter learned to ski when she was 2 ½ years old...little bitty thing. Both my



Vegetation around the lake in 1998 (USF)



The Halls' dock leading into Lake Pretty in 2002 (USF)

boys were really good. They could ski double. They could ski triple. They could build pyramids. They could do whatever you suggested. And we used to go all around the lake. This was our take off and landing beach right here.”

Lloyd traveled for a living building nuclear power plants worldwide. The Westinghouse Corporation employed him, which was at one time the world’s leader in building nuclear power plants. While home in Florida, he would spend time at the lake enjoying the activities with friends and family. About what he did for a living, Lloyd explained:

“I built power plants and I traveled all over the world doing it. You know, it’s kind of hard to direct the construction of a power plant if you’re not there. So, I had to go to the job sites and do that. I’ve spent a lot of time in Brazil, Yugoslavia, Italy, Philippines, Japan, Korea – all over the world. And when I would come home after a job assignment, I would have four, five days off and I would come here [to Lake Pretty] and this was my relaxation.”

The weekend getaway house eventually became Lloyd’s retirement home. He and his wife began permanently living there in 1999, but they have since been back and forth between the lake and their home in Seminole Heights. Over the years, the lake has played a large role in the Halls’ lives. About how he currently feels regarding Lake Pretty, Lloyd shared: “We love the lake. We love the quiet serenity and the view... It’s been a lot more than skiing.”

History/Information

Lake Pretty is a 79-acre lake and part of the Rocky Brushy Creek Watershed of Hillsborough County in Odessa, Florida. As part of a chain of lakes, Lake Pretty is connected to Josephine Lake and Rock Lake and nearby is a smaller water body called Politz Lake. At the time of the interview, Lloyd described the canals that connect the lake as overgrown and hence, unable to navigate.

In terms of water quality and quantity, Lloyd says Lake Pretty is in relatively good shape. He remembers few problems with the lake and can recall flooding only once. He shared:

“We’ve never had a problem with this lake. The only problem we ever had was in 1970-71. To get to this house, I had to park my car on Copeland Road and walk in water knee deep to get here. We had a hurricane. It didn’t hit Tampa, but we got ten inches of rain. I came home one weekend after a job in the Philippines and my wife picked me up at the airport. She said, ‘We have to go to the lake.’ I walked in here and the water was only one inch from the bottom of the house. One inch!”

The rain stopped when the hurricane died down and most of the excess water flowed into the drainage canal preventing the house from flooding. Lloyd said that was the highest he had ever seen Lake Pretty’s water levels. According to Lloyd, not long after that flood, the Army Corps of



Shoreline of Lake Pretty in 2002 (USF)



Trees on the lake's shore in 1998 (USF)



View of the lake in October 2002 (USF)

Engineers put regulating boards into a creek that connects to Lake Pretty. This is not referred to as the drainage canal.

Lloyd describes Lake Pretty as private and said: “Everything on the lake is privately owned. There is no public access to this lake at all.” He also considers the lake to be a “good fishing lake” that boasts blue gill, speckled perch, bass, and catfish.

Other wildlife supported by Lake Pretty and its environment includes raccoons, alligators, eagles, squirrels, fox, owls, and a panther that Lloyd has not seen in about seven years. About the owls, Lloyd shared: “I’ve seen owls sit on that fence out there when they’re hunting and when the moon is full; you can see them go off and get a field mouse or varmint.” One of Lloyd’s favorite birds is the whippoorwill, about which he said:

“At night, I like to sit in the back out here on this screen porch and listen to the whippoorwills in the summer time. That’s a sound that can just put me to sleep. I don’t have a worry in the world when I hear those birds.”

However, according to Lloyd, increased development has pushed a great deal of the wildlife out of the area, which saddens him. He explained: “It’s [the wildlife] getting less and less because development is moving in and it’s squeezing the wildlife out. There used to be deer that lived in this bay head right here, but I haven’t seen them in ten years or more!”

Development

Traditional uses of land surrounding Pretty Lake consisted primarily of orange groves. Lloyd says the McKell family owned one of the larger groves – roughly 40 acres. It was a Mercot grove about which Lloyd explained: “Mercot is an orange that peels like a tangerine, but tastes like an orange...very, very delicate fruit. It’s good.”

Lloyd estimates the start of residential development sometime in the 1970s and he believes much has changed in the area since he first bought property on Lake Pretty. He related that there has been a great deal of development, residential and commercial in the area surrounding Lake Pretty. As Lloyd explained:

“In those days, there was nothing; nothing between here and Westshore Blvd. You got in Town and Country and you had gas stations. But it is not like that today.... It was pristine and now it is congested. It’s crowded. It’s filled with people who really don’t care about the environment. They don’t care about their surroundings.”

Recently, Lloyd’s sister and brother-in-law sold their half of the property initially purchased and moved to Atlanta, Georgia. A young couple bought the lot and at the time of the interview, had begun construction of a large home. Lloyd said, “They’ll have a pretty house. It’s a big house and it’ll be nice when they’re through.” Further plans for development, according to Lloyd, include the division of the McKell orange grove into 15 building lots near the lake and four directly on the lake.

The Future



Cypress trees along the shoreline (USF)



View of Lake Pretty from the Halls' back yard in 2002 (USF)

When considering the future of Lake Pretty, of primary concern to Lloyd is continued growth and lack of planned development. Of consolation to him is the decent amount of organization among those who care about it. He explained:

“We have a homeowners’ association on the lake and we also have most of the people on the lake that belong to Keystone Civic Association, which is just down the road. That encompasses the whole Keystone area – all the lakes and environs of Keystone Lake. Very active group of people in growth control, growth management, set back rules for the entire area, not just for Keystone, but for the Keystone region.”

Lloyd feels such organization of concerned citizens is what will ensure a positive and healthy future for Pretty Lake. As he noted: “People who live on the lake want to keep it pristine. They have a vested interest.”

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