

Lake Keystone Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Gobby Kuhn in her home on Lake Keystone in August 1998. The interview provided information, which combined with survey, biological assessment, and other agency's data illustrates the past, present, and future trends of the lake.

Gobby Kuhn

From Illinois to Florida



Gobby Kuhn, longtime Lake Keystone Resident

Gobby Kuhn and her family moved from Illinois to Florida in 1955, to be closer to Gobby's parents who had moved down and bought lakefront property on Lake Keystone. Gobby explains that the first time her father fished on the lake he caught a big fish, a bass, and that cemented the deal.

Gobby and her husband ran a gas station on the corner and lived in a house behind it while they raised their family.

Gobby comments that the environment around Lake Keystone was a good place to raise her four children. The isolation of the lake led to her dropping off and picking up her children, and gave them time to talk. It taught the children responsibility in that they had to be at the same place at a designated time. There were many activities for the family and their lives were filled with swimming, birthday parties and other lake activities.



Gobby's mother on a then sandy beach models the latest catch, 1954
photo by: Gobby Kuhn

The Kuhn family home was not on the lake, so Gobby and her family spent much time at her parents home, "sitting watching the kids with her mom and drinking iced coffee" Eventually, Gobby and her husband moved into her parent's house on the lake. She has remained involved with the lake, initiating the Lakewatch branch of the Keystone Civic Association and participating in data gathering. When asked what her favorite thing about the lake was, she comments, "The peace and

tranquility I get out of it...I've always gravitated toward water, if I've had problems, I've always gone to the water to solve them..."

The lake has created a lifestyle for Gobby that transcends her relationship with the lake itself. She spends her summers working with children at camp, leads canoe trips for senior citizens and has volunteered with the Girl Scouts. She has passed on her love of the water to her children, one of whom ferries boats for Sting Ray and another who, she comments, "is a water person like me."

Lake Keystone



West shore of Lake Keystone, the largest lake in the Northwest Hillsborough Basin

Lake Keystone is the largest lake in the NW Hillsborough Basin. It is a navigable body of water and as such is under the jurisdiction of the Tampa Port Authority. If a property owner or developer wants to alter the land around the lake, a permit must come from them.

The flow of the lake system is to the north. Water flows out of Lake Keystone into Brooker Creek, to Island Ford, Crescent Lake and Lake Minneola. All of the lakes in this chain are connected, but not traversible at this time. Gobby remembers a canoe trip taken with a Girl Scout troop trying to thread through as many lakes as they could.

Lake Keystone is a valuable commodity in the lake system of the area, it is deep and large and Gobby feels no threat that it will ever not have enough water. Others recognize the stability of the lake and an idea to reverse the natural flow of the lake was broached, but discarded, as Gobby cautions, "You can't fool with Mother Nature."

Gobby maintains that the quality of Lake Keystone has really not deteriorated over the years. "We got our runoff from the groves, that's true...phosphate and stuff...We're still getting runoff from people fertilizing their lawns. I don't think it's changed our lake at all."

Wildlife and plant-life around the lake has not experienced extreme fluctuation. Some of the land-based wildlife that previously combed the shores has disappeared such as rabbits, raccoons and quail. Gobby has noticed an increase in the wading bird population, "I have a big snowy egret that comes into the yard every now and then and walks all around like he lives here. We never had that before..."

Development

Lake Keystone was originally rimmed by orange groves, a situation that in the last 20 years gradually began to change. On this subject, Gobby comments, "Remember, this was an investment, so we would have a bad freeze or something else would happen and it was costing more and more to irrigate, to keep up the trees, to replace them, and along comes a developer and offers...big money, so they sold." And sold, they did. The lake is now rimmed by more than 200 residences.

When the Kuhn family moved to Lake Keystone, many of the houses were weekend cottages. The home of her parents reflects this, "I tell people I live in the old house on the lake, you can find me, no problem."



The Kuhn family children on family beach, 1965

photo by: Gobby Kuhn

More recent residents are building year-round houses and raising families in the area. The historical isolation of the lake has given way to a thriving area, complete with good schools. "We're getting a lot of young people which is great...They're family oriented...it is a fun place to live with your family."

The majority of the land around the lake has been developed exclusively as single family residential and for the most part on acre or bigger lots. The land remaining around the lake is very much of interest to the property owners. Not many parcels remain, there is an undeveloped point, but the land is connected to a house sitting back from the lakefront.



One of the few remaining undeveloped parcels on Lake Keystone

Using the Keystone Property Owners Association as a vehicle, residents have been able to have an impact on the type of development occurring around the lake. They organized nearly 20 years ago to battle a developer who wanted an easement for lake access to non-lakefront property owners. Their battle was successful. Yearly dues are paid to the organization and the money goes into escrow to battle propositions the organization feels

will negatively impact the lake.

The Future

The Keystone Civic Association has a Lakewatch branch. "Everyone thinks we're watching people doing wrong things on the lake, but that's not our intent. Our intent is to gather data so that when we have things happen on the lakes we can say...it's changed because of that". The Lakewatch branch monitors over 30 lakes in the area and has hosted Lake Days to disseminate information about lake health, wildlife, vegetation and safety.

The residents around the lake make attempts to organize to ensure for the health of the lake. The property owner's association is one such vehicle. They have at least one meeting each year and more if there is an issue to address. "It's a nice group, not everyone belongs, I wish they did...People think this [the lake environment] is really nice [that] nothing's going to happen...and then all the sudden something happens and they realize we do have an organization that can help them."

Gobby is an activist for her lake. She organizes the yearly boat parade, a candle-lit affair during the Christmas Season. She observes that it was an opportunity to get to know people who were new to the lake. The Kuhn family has had a relationship with the lake spanning 40 years. "We've lived on this lake, we really have. There's lots of memories for the kids and for me. Like I say, it 's a kid's place, a family place...I have always said, the door's always open."