

Lake Carroll Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Terrence and Betty Owens in their home on Lake Carroll in July 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.

Terrence and Betty Owen



Terrence Owen, oral history informant

The Owens moved to Carrollwood from England in 1963, when Terrence took a teaching position with the Chemistry Department at USF. As Englishers, Florida was a welcome change, Terrence comments, "To an Englishman, ah. Why did the British build an empire, notice where the empire is, south. Any where to get the blazes away from England". His wife agreed to the move on two conditions, first that they have a dishwasher, second that they have Orkin come once a month.

The original developers of Carrollwood offered incentives to USF faculty to move into the new development. The Owens picked out the site for their house as a manmade bayou was being dredged and received an orange tree from the groves that were surrendered to the development to sweeten the deal.



It wasn't even an orange grove,
it was scrub...scrub and
rattlesnakes...
photo: Terrence Owen

The Owens raised two children on Lake Carroll and remark, "It was a wonderful place to raise a couple of kids. That was back when water-skiing was unbelievably popular. Our son and his friends used to go out at six in the morning skiing before they went to school...They lived on the lake." The children in early Carrollwood were thrown together due to the relative isolation of the neighborhood. The Owen's comment, "As far as many people were concerned, back then this was out in the sticks. They said, 'You don't live out there on Lake Carroll. We have weekend cottages on Lake Carroll...'" The children's world consisted

of Boy and Girl Scouts, swimming and water skiing, all activities that served to bring the children together and the parents as well.

Although their children have grown up and moved away, the senior Owens carry on the tradition of trans-generational interaction with the lake through visits from their grandsons whose lake activity, like their parent's, centers around skiing which has been updated for the Owens through the addition of a jet boat.

Lake Carroll



In due course they developed the newer community beach, which they call Whitesands Beach, up on the North shore

Lake Carroll is in the heart of Carrollwood Proper. It serves as the setting for over 100 of the original 935 homes in the original development area. The lake is a heavily used body of water and many of the residents have boats and jet-skis. Residents of Carrollwood Proper who do not own property on the lake itself have lake access through Whitesands Community Beach.

In the 1960's when the Owens moved onto Lake Carroll, the lake was clear with a white and sandy bottom. Terrance comments, "...it was almost like the Bahamas." He remarks on the change in water quality over the years, "...mud washed down, fertilizers washed down, weeds got a hold, and now it's weedy... The water quality people tell me that the quality is good... The clarity is excellent. The weed, they say... reflects a normal, healthy biological environment..."

The lake hosts four bayous, three on its southwest side and one on the south end. Of the four inlets, two are natural, one created by connecting the lake to a neighboring pond and the third, the site of the Owen's home, was completely manmade in 1962 through dredging.

The land around Lake Carroll was previously orange groves on the north side and scrub on the south and western sides when development for Carrollwood began. The wildlife, supported by the historic environment, waned to some extent with development, but the lake still hosts a good variety of fish, including a bass population, which has made a recovery in recent years, perhaps due to the encouragement of catch and release practices.

Development



Sunstate Builders they were called. They were the ones that developed the original

Sunstate Developers was the force behind the developing of Carrollwood Proper beginning on the northwest shore of Lake Carroll in the 1950's.

They offered inducements to USF faculty, teaming the new university with the new community. Attractive inducements, in addition to lake living itself, included the benefits of storm drains for the streets, draining into the lake to deter flooding and a free, mature orange tree thrown in to grace the

Carrollwood. The prime mover in all this was Matt Jetton. It was his vision that developed all this western end of Lake Carroll...He was quite a character
photo by: Terrance Owens

yard of the new home.

They did indeed create a community among the residents of Carrollwood. In the 1960's, residents contributed \$50.00 a year toward a civic

association to care for a community beach, a community house donated by the developers, a community park and public lands such as landscape islands in the streets and the lake. The original \$50.00 has been raised to \$300.00 paid by the 935 Carrollwood Residents annually on top of their property tax, an addition that was passed by referendum.

Approximately ten years ago, a second wave of development began. Because little property around the lakeshore remains undeveloped today, new owners are buying up properties sporting 1960-70's houses, razing them and rebuilding modern homes worth more than previous structures. As a result, the tax base for the area has risen.

The Future

Lake Carroll retains little of its historical, natural environment, but this has been its reality for the past 40 years. It has survived development, heavy recreation use, and drainage and is still a healthy lake. Lakewatch has been able to provide some level of awareness for the residents as to the impact of their actions on the quality of the lake.

For the Owens family, Lake Carroll was an optimal environment to call home. As redevelopment continues and property values increase, the lake will remain the focal point of the Carrollwood community.