

Lake Carroll Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Heywood Turner at his home near Lake Carroll on May 23, 2001. The interview provided insight into historical uses of the lake, the local wildlife, and community spirit.

Family History



Heywood Turner near his squirrel-proof bird feeder

For over fifty years, Heywood Turner has been visiting and enjoying Lake Carroll. As a teenager, Heywood and his friends would often ride their bicycles from Seminole Heights to go swimming in Lake Carroll. During the 1940s the lake had a swimming pavilion, towers for diving, rope swings, and showers for the swimmers. Heywood says that both Lake Carroll and nearby Lake Ellen were favorite swimming locations for a large number of people.

By the late 1960s Heywood had gotten married and started a family. Once he and his wife, Mary, had children, they decided to move away from the city. In 1968 they bought a home near Lake Carroll, although not one with direct access to the lake. Heywood talks about their decision to move to Carrollwood,

“Well, we thought it was a good place for children to grow up. A little bit more of feeling of freedom in the area, being able to go out walking at nighttime.”

The Turners raised three children in their home near Lake Carroll. When the children were young, the family would often go swimming in the lake and use the lakeside park facilities. Now that the Turners have grandchildren, they continue to go to the lake and visit the parks. The parks are well designed, according to Heywood, with paved walkways for the grandchildren to use for rollerblading, as well as benches on which the grandparents can relax. Heywood also continues to ride his bicycle near the lake to enjoy the beautiful surroundings.

Lake History

Lake Carroll is located near Armenia Avenue and Linebaugh Avenue in the Northwest Hillsborough Basin. The lake is rather large, spanning an area of 215 acres and reaching a depth of 21 feet. Given its size, Lake Carroll is often busy with people swimming, fishing, using paddleboats, and riding jet skis.

Heywood remembers that the area around Lake Carroll in the 1940s was rural and “predominately orange groves.” He says that most of the homes in Carrollwood have been built on land that was previously used for orange groves. Reminders of this past include orange trees in people’s yards and the name of a major street – Orange Grove Drive.

As the area has been developed for residential use, many of the trees and natural vegetation have been removed. Heywood feels that the area surrounding Lake Carroll is still very green, but lawns are a predominate feature. He thinks that lately there have



View of Lake Carroll from northwest shore

been problems with the growth of unwanted vegetation in the lake, such as hydrilla. A recent St. Petersburg Times' article indicates that the chemicals, especially fertilizers, used to maintain lawns might actually encourage the growth of unwanted vegetation. Heywood mentions that the Carrollwood Civic Association produces a monthly newsletter that will often include suggestions about fertilizer use. However, he says that there are no official restrictions on chemical use around the lake. According to the same St. Petersburg Times' article, another major issues affecting the health of Lake Carroll is that the storm sewer system dumps runoff directly into the lake. (Article cited: ["Lake's Biggest Threat Takes an Ironic Twist"](#); by John Petrimoulx in St. Petersburg Times, published December 10, 2000.



One of the storm sewer pipes that brings run-off into Lake Carroll

Even with the elimination of traditional land vegetation, Heywood still sees a variety of wildlife, including turtles, raccoons, opossums, rabbits, and squirrels. There also continues to be occasional alligator sightings around the lake. Apparently, the number of rabbits has gone down considerably in recent years and Heywood is not quite sure why this has happened. In contrast, the squirrel population has appeared to increase enormously. However, as Heywood points out, the squirrel population might be growing just in his own backyard because of the ready availability of birdseed.

An avid birdwatcher, Heywood spends much time observing and identifying the birds in the Lake Carroll area. Some of the birds that he has identified include blue jays, mourning doves, thrashers, cardinals, crows, woodpeckers, and hawks. There are even water birds, such as ducks and egrets, which will make their way from the lake to the Turners' backyard. Heywood says about the mallard ducks,

"They visit the yard. They'll come across. In fact, yesterday I was picking oranges and a mama duck with about six little ones in tow came walking right through the yard. They came to graze underneath my birdfeeders for the seed."

Heywood also sees ospreys near the lake. The Carrollwood community has encouraged the osprey to remain in the area by building a platform at the Little League field where the osprey can nest year after year. Another bird in the Lake Carroll area is the peacock.

"There are a couple of stories in the area. I'm not sure exactly what the origin is. One is that one of the grove owners brought in peacocks as watch birds... Another was that there was a peacock farm in the area. I'm not sure which of those is the correct story. They've both been given some press over the years. Nonetheless, they're still very much in evidence on Orange Grove Drive... You see these large numbers of them and they'll be sitting on walls. One fun image that I saw was at the school over here, on the soccer field...there was a peacock perched right on top of the soccer goal."

Development



Heywood Turner showing John Primo, one

When Heywood would come out to Lake Carroll to go swimming in the 1940s, the area surrounding the lake was still very rural with wetlands and few houses. Orange groves dominated the landscape. By the 1960s residential development in the area had already begun. The Turners' house was built in the early 1960s, and when they bought the house in 1968, remnants of the orange grove remained. Heywood states,

"In fact, most of the homes in Carrollwood now reside where there were previously orange groves. When we moved here there were about twenty-

eight orange trees on this lot. Now we've got one. You could see the rows of trees carved out enough space in the grove to build a structure."

The one orange tree that remains in Heywood's yard is still productive and grows enough oranges for one year's worth of juice.

The residential development of the area around Lake Carroll continues. Currently, the lake's entire shoreline is dotted with houses. In recent years, Heywood has seen many older homes torn down and replaced with newer, more expensive structures.



An example of an older home surrounded by newer structures



One of the parks near Lake Carroll that is maintained by the Carrollwood Civic Association

The Carrollwood Civic Association continues to keep up the neighborhood facilities, such as White Sands Beach, Scotty Cooper Park, and the civic building. Although the buildings in the neighborhood are continually improved, there are some downsides to the development. Heywood feels that one major issue in the area is the increase in traffic, with congestion being especially problematic near schools.

Future

During the more than thirty years that Heywood has been living near Lake Carroll, he feels that the quality of life has been very well maintained and that the community continues to keep the area beautiful. When asked about whether he thought there would be any major changes to the area in the future, Heywood says,

"My quick answer is I hope not. I really don't think so... I think there's enough of a continuum of people here that work hard to maintain the area. Another thing that has happened is you see second generation residents moving into the area. People grow up here, go away and then they come back and reside here."

Although the area faces many future challenges, especially regarding the health of Lake Carroll, there remains a strong sense of community. With the active involvement of community members, the environmental problems will hopefully be solved, and the community will be able to continue to enjoy their lake.

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