

Glass Lake Narrative

The following narrative is based on an interview with Al and Lyn Wellner in their home on Glass Lake in June 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.

Family History

The Wellner Family



Al and Lyn Wellner, longtime Glass Lake residents and oral history informants

Al and Lyn Wellner have been residents of Glass Lake since 1949. They bought a log cabin, which had been built in 1932, on the north side of the lake, the cypress for which came from the property. Al had learned about the property through a newspaper advertisement while still living in Atlanta. He had spent time in Tampa while working with the Boy Scouts of America and decided this was a place he would like to live. Al tells the story of the first time he saw the property,

"I asked a friend to meet me at the airport... we were both surprised. We had agreed to meet the real-estate agent at the corner of Patterson and Racetrack Roads, as we got closer and closer to this property, Warner looked at me and I looked at him, and believe it or not, this was the property right next to the property of my friends. I bought the property, moved here and got married all within 30 days."

The Wellner homestead, as their family has dubbed the property, provided the setting for raising their family of two girls and a boy. Al comments, " As our family grew, I started knocking down walls and adding on. Finally we had the two redwood units added.

The property the Wellners own on the lake is also



The Wellner Homestead painted on a piece of the original redwood shutters by Lyn Wellner

the setting for a second cabin that has an unusual history about which Al reminisces, "The original house...was a little white construction shack on Racetrack Road...I saw a "for sale" sign one day...I went to the man I knew and said, 'How much?' He said, 'You've got to bid on it...say \$15.'" So I bid \$15 and two or three days later I had a house". Like the main family home, the cabin has been added to and expanded to meet the needs of their son and daughters and their growing families.

As children, the Wellner kids utilized the lake for swimming, skiing and fishing. Patterns in activities followed the seasons. Al never could figure out the seasonal clock operating within his children and he muses, "It's funny, when our children were small they'd be in the lake two or three times during the day in the summer...sometime around September or October they stopped...then sometime in May or maybe as early as April, they'd e say, 'Dad can we go swimming?'"

The Wellner house has been the site for gatherings of band members, birthday parties and Boy Scouts. Many memories have been supplied by these get-togethers. Lyn tells a story of a band party, " My daughter Jane had a band party one time...Of course, Al was marshalling things...some of the kids were missing, he thought he would walk down to the beach and of course they were down there. He asked, ' Has anyone seen the alligator?' They all came running back up."

Jane was not the only one who brought friends to the lake. Their son Tom challenged high school friends two or three years running to a water-skiing contest on Christmas day. Al recounts, "They'd have all their clothes on and ski...everyone but Tom had fallen down at some point. Tom was kind of bragging about it, so they picked him up and threw him in."

The Wellner children have grown up and scattered with the exception of Jane. The lake has reclaimed the pumped up beach and the trees planted when the Wellner's first moved in have matured and dropped seedlings of their own. The third generation of Wellner's, the children's grandchildren have discovered the lake. Lyn reminisces, " Our daughter and her two sons were out here and worrying about snakes. I said, 'Jane, you grew up out here.' And she said, "How did you let us do that when there were snakes?" How soon they forget!

Glass Lake



Basin and is rimmed by cypress swamp, oak and pasture. Several other species of trees populate the lakeshore, planted by the handful of residents who call the lake home. The Wellners have contributed to the diversity, planting 2000 pine trees on their property when fire claimed an orange grove. Al

recounts the results of an entrepreneurial bug that bit his son Tom. "My son...he was 12 or 14 said, 'Dad, can I plant some cedar trees to sell as Christmas trees?' So he went out and planted those cedar trees. Well, cedar trees aren't that good for Christmas trees because they don't have any branches on them..." The business venture may have failed, but it created a wooded environment leading up to the lake.



The Wellner's drive, bordered by pine and cedar

In recent years, the lake has fallen victim to an infestation of the Brazilian exotic *Elodia*. The weed is a new addition to the lake that has always had a weed problem, but is more invasive. Lyn comments on this subject, "The weed that was here ... we harvested...it was not that bad... we could make ponds of it and swim around the ponds. It was not a dirty weed. We'd get into many a weed fight. This is just awful. It's as if it's a huge bush from the ground up." Al is the

Lakewatch volunteer for the lake and during the spring had problems getting his boat onto the lake to take readings.

Al has a permit from the county to treat the weed from the shore and uses it to keep his beach clean. Other than that, the weed has not been treated chemically, but the residents have resorted to hiring nursery people to harvest the weed by hand. They do not object to chemical treatments, Lyn tried to have the county control spray it. She relates this experience, "I said, 'Can you spray this weed?' They said, 'Yes.' They didn't know what they were talking about. They sent representatives out and they said, 'No, we can't spray this...we only spray for mosquitoes.'



Elodia, an invasive weed has overtaken Glass Lake in the

Despite vegetation takeovers, the lake remains home to a wide variety of wildlife, although their numbers have declined over the 50-year span the Wellners have lived on Glass Lake. The lake is still home to large bass and many types of waterfowl. The Wellners have had a pair of Sandhill Cranes who visited every morning to get birdseed and use the neighboring property to nest and raise their offspring. The area used to be home to bobcat,

recent past
seen in five or six years.

wild turkey and fox, although they haven't been

Development

Glass Lake has remained somewhat of an island of rural peace within an area of rapid residential and commercial development. The Wellners have been the only full-time residents that have lived on the lake since 1949. The lake is home to a handful of other well-spaced homes surrounded by land owned for the most part by the residents. Property owners over the years have been few. The southwest side of the lake was owned by a mother and son, the Millers. The land is now owned by a descendent. The north end of the lake has been purchased by the only other full-time residents and they have interest in preserving the natural environment. The Touchtons own the property to the south of the Wellners and they do not intend to develop the land, but rather use it to run cattle. There is a 50-acre lot for sale on the west side of the lake, but development has yet to be planned.

The area surrounding Glass Lake is still zoned for agricultural and residential. The Wellners have witnessed the building of subdivisions and golf courses and an increase in traffic and noise. They have approached officials to deter high-density development around the lake and for the time it seems to be assured.

The Future



It is hard to predict what the future holds for Glass Lake and its residents. Presently, a preservation ethic is the norm, helping to maintain the quality of the lake and the rural atmosphere from which the residents benefit. Al comments, "It's always been a beautiful lake." With the concerned attention of the present residents and landowners, it will be a beautiful lake

well into the future.