

Round Lake Narrative

The following narrative is derived from an interview with Woody Dame, a twenty-six year resident of the northern shore of Round Lake, at his home on March 15th, 2000. The narrative exposes various historical aspects of lake living, and offers a glimpse of environmental issues that are significant to community members.



Woody Dame

Photo Source: USF

Family History



The Dame's lake frontage

Photo Source: USF

Woody Dame and his family moved to Round Lake from Nashville in 1974. The benefits of lake living and the rural nature of the area attracted the Dames to Round Lake. Woody comments, "We thought it would be nice to live on a lake with a large lot that was in the country."

Woody and his wife, Betty, brought three of their four children with them from Tennessee. The Dame children enjoyed fishing and swimming in the lake while growing up in the area. Betty and the Dame's son Garry used to snorkel around the entire perimeter of the lake, looking at various species of fish and turtles. Woody reminisces about going alligator hunting at night with his son Garry.

Woody comments,

"We used to have alligators in the lake from time to time and it was always a thrill for everyone. We would go out on the dock at night, with a flashlight and a stick, and call the gator up by splashing the stick in the water and making gator sounds. As you flashed the light across the water it would pick up a glow from the gator's eyes. If you continue to splash the water and make gator sounds you could lure the animal right up to the dock."

The Dame's children are now grown, however Woody and Betty's grandchildren now come over to enjoy swimming and fishing in the lake.

Woody and his wife are both active in the lake environment. Woody enjoys boating and fishing on the lake. While Betty regularly feeds fish, turtles (soft-shell and hard shell), marsh hens, and an occasional Blue Heron. Woody comments,

"The Blue Heron will land on the turtle raft next to the





The Turtle Raft

Photo Source: USF

dock and wait patiently until the small fish rise to the surface to grab a piece of cracker than he will make his move to snatch a quick meal. Soft-shell turtles are special to the lake. They are few in numbers and a little shy, staying a short distance from the dock with just their noses above the water until they gather enough nerve to swim in and compete for the crackers that are available."

Woody at the helm of his boat

Photo Source: USF

Lake History



The shore of Round Lake

Photo Source: USF

Round Lake is a 10.5 acre lake, in Northeastern Hillsborough County, with water levels along the shore line up to 5' and out from shore 10' to 15'. There are several places in the lake that have depths of 20' to 25'. The lake is bounded by North Dale Mabry on the west, Little Road on the northwest, Linda Vista Circle on the north and northeast, and Berger Road on the south. The lake is surrounded by twenty-one homes, and by a total of twenty-three plats. According to a report, dated January 1999, by the Department of Fisheries and Aquatic Sciences (University of Florida), Round Lake contains nineteen different species of fish (e.g., brook silverside, lake chubsucker, bluegill, etc.).

Round Lake is an augmented lake. Woody asserts that the main reason for low water levels on Round Lake is the section 21 well fields that are located on the west side of Dale Mabry across the road from the lake. Woody comments, "After the well fields were installed in '64 or '65, the residents around the lake, in '66, asked for and received approval to drill an augmentation well to keep the lake at a proper level."

The implementation and maintenance of the augmentation system on Round Lake has been a grassroots effort from its inception. Woody credits his neighbor Russ Macy, and several other lakeside residents for collecting money from community members to dig a well and install a pump. Funds to pay for the pump's electric bill were collected from the community members on a monthly basis until Jim MacManus, a neighbor, arranged with Tampa Electric to add prorated charges to each residents' electric bill. In 1990 the Round Lake Association was formed. The association's main goal is to maintain the augmentation system. Annual dues are collected from lakeside residents to pay for the operation and maintenance of the augmentation system.

Prior to 1995, community members had full control over the augmentation process. In 1995 Southwest Florida Water Management District (Swiftmud) required that the augmentation system be placed on a permit. Woody elaborates on the amicable decision-making process used to decide the target water level for augmentation,

"...[I]n '95 Swiftmud required the association to obtain a permit. One of the requirements in granting a permit was to establish a minimum water level for the lake. A representative from Swiftmud, Jim McManus, a neighbor, and myself went out on Jim's dock and checked the staff gauge. The water level was at fifty-three sea level feet and the three of us agreed that was a good



A small fish swimming in the shallows of the lake.

Photo Source: USF



The nails demarcate the target water level for pumping

Photo Source: USF

level. The man from Swiftmud drove in a nail in one of the dock supports and told us we could pump enough to maintain the water level up to the nail. So now when we reach that level we shut the pump off."

The lake environment provides habitat for various animal species. Raccoon, possum, armadillo, water snakes, black snakes, mallards, wood ducks, heron, marsh hens, cormorant, marsh rabbits, ibises, and quail. According to Woody there were otters in the lake and an alligator but neither have been seen in a while and the number of rabbits and quail have decreased.

Development

Woody has seen the area surrounding his home change from a rural community to suburbia. When Woody moved to his home in 1974, much of the surrounding land was undeveloped, and was used for pastoral and agricultural purposes. Woody comments,

"Between Ehrlich Road and Van Dyke Road there was very little development. Just about all of it was cow pasture. Now you see shopping centers, a high school, and subdivisions. We used to ride our motorcycles from our home to the pasture a half mile away and ride all over the place, that was in '74 and '75. The property around the lake was already developed when we came in '74."

One of the earliest development activities Woody recalls hearing about is a dredging to harvest sand for use as fill on the property around the lake. Woody comments, "I don't know when the dredging was done, I am guessing in the early sixties. The dredging caused the lake to have some pretty deep holes in it, some as deep as 25 feet."

When asked if there were many 'longtime' residents living on the lake, Woody replied,

"Well it's kind of mixed. Edna Prince, Russ Macy, Carmen DePaula and Irene Kintzel have all lived on the lake for a long time. Of course when you look back there has been a turn over of residents, people have bought and sold like any other residential neighborhood."

The Future

Woody asserts that, "The future [well-being] of Round Lake is dependent upon the augmentation permit, at least for the short term, until the section 21 well field reduces pumping by a substantial amount as it has agreed to do." Woody is concerned that population growth and the need for more water might put an end to the augmentation permits. "This would create a lower lake level during the dry season that could put the lake under stress and leave docks sitting on dry land." Woody believes that if the lake were to recede significantly over an extended period of time the value of the homes around the lake would decrease



substantially. Woody comments, "You know for a lot of people, including myself, this is probably the most valuable asset you have...it's appreciated over the years and to have it go down would hurt financially."

Although Round Lake is currently healthy, its future, like its neighboring lakes, is not guaranteed. One thing is for sure, the efforts of Southwest Florida Water Management District, the Round Lake Association, and concerned citizens will be absolutely essential if the lake's good health is to be maintained.



Some of the homes on the shore of Round Lake.

Photo Source: USF