White Trout Lake Narrative

The following narrative is based on two separate interviews with long-time White Trout Lake Residents Arthur Hackett and Joanne Almand at their homes in 1998 and 1999. The interviews provided information, which combined with survey, biological assessment, and other agency's data contribute to the identification of past, present, and future trends of the lake.

White Trout Narrative

Joanne Almand and Arthur Hackett

Joanne Almand

Joanne Almand (nee Brown) is a lifelong Hillsborough County lake resident. Her father bought property on the south side of White Trout Lake in the 1930's from M.H. Mabry, the brother of Dale Mabry. M.H. owned a significant amount of land to the south and east of White Trout Lake, and wanted his friend, Joanne's father, to buy some of it and predicted that, "...he'd be happy some day that he did."

The Browns had dreams of building a permanent home on the property, but the second World War waylaid their aspirations. The family still made use of their lakefront property, converting a tin garage into a weekend home, and spending much time enjoying the lake. Joanne comments, "We lived in town but we came out here all the time...living in the little tin house. We were self-sufficient. We had the field peas and the garden...we drug all the palmettos out...we got a quarter a bucket back then and that was a lot of money."

There was no lack of entertainment for the children of the Brown family when they visited the lake. Joanne comments, "You just knew everybody. You would have picnics...and everybody would come. We would play with the Mabry's grandchildren...We were either there or they were here...It was wonderful. I am glad I
The Almands made use of a tin house to enjoy White Trout Lake during the weekends and summer months, ca. 1930

photo by: Joanne Almand

Joanne Almand's childhood on White Trout Lake fueled a relationship with the area's lakes that would last a lifetime. She and her husband lived on Lake Keystone for nine years and she comments about the experience, "...[It] was the nicest lake...wonderful fish. It's still nice. We have always liked to ski, before skiing was popular we used to ski and you could spend a lot of time on the lake...We were hoping [more] children would move out there. When we lived out there, there weren't any...I loved Keystone and liked the area..."

To ensure a social life for their children, the Almands turned to the developing Carrollwood. They spied their desired lot from across the lake before the roads were even put in. They talked to Matt Jetton, the original developer of Carrollwood, about the lot with "all the oak trees". If he were ever to make it a building lot, they wanted it. They began building on the lot in 1960 and moved in to their new house in 1962. Joanne comments, "The kids were in hog's heaven with all the kids, but of course, everything evolves."

Joanne's evolution has brought her back to the site of her childhood, the shores of White Trout Lake. She lives in the home her parents built in 1953 on the south shores of the lake. She has added on to the home over the years and revels in her return to the lake she has known for the majority of her life.

The Hacketts

The Hackett family has a long history of association with White Trout Lake. Arthur's parents, Jim and Betsy Hackett, bought their home on the northeast shore of the lake from James and Mabel Henderson in the late 1940's. Mr. Henderson had lived in downtown Tampa, but for many years he maintained a small, sheet metal-roofed fishing cottage on the site that he thoroughly enjoyed almost every weekend. When the couple built a year-round residence and moved into their new home, he named it Scotland Yard.
Charles, who as a youth spent many summers on the lake with his grandparents, now owns the house and the Temple Orange Grove that his Grandfather planted in the early 1950's. Arthur and his wife built their home in the grove, set back from the shores of the lake, but they have lake access through their son's property.

Arthur fondly remembers swimming in the lake when the water was clearer, when the fish were more plentiful and the land surrounding the lake was less inhabited. His wife Edith reminisces that one of her favorite things was to wash her hair in the lake in those early days when the water was still clean and soft. Unfortunately, increases in development have spurred changes in water quality and have led to a decrease in lake activities by long-time residents with memories of a pristine White Trout Lake.

Arthur, although not owning lakefront property, has invested much time and effort to achieve a balance between the effects of development and the health of the lake. He is the White Trout Lake volunteer for the Lakewatch program, monitoring the water quality of the lake. In addition, he is spearheading an effort to address a recent infestation of hydrilla presently threatening the lake.

White Trout Lake

White Trout Lake is a 78-acre lake located in the
Hillsborough Basin and the Sweetwater Creek Watershed. The lake was naturally formed and is still fed by several springs. The name of the lake was influenced by three factors, the historic clarity of the water, the white sand lake bottom, and a thriving bass population. Joanne comments, "They used to call bass 'white trout' because they had a white cast because of the clear lake... It is what they used to call bass that were bred in clear, clear water."

In addition to a healthy fish population, White Trout Lake historically supported a diverse representation of wildlife found around lakes in the area. Until 1993, Joanne saw otters on the lake. Other than a decrease in snakes and fish, the population supported by the lake appears to have maintained a stability unexpected amidst high-density development.

The present relationship between humans and White Trout Lake began before the early pioneers recorded history. Residents of White Trout Lake have found relics from Native American Indians who at one time populated the area. Perhaps the locating of a sawmill on the lake's south shores enabled the first immigrant populating of the shore. The residents occupying the land around the lake today still find sawdust washing up on their shores during periods of lake level fluctuation.

The lake was, in historic times, home to only a handful of residences, the majority of which were weekend cabins. Two year-around homes, owned by M.H. Mabry and Louis Hill, were located on the lake's shores. The land around the lake was utilized in part for cattle grazing and citrus production. Where the land was not disturbed by residences or food production, pine, oak and palmettos flourished.

Joanne and Arthur both refer to times when the clarity of the lake's water was much higher. Joanne comments, "... It was a white sand bottom. The whole lake was white, you could go out in the middle of the lake and it was white..." Over the years the quality of water has declined. Joanne continues, "As the years evolved, it just got worse and worse. It's a shame to see something that is so natural and beautiful coming to what they're coming to now."

The lake is currently battling problems with aquatic
vegetation, particularly hydrilla and algae. Another White Trout resident, Lester Olson, commented in a survey, "I think if I had bigger feet, I could walk on the algae accumulated on our shoreline." For many residents, the increase in vegetation problems has led to a decrease in lake activity, and has served to motivate some residents to take action.

Time has taken its toll on White Trout Lake and human occupation of its shores has encouraged the introduction of exotic vegetation such as maleluca

photos by: Art and Edith Hackett

Development

Until the late 1950's, development was scarce around White Trout Lake. After that period, Dale Mabry and Busch Boulevard were surveyed and extended. Orange Grove Drive was added from Armenia to give limited access to the lake's east and north shores. Until then, access to the lake was limited to Twin Lake's Road leading to a dirt road that ran through Mabry's property and on to the Brown's property.

In the late 1950's, Matt Jetton began laying out Carrollwood; Streets were put in bringing ease of access and the area began to develop in earnest. The Browns and other property owners on the lake's south shores surrendered property to the county for the building of Busch Boulevard. The building that commenced in the late 1950's has not flagged in the recent past. The Estates at White Trout Lake were developed over the last few years on property previously owned by the Coe family. What was once a family orange grove and two houses on the east shore of the lake is now the setting for 47 houses. Although only seven of the homes have lakefront property, the remaining 40 have a cumulative effect on
the lake, adding runoff that contributes to the decline in water quality of the lake and the vegetation problems the lake is now experiencing.

Although the majority of property around the lake has been developed, people interested in lakefront property have found ways to squeeze in. Property surrounded by large lots, such as the Brown's, has been sold off. One property, accessorized with a swimming pool and tennis court, was sub-divided and a new house is now being built on the site of both recreation structures.

The Future

White Trout Lake is situated in the heart of a heavily developed area north of Tampa. An increase in the density of the built environment in the near future seems unlikely as most developable land surrounding the lake is in use. Families having a long relationship with White Trout, who have seen changes brought by increases in human occupation of the surrounding land have taken steps to ensure the health of the lake.

Arthur Hackett initiated action among lake residents to address the hydrilla infestation. The colder winter months have limit use of the lake, so the ramifications entailed by hydrilla infestation are not yet fully felt by residents. As the warm months of high lake use approach, activity restrictions a hydrilla infestation brings will increase, potentially causing more residents to get involved in addressing the problem.

The health of the lake and its future are of much concern to residents, especially those with involved relationships with the lake. Joanne sums it up nicely, "I just want this passed on to my family. When I grew up, it was like absolute heaven to have the space. I still don't know where I am [200 yards from Busch Boulevard] because I don't hear anything. I have enough property and I plan to keep it this way. I would never sell." Many residents echo the appreciation expressed by Joanne and work to insure the existence of the lake and the lifestyle it facilitates for future generations.