



Civic Association of West Lake Brantley

George and Rita Deschambeau moved to our neighborhood back in 1973, back when 434 and 436 were lonesome 2-lane roads with very little traffic and few traffic lights. The area in general had served as a turpentine farm, and still retains many of the pines from that era. Rita had previously lived for 7 years in Fern Park's English Estates. What drew them to our area was beautiful 285-acre Lake Brantley. Their neighbor in Fern Park had bought land here, and took them out on the lake. They loved it and decided to make the move.

After expanding their original dwelling more to their liking (such as making the carport into a den and adding a 2-car garage), they were able to enjoy the good life, tucked away in a semi-rural wooded paradise, with very friendly neighbors.

Back in 1973, what would become Brantley Point was a froze-dead citrus grove. There was no Wekiva, no Sweetwater-- just thick woods. Jennifer Estates was previously also a citrus grove. The nearest grocery stores were Pantry Prides at 436 and 17-92 or one in Apopka, or the old Goodings in Maitland. By the 1980's a Winn-Dixie and K-Mart were built on 436 at 434. In fact, our area had a Maitland address back then, with box numbers for mail, rather than house numbers. Where Wal-Mart and Sports Authority on 434 are now, there was a citrus processing plant. It was definitely a simpler, less-hurried, less crowded time.

Rita recalls that long ago a nearby neighbor used to discharge his laundry's gray water directly into the lake. Someone-- not Rita-- called the health department, which tested the water quality and announced that Lake Brantley "...is cleaner than what they're drinking in Orlando." Then as now, occasional droughts would drastically shift the lakeshore.

Before the county finally paved our streets in 2000, they'd send weekly grading trucks in to scrape the roads level. They got the bright idea to dump coastal sand & shell mix each week to build up the low spots, and these shells were murder on everybody's tires. Plus, this shell grit would stream directly into the canals and lake during heavy rains. This shell filler was elevating the road way too much and contributing to flooding out hers and adjacent properties. Rita got fed up complaining to the county and seeing no action, she decided to go sit atop the fresh load of shell grit they had hauled in, and thus she prevented the grader from operating.

Rita recalls hydrilla has for a long time been a problem in the lake, clogging boat propellers and becoming a major nuisance. By 1985, ours and surrounding communities introduced thousands of sterile grass carp, which ate not only the hydrilla, but beneficial aquatic plants as well. (And now South American snails are the newest problem, source unknown).

Rita recalls back in the 1970s CAWL B president Ray Lewis would send a monthly mimeographed newsletter to residents. To spiff up the newsletter, Rita and George eventually took over its printing for many years.

She recalls each New Year's Day, Ray Lewis and the CAWL B Board would take a photo of themselves to document their ownership of the beach park and boat ramp. Rita devoted several years of active service on the CAWL B Board and has always promoted the welfare of her community, attending numerous county meetings that helped pave our roads. We commend her civic-minded dedication all these many years. This writer knows firsthand what a wonderful neighbor and friend she has been.

Submitted by:
John Goring 8/31/2004