

Ron Ahlman, Lake Julia

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LIFO or FILO? The acronyms in the accounting or computing world stand for “last in, first out” or “first in, last out.” For Lake Julia residents it depends on what time of the year it is. Now in late fall/early winter, it means “first in, last out” for those who pay attention to who is the last to take his dock out of the water, or the first to put in. Ron Ahlman, long-time resident on Lake Julia, just took his dock out on November 20, just days before ice arrived. Looking back to the spring, it was not surprising that Ron put his dock in the water the same day the ice went out. FILO.

You would be mistaken to think Ron has an obsession with first or last [as the case might be]. It has more to do with him loving to fish. “The longer I have my dock in the water, the more time I have to fish.” Just last week he caught a 3 lb walleye from his dock. How does he come by this love of fishing? His family story has it that at the age of 1 month, he was in the boat with his mother as she was fishing on Lake Julia. That was 69 years ago.

Sometime in the 1930’s his grandfather took an interest in Lake Julia, owning 5 or 6 lots. Grandpa Stromberg built a couple of houses on the east side, and his uncle, a builder, and his father built a couple more. His uncle built the solid brick house on Julia that is now home to Barb and Roger Johnson.

His mother died when he was three, his dad remarried but had a stroke around 1967 and didn’t come up to the lake much after that. The family lived in their house on Xerxes in Minneapolis, but summers were just about always spent at Lake Julia. As a young boy he remembers boating, fishing, swimming, and water skiing. There were a lot of woods and few cabins, the water was clear, and yes, there were weeds but not so thick that you couldn’t rake them when necessary. There was a band of weeds on much of the Julia shoreline, and his father would have to raise the motor on his boat going through the channel to Julia. The channel was also a source for turtles, some of which he kept for pets.

Ron especially remembers that the crappie and bass fishing were great. Crappies: “We would catch our limit in no time.” Bass: he remembers once fishing with frogs [“they were everywhere”] in a weed bed by his neighbor’s ski jump and catching 11 bass. In his early days at Lake Julia, Ron recalls clear water, some weeds, but no dog days of summer. Dog days happened to other lakes, but not Julia.

His stepmother sold the brick house in the late 60’s/early 70’s, but soon after had regrets about selling and bought the property where Ron lives now. That was around 1972. The property was 3 fifty-foot lots, had been owned by Louie Gohman, and is just further north on the shoreline on the east side of Julia. At the time there was just a cabin on the property. Ron bought it in 1974, and soon after, he and brother Roland began the process of adding on.

Like many others on the lakes, Ron spent time at Cottonwood Beach Resort. He and his family also attended the pancake breakfasts at Stan and Margaret Smith’s, early fundraising and social events of the Briggs Lake Chain Association.

One of Ron’s biggest concerns is the stability of water levels, especially the flooding. He recalls an effort in the early to mid 1980’s to stabilize water level, but nothing happened. Another of his concerns, which is also the biggest change he has seen since his early years, is water quality. Where once the water was clear with native weeds, now there are fewer native weeds and murkier water.

If he were granted one wish to improve conditions on the lakes: “I would do something to stabilize water levels and control flooding, possibly starting with the Bayou.” His guess is that at one time the Bayou had water flowing through it, but over the years the water channel changed naturally. Altering it again, he thinks, just might help stabilize water levels.