

This We Remember:
Paul and Norma Fors, Lake Julia

Does this sound familiar? “I like to get up in the morning and look out at the lake. It sure beats looking at a parking lot or apartment building.” Paul and Norma Fors have been a part of the lakes for the better part of 54 years, first buying two parcels of property in 1955, then living in both a tent and cabin in the years before and during the time it took to build their home.

Building took about 10 years, starting in 1975. Paul, a bricklayer, worked on other people's homes during the week in the twin cities area while Norma drew house plans and made preparations for each weekend jaunt to the lakes. What started out to be a nice small cabin turned into their year 'round home, which they moved into in 1985. According to Paul, “It was a fun project; Norma always had things ready to go.”

Lake Julia was the treasure they shared with other cabin owners and weekenders. Paul fondly remembers the lake at that time: “We would walk along the shoreline in waders and catch nice bass and sunnies. There was a nice natural hard sand shore line [now covered in muck] in front of our land and all along the north end of Julia.” At the time there were no speedboats, just fishing boats, so the water and lake bottom didn't get all riled up.

Paul doesn't recall problems with lake weeds, and that “the fishing was great.” At one point their property, as well as their neighbors, ran a good 10 feet further out into the lake, but because of erosion problems they lost that part of their property. The road into Lake Julia at that time was just a sugar sand road, and Highway 25 was still unpaved. Their girls used to complain about “going down the sandy road to the lake.”

Norma's fondest memories include driving around the lakes to the Cottonwood Beach Resort to go dancing and meeting other people from the lakes. “Living in the suburbs,” said Paul, “you didn't know your neighbors. But at the lakes you knew everybody. Every Friday night there was a pot luck dinner at the town hall, and a lot of lake people showed up.”

Moving into their home was one of Paul's warm memories: “We didn't move in until it was completely done.” Before they started building their home, and during construction, their girls were at the lake all summer, and all kinds of people came to visit. “Our girls practically grew up here. We had good times here.” Adding to their adventures on the lake, Norma's sister and her husband built a cabin on the east side of the channel between Briggs and Julia.

From their time as weekenders and builders to 2009, the biggest change the Fors have seen is “from cabins to all year homes,” which they don't see as negative but part of normal change. What Paul doesn't see as normal change is worsening water quality. If he could make things change, he would improve water quality and clarity, like it was just a few years ago.