

LOOKING BACK

It was early morning, yet the temperature was already well into the 70's on that day more than 35 years ago when we first saw Forest Lake. After leaving our two small children with grandparents back in the city, my husband and I headed north onto highway I-75.

At that time, the expressway ended at Alger so we had no worry of going too far. We easily located the sales office of American Central near the post office in the little town of Alger. In contrast to that quiet town, the sales office was a beehive of activity. Coffee and doughnuts were plentiful and helped to promote conversation between salespeople and potential buyers. Some marketing techniques American Central used to draw people into the area were airplane rides over the lake, boat excursions, and outdoor barbecues. We were reached through mass mailings.

After a few minutes of polite introduction, our salesman was very eager to show us "beautiful Forest Lake." However, I was surprised when he pointed out his car. Apparently his sense of salesmanship prompted him to buy a long antique funeral limousine. Once we were in the back seat, though, it was difficult to converse with him.

The ride down Jackpine seemed endless, probably because we had to travel at a slow pace. At that time Jackpine was only a bumpy sandy road full of potholes. In fact, none of the roads we traveled on that day through Forest Lake were paved.

Finally we reached the clubhouse. Then it was much smaller than it is now. In fact, it looked like we were walking into a private home since it was furnished like someone's living room. Our salesman immediately began telling stories about big fish that were caught near the dam. Sometime during his conversation I wandered over to the door wall and looked out for the first time at Forest Lake. Although the water was low since the lake hadn't filled yet, the abundance of beautiful trees and the general contour of the lake gave it the look of a pristine wilderness area. It was beautiful!

As the day wore on, our salesman used the same selling techniques on us so familiar to other property owners. "Land is the only thing on this earth that can't be duplicated," he repeated. "You can't lose when you buy land." Then there was his two-way radio that continually squawked out updates on properties that "just sold." This happened approximately every 15 minutes. According to our salesman, properties at Forest Lake were "selling like hotcakes."

Eventually, we ended up buying property on that day so long ago. We built a cottage on it two years later and in time, bought 4 additional properties bordering our original lot. Today, looking back to those early years when we were so young and inexperienced, we have to chuckle, just a little. Because what we ended up with was not the large capital gain on our property that the salesman had predicted, it was in fact something else much, much better.