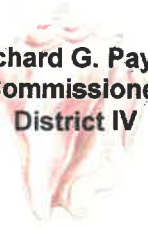


Richard G. Payne
Commissioner
District IV



THE CITY OF KEY WEST

P.O. BOX 1409
KEY WEST, FL 33041-1409

1300 White Street
(305) 809-3844
rpayne@cityofkeywest-fl.gov

June 20, 2018

To: Mayor Cates & Fellow Commissioners

Re: Resolution Naming “LAKE McKILLIP”

To give you more information about Mr. John Leigh McKillip (now 83 years young) I asked his son Alan to write a brief history about his father John Leigh McKillip that I could give to you. Alan is now a Senior Pilot for Delta Airlines flying Boeings 757 and 767s. He visits his father in Key West and I have gotten to meet him. John is not aware of my proposed naming resolution and is a very modest person who seeks no limelight. I hope to surprise him.

Alan has written an eloquent paper describing his father and the part that the adjacent salt pond played in Alan’s growing up years. Making and launching boats and Alan and his friends fishing and swimming in the pond.

I would appreciate if you would read Alan’s letter and I thank you for your kind consideration of my resolution.

Sincerely, 

Enclosed: Alan’s Letter

Requested Info On John McKillip

mckillipa@comcast.net

Sat 6/9/2018 10:28 PM

To:Richard Payne <rpayne@cityofkeywest-fl.gov>;

Commissioner Payne,

I have been able to acquire most of the information on my dad that you requested.

John Leigh McKillip was born in Key West on June 4, 1935 to Juliette Russell McKillip and Gilbert Alexander McKillip (both born in Key West). He had an older brother Odes McKillip. My dad grew up on the corner of United Street and Leon Street. He and his best friend Robert Sawyer launched their small boats from there on Friday after Elementary/Middle School to spend the weekend in the Mud/Bay Keys.

My dad had a love for the water which steered in him to Outboard motor boat racing. He purchased his first racing boat in 1951 for \$35. This led to larger boats, many of which he built, including Inboard Hydroplane (one of which he built in High School shop class during his Senior year) involving racing throughout the Keys up to Miami. The peak of his racing career was in June, 1963, receiving the E Pleasure Craft World's International Championship Trophy. His racing stopped when he was involved in a bad accident in Fall of 1963 in Tavernier. My mom stepped in and basically said you have two small children who need a father and I do not want to become a widow, And that was that! Dad was an active member of the Key West Outboard Club (club house was located on Stock Island where Boyd's Campground is now located) from the beginning of his racing days until outboard boat racing went out of style in the Keys in the early 1970s and the property sold off to Boyd's.

John did not serve in the Military. Being born in 1935, he was too young for WW II and the Korean War and too old for draft service in Vietnam. Any time I mention that I was born in Key West, people ask "Was your Dad in the Navy?" to which I respond "No, my Dad was born there and his dad and mom were born there. I am a REAL CONCHI!" When my wife was to give birth to my daughter and son I suggested we be in Key West at the time to produce another generation of Conchs. That was a non-starter!

John was a Carpenter by trade, starting work right out of High school with Bennent Construction. Over the years dad worked for CBS Construction (owned by his brother Odes), Johnson & Curry, Padron Construction and finally Toppino Inc. for his last 37 years of work in the trade. Dad worked as an Entry level carpenter, to Job Foreman over those years. Dad estimates he built about 45 homes throughout Key West along with numerous other projects, like the Old City Hall building down town, Fifth St. Baptist Church to the brick inlaid cross walks on Duval and Whitehead Streets. While working for Toppino's dad was Toppino's job foreman for the Overseas Highway bridge replacement projects. Dad was working for Johnson & Curry when they were building homes on Fogarty and Patterson Ave from 11th St working toward 10th St. He says he built 12 of these homes in this area.

The lot his current home is on at 2801 Fogarty Ave. was "left over" from the tract construction and was offered to him for the grand sum of \$3,500. He was offered and could have had all four corner lots for the grand sum of \$12,000. At that time he and my mom, Myrna Lewis McKillip (of Key West) were living on Bay Point in the home that my dad built for my mom as a "Wedding Present". The home, except for the Garage Door, was paid for when they moved in in 1956, after their marriage on April 6, 1956. The home is still there and intact! As my mom was tired of living "way out of town in the boonies" he sold the Bay Point home, moved in with his Mother-in- Law on Reynolds Street, bought the lot and built the home in 1960. He has lived there since.

My dad remembers the 10th to 12th Street area north of Flagler Ave to Harris Ave as the "Lime Grove" area and was "Hammock Land". He thinks the area of Fogarty and Patterson Ave was filled in around the mid-1950's. This fill-in from Harris Ave. to the old Henry Flagler Railroad base (behind Paterson Ave.) created an "L" shaped pond from Kennedy Drive at the top of the "L" to the west side of the Pond at the bottom of the "L" from Harris Ave to Roosevelt Blvd. After the North side was filled in behind Patterson from 10th St. to Kennedy Drive (where the two shopping centers are) in the 1970's the pond which is the subject of your interest (the First pond) was the largest section left. A smaller pond (the second pond) was between the temporary road for the 9 inch water line now covered in Mangroves (extending along Patterson from 10th to the canal at 9th St.) and the larger pond (the third pond) behind Denny's to Roosevelt Blvd.

Growing up next to the "First Pond" was great! My dad and I built several pram and skiff type boats which were launched in the pond. As I got older my boats "grew" bigger as I did and I was allowed to go out of the First Pond the the Second Pond, to the Third Pond and finally beyond the bridge on Roosevelt to the "Sea Drome" area between Sigsbee Park to Fleming Key (the Navy landed large Sea Planes here) eventually to the Seven Mile Reef and to Marquesas Key. My friends and I built a large platform in the middle of the pond to dive off of and hang out. We used to have "row boat" races in the pond. In the 1960's the pond was about 5 feet deep in the middle with clear water and covered in turtle grass. My friends and I would snorkel in the pond and spear Pin fish and Shiners with a miniature "Hawaiian Slings" made from a wooden thread spool, tire rubber and spear made from wire clothes hanger. Often we would catch large snapper, small "Jew Fish" (which they were called at the time), grouper, mullet and an occasional tarpon. During the winter we would catch large brown shrimp (70-80 each night) and during the summer large Blue Crab along the edge of the pond before the mangroves began to take root (dad showed you the picture of him in his racing boat "Miss Safe Harbor Marina" in about 1962 and only the mangroves along the Flagler Railroad base are present).

My dad loves Key West! His family roots go back to the mid-1870s. His father Gilbert, who was a salesman at Home Appliance Store was born in Key West in 1898, with his father William McKillip, who owned a Jewelry Store at 202 Duval Street (Rick's Café location) emigrating from Northern Ireland. His mother Juliette was born in Key West in 1904 with her father Benjamin "Big Foot Ben" Russell (one of the last "Wrecker's salvaging ships off of the reef), emigrating from Hope Town, Bahamas.

I hope this is sufficient information for your efforts concerning the Pond. Please reply that you received this email.

Respectfully,
Alan G McKillip
770-262-7683