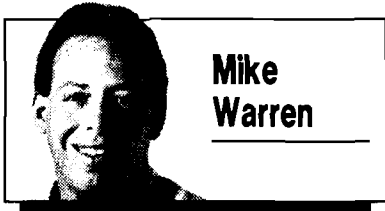


Lake Olympia's dark beauty holds visitors spellbound

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TRUST ME. If you lived at Lake Olympia, you *would* own some type of boat, even if it were only a rubber raft.

Lake Olympia's 130-acre, natural lake is like a magnet, holding visitors and residents spellbound with its dark beauty.

Looking at a topographical model of the 1,000-acre, master-planned community in the visitor center, I got the impression Lake Olympia has more water than land.

"There isn't more water than land," said Dolores Roberts, Lake Olympia's sales and marketing director. "But there's definitely more than in any other development in southwest Houston."

Andrew Choy, president of Lake Olympia Development Corp., found a gem in the rough when he spotted the lake on an aerial photo of the land, which had been known for more than 100 years as the Palmer Plantation. Choy purchased the land and built a bridge over Oyster Creek, connecting Highway 6 with the new Lake Olympia Parkway.

As he developed Lake Olympia in the early 1980s, Choy worked with the Army Corps of Engineers to preserve the natural beauty and wildlife native to the lakes and islands. The islands are home to exotic birds and deer and Choy said the lake contains "a million" fish.

Lake Olympia opened in 1984 and experienced early success. When Houston's economy took a nosedive, progress stalled. But Choy said Lake Olympia was the first southwest Houston development to begin opening more streets and sections when the economy improved.

Compared with Lake Olympia, many other developments' lakes seem like large ponds, Choy said.

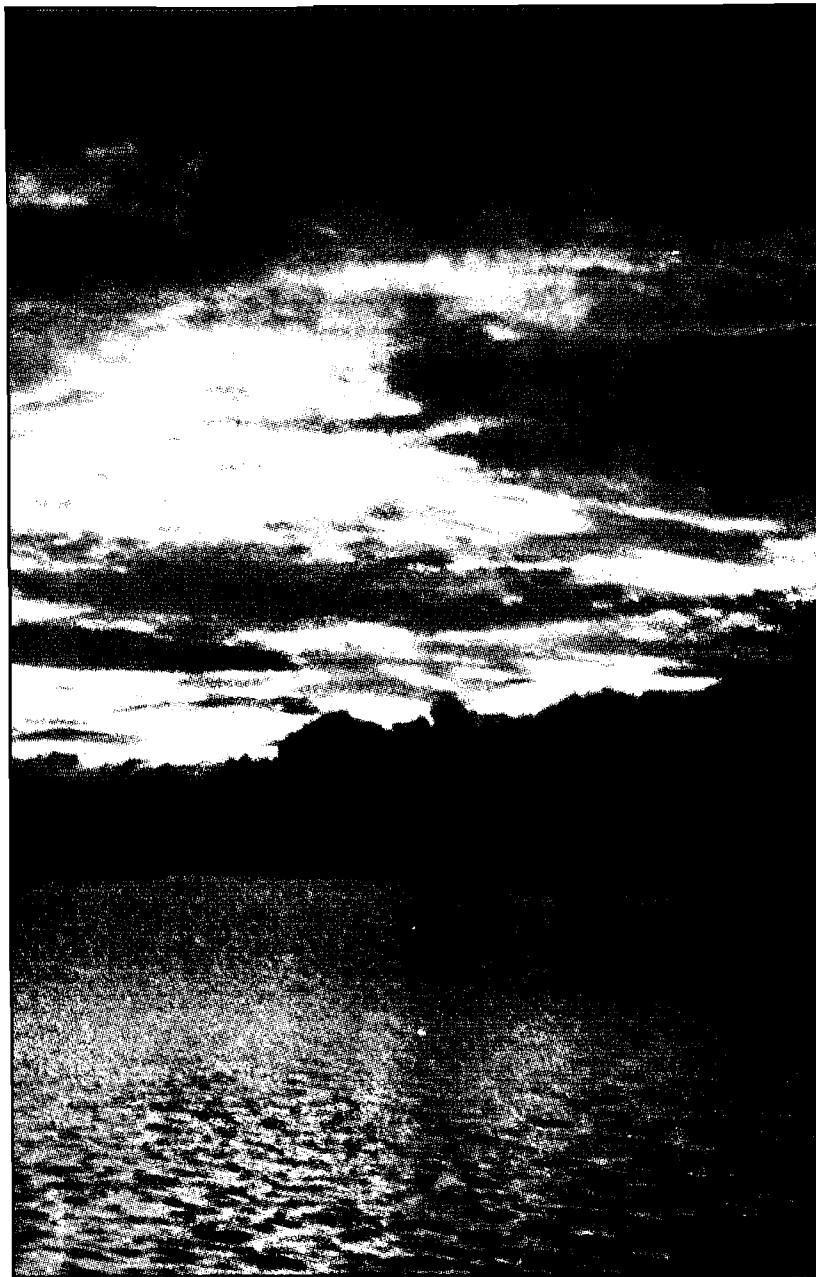
"You can't do anything on those lakes," Choy said. "You can spend a whole day on our lakes."

When Roberts hosted a boat tour (available to all visitors), she began by telling me, "Seeing is believing. There's no way you can tell somebody (how beautiful the lake is) until they actually go on the boat ride."

Indeed. The portion of the lake near the visitor center, which is a man-made extension of the natural lake, is similar in appearance to other master-planned community lakes. But after the boat left that part of the lake, it seemed we were in another state.

We cruised past islands so thick with trees and vegetation that I could see only a few feet into them and, on the water, lily pads with bright pink stems. Occasionally, an egret made an appearance. Downtown Houston seemed light years away, although it is actually less than 20 miles away.

Channel 2 weatherman Doug Johnson, Oilers coach Jack Pardee and pro golfer Billy Ray Brown call the community home. Oilers quarterback Warren Moon is building a lakeside estate at Lake Olympia, as well.



Elliott Barron/The Houston Post

Spectacular Texas sunsets are a Lake Olympia specialty.