

# Author writes book about Wekiva River

Jim Robison is a champion of Florida’s waterways, especially the Wekiva River.

In April 1988, when Seminole County celebrated its 75th anniversary, Robison began writing a weekly history column called Seminole’s Past.

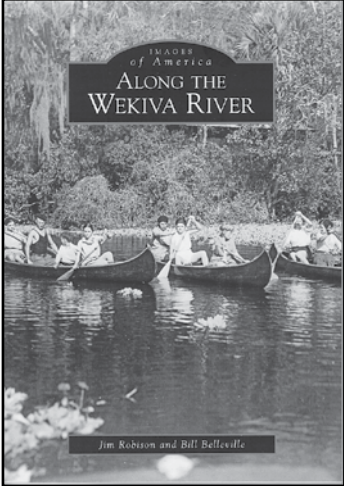
History goes deep with Robison. His great-grandmother, Henrietta Jane Robison, was born in 1855 in Holmes County and widowed by a Florida yellow fever epidemic in the late 1800s.

“She homesteaded land in North Florida that remains in the extended family today,” Robison said. “She and other family members spread across the state and witnessed Florida’s transition from the last frontier east of the Mississippi to one of the most populated states in the nation.”

Robison did not actually grow up in Florida.

“My parents raised two sons as Air Force brats with tours throughout the U.S. and Europe before returning to their home state,” he said. “My father, Ivy Randolph Robison, retired as an Air Force colonel in the mid-1960s, bought a home in south Orlando’s Lake Conway Estates and turned his skills as a military officer into successes in real estate, specializing in building quality homes for military retirees.”

Robison has lived most of his adult life within a few miles of his home on a little pond in Casselberry. He is past president of the Sanford Historical Society and currently serves on the board of Friends of the Wekiva River and the Seminole County Historical Com-



It took one year for Jim Robison to write his book titled **Along the Wekiva River. Robison, who is on the board of the Friends of the Wekiva River, has written several books.**

mission.

In 2009, he wrote **Along the Wekiva River**, a book that shares the history and varied facets of the Wekiva River.

“It took me about a year to write the book,” Robison said. “I talked to city of Apopka Mayor John H. Land, who knows a lot about the area, the Apopka Historical Society, *The Apopka Chief* and when Kelly Park was dedicated, I tracked down the person who used to live on the land in the park. It was really a learning process. For example, I didn’t know that Dr. Howard Kelly, the one Kelly Park is named for, was one of the doctors that started Johns Hopkins University Hospital. A scientist, naturalist, physician and humanitarian, Dr. Howard Kelly received worldwide distinction as a gynecologist and one of the founders of Baltimore, Maryland’s Johns Hopkins Hospital. The preservation of the Wekiva began in 1927 with this extraordinary man

who donated his 200 acres, including Rock Springs, to Orange County for the purpose of public recreation and spiritual enrichment.”

Co-author Bill Belleville also encourages a sense of place – to endeavor to have an understanding of city/county where you live and understand the history of those around you and the responsibility to preserve into future, Robison said. Belleville is a scuba diver, canoe adventurer and nature explorer.

Robison said one of neat things about the Wekiva River, the Wekiwa Springs State Park and Kelly Park is they are not far from home.

“You can see what it is like and get a sense of place of what Florida was in previous generations,” he said. “It is really easy to get away from suburbia on the water or with a hike. A board member of the Friends of the Wekiva River, Robison is concerned that current resi-

dents protect the Wekiva River and address critical water issues that he say will save them.

“Florida will run out of cheap water at some point,” he said. “The spring flow is diminishing and the amount of runoff pollutants getting into systems is increasing. That will have a direct effect to homeowners – in the future their water bill will equal their cable bill. The cost of water for your home and to irrigate your yard will become very expensive unless we figure out ways to conserve it and make it last.”

The future of Florida is economy based on having enough water to serve future generations, Robison said.

“Retirees won’t stop coming to Florida almost year around, and the population of Florida in the next two generations is slated to double again,” Robison said. “The entire I-95, I-75, I-4 corridors will be populated from St. Petersburg to Orlando. There will be no real difference as you leave from one community and go to another. We will have to deal with where they will live and provide water needs at somewhat of an affordable level.”

Although Robison can be a pragmatist, the dreamer within cannot be suppressed for long.

“We live in this world of myth,” he said. “Here we have the myth of the American frontier and the reality of life on the frontier. The Wekiva is like that, part myth, part reality.”

Copies of **Along the Wekiva River** by Robison may be purchased at the Museum of the Apopkans, 122 E. Fifth Street, Apopka.

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