

Lake Q&A
India Davis



Where are you originally from and how did you discover Lake Martin?

I am originally from Mobile, AL; have seven brothers and sisters who are forevermore my best friends. I attended Catholic grammar school; an all girls' high school; received my undergraduate degree at The University of Alabama and my Masters degree at Auburn University Montgomery.

I first came to Lake Martin in 1969 when I was dating Mike Davis. We eventually became engaged, and I came to Alex City and applied for a teaching job. I interviewed with Mr. Sam Doss. Not sure how I got so lucky to land a teaching job, except for the fact that there were so few special education teachers back then, but I did get it and started at Laurel School, which is now Stephens. That was 1970.

I moved to Alexander City and lived with Mrs. Genie Herzfeld in what is now Mistletoe Bough, the bed and breakfast near downtown. She was 83 at the time. There were no apartments for rent, and Charles Wayne Davis assured "Miss Genie" that I wouldn't be bringing boys around. She was an unbelievable delight, kept up with everything I did and literally became the grandmother I never had.

When did you move to the lake?

I moved out of Miss Genie's when Mike and I married in 1971, and we lived in a Russell Cabin. It took us only two years to decide we wanted to live on the lake. At that time, nothing was for sale at the lake, but after much persuasion from the local boys, Ben Russell opened up Phase I at Willow Point.

What was the lake area like when you first came here?

There were no Realtors. Ben Russell sold us our lot. Willow Way East was a dirt road. We had well water or lake water. For phones, we had party lines. There was no cable, only antennas for television. And there was no guardhouse.

Our world at the lake was amazingly small and simple. Children swam and skied and took swimming lessons in the lake. Families all got together and celebrated the holidays. Fred Dobbs would bring the fire truck around on Christmas, and all the children jumped on for the ride; ladies had cookie swaps; Halloween was so small that the neighbors took Polaroid pictures of each trick-or-treater; Fourth of July called for a neighborhood parade, and there was always a queen – Libba Robinson – riding in one of Fred's convertibles. Life was easy.

Growing up with summers at Gulf Shores, I knew I wanted to live on the water, but secretly, I never thought I would love lake life; I wanted to hear the rolling tide, but after a short time, I realized that lake life was definitely the best. There are lots of seasons to enjoy, especially spring and fall. They are my favorite seasons, because I can sit on the deck and close my eyes and just about commune with nature.

If you could not do that job, what would you do instead?

If I could have another job, I would like to have been

a pastry chef and own a bakery.

'India' is an unusual name. Where did it come from?

My mother had a best friend in Georgia named India Mansour, and well, she thought so much of her that the name stuck – on me. Lot of Georgians have the name India, after India Wilkes in *Gone with the Wind*, and amazing to say, I sold a house to another India, and she was from Mobile as well!

What is your job? How long have you been doing it? Did you do that job before you came to Lake Martin?

My background consists of 25 years teaching special needs students and at the same time 10 years working as a psychometrist for the state. Both jobs kept me busy and inside buildings. Becoming a Realtor made me feel like a bird. I was free, I thought, to make my schedule and run my own life and be with adults. No more bus duty at 7 a.m.

That's not exactly how it works, but being a Realtor specializing in lake property is absolutely exciting! I cannot imagine not being a Realtor, as it affords me the opportunity to meet so many wonderful people. Being a Realtor is not about selling a home; it's about a relationship, more like putting a puzzle together to find a family haven that will create lifetime memories. During that time I get to know their family and their friends, and we become so close. That's probably the best part of my job, and in reality, many of my customers are my best friends. I have been in real estate for almost 20 years, and when I started, computers and cell phones were not in our world.

My parents owned a department store in downtown Mobile and raised all eight of their children with a love of God and family. They instilled in us honesty, integrity and a work ethic, bar none. For that, I am most grateful, and I feel that my success as a Realtor is what it is because they instilled those gifts in me, and I, hopefully, exemplify those qualities to all the people I meet.

Have you ever met anyone famous?

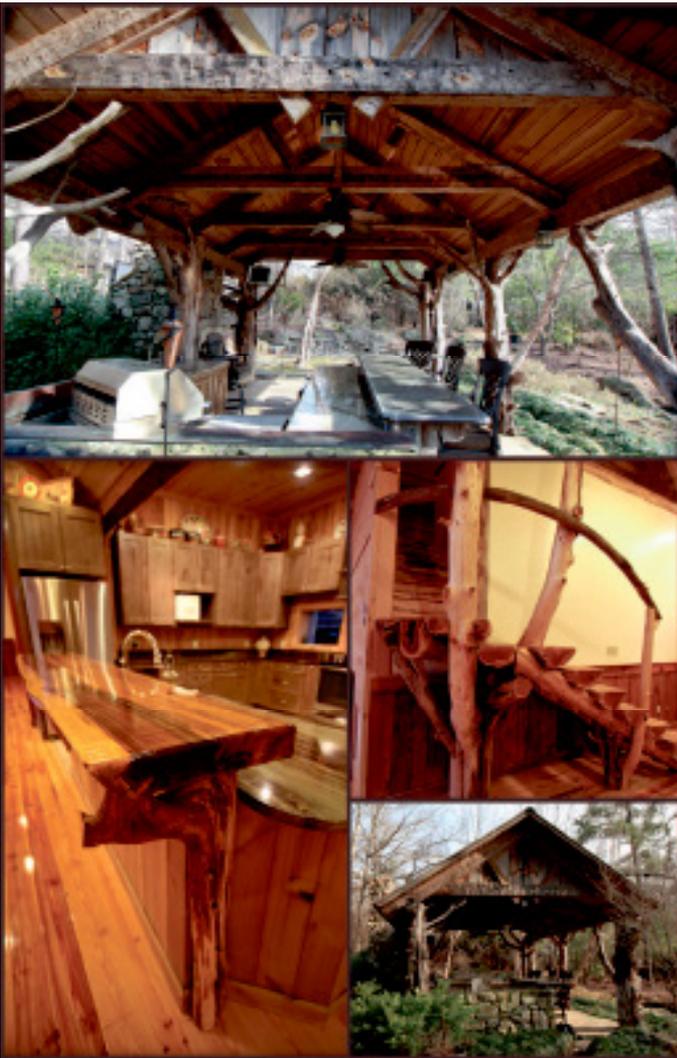
During my 20 years as a Realtor, I have not met many really famous characters, but the most interesting was Sela Ward. She could not find a home to rent on the lake, so I let her have mine, and my family went to our Russell Cabin. Don't ask me why I did that; probably Mike wanted a good look at her.

What is your vision of Lake Martin's future and what do you think needs to be done to get there?

Seeing Lake Martin in 1972 when we first bought our lot and looking at it today is just mind-boggling. I imagine that in the coming years, Russell Lands will have developed all of Pitchford Hollow/Willow Glynn and all of The Ridge, including the island. I can foresee a booming town center at Russell Crossroads with a coffee shop, ice cream bar, a pub, a couple more restaurants, retail shops and a hotel – hopefully, The Ritz!

And then, I believe they will rename us Lake Martin, Ala.!

I think that our lake continues to be one of the most pristine and beautiful lakes around, and with the help



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of Ben and Luanne Russell and the Russell Forest Preservation Organization, our lake will continue to maintain that reputation. I see more houses, more boats and lots more personal watercraft and floatation devices behind them. To keep up with all the extra water activity, we will have a huge challenge to keep the lake clean and safe, so the young and young-at-heart alike can enjoy the amenities of the lake.

What do you think is your greatest accomplishment?

Definitely my two children, Sawyer and Lynley. Seeing them mature into charitable, loving parents who are raising their children with the same ideals with which I was raised just sends chills. And to top that, having them as part of my realty team. Who could ask for more? Our team has excelled, and yes, we have continued to be the number one team on the lake, but what that means for us is having integrity; being honest in all that we do; listening to what our buyers and sellers want and having fun doing it. Most of all, we compete only against ourselves. It is great to see other Realtors do well, and we know they are working just as hard as we are.

But when I think of accomplishments, I have to mention my special students, because it is not just my accomplishment but theirs, too. I love to meet one of them in a store, get a hug and hear them say, "I remember what you said, Mrs. Davis – I have a job!"

Now that, along with stories about how they are no longer afraid to ask questions or to read, just thrills my soul! There are so many funny stories from my teaching career, but I remember one vocational class when we were discussing the word "income."

"Give me a sentence using this word," I told them.

Up flew a hand, and the student said, "Open the door and income a cat and dog!"

Well, I just had to say that it was a great effort, and we moved along with the lesson.

What are the most moving/memorable occasions in your life?

I have three. The first was seeing my son in green hospital garb walking down the corridor holding my first grandchild. That was a surreal moment in my life. I just couldn't grasp that it was my son was holding his own child!

The second is watching my daughter come down the aisle on her wedding day. Preceding her were all her young first and second cousins – barefoot – dressed in handmade gowns. They were four or five abreast carrying garlands of flowers, and they were crowned with flowers. And then out she processed to the voices of angels - truly!

And lastly is about my mother. I was sitting at her bedside with all my siblings, and I was holding her hand as she passed away. There is no way to say without sobbing what that moment was like. She is my mentor, and if I could be half the lady she was, I will have accomplished a lot.