

## **Mpls.-St. Paul Magazine**

(Published 2003 as part of Special Advertising Section in Mpls.-St. Paul Magazine)

**By John Nemo**

When more than a dozen of the first homeowners in the history of Cobblestone Lake gathered on a spring evening to discuss why they chose to move to the new master-planned community in Apple Valley, Tim Quady immediately established himself as the neighborhood's comedian.

"Just for those of you who haven't moved in yet, here's a tip: Get window treatments!" said Quady, who became the first resident of Cobblestone Lake in November of 2002. "Honest to God, it's the one thing I wished people would have told us before we moved in. You never think about it until the first day, when construction people are moving past and you're *trying* to get out of the shower!"

Quady sat back in his chair, sipping a beer as his fellow neighbors bust out laughing inside the living room of a spacious Cobblestone Lake model home. The dozen or so people inside the room had come from all different walks of life – young professionals with no children, families with several kids and empty nesters – but each found their dream home at Cobblestone Lake, a 323-acre master-planned community located in the southeast corner of Apple Valley. When construction is finished later this decade, there will be between 2,000 and 2,500 single-family homes, apartments and detached townhomes, along with a commercial district featuring neighborhood shops and restaurants, 13 miles of paved walking and biking trails, several parks and a 40-acre lake that serves as the neighborhood's centerpiece.

### **A Unique Sense of Community**

Toni Sullivan introduced herself and her husband, Mike, to the group.

"We live in the green and tan house down the street, next to the wild man," she said, nodding at Quady as the room burst into laughter once again.

"Excellent!" Quady said, drawing even more laughs. "This is so cool!"

Soon everyone was laughing and referring to Quady as "wild man," the spirit of Cobblestone Lake already evident among the group of new neighbors.

"Everyone's calling me 'wild man' now, but I think 'first resident' might be a better label," said Quady, who joined his wife Lisa and the couple's young daughter as Cobblestone Lake's first official residents last fall. "We came from a neighborhood that was very secluded. It was really beautiful, with heavily wooded lots, but it was, really, really seclusive. And I'm a fairly gregarious person, and I like to be out with other people. And we also have a daughter who had spent five years in the neighborhood and didn't have anyone to play with. Within a year, this place is going to be filled with kids, and there are sidewalks, and she's already out there learning how to ride her bike."

Like Quady, the residents of Cobblestone Lake have come from every corner of the metro area – places like Lakeville, St. Louis Park and even downtown Minneapolis – to this quiet, conveniently-located corner of Apple Valley.

“She drove me here kicking and screaming,” said Craig Jenneke, sitting next to his wife, Shannon, who smiled at the memory. “I had built a house eight years ago in Farmington. I lived there by myself until we got married, and then we started trying to adapt the house to our new lifestyle, having two daughters and whatnot. So we were going to put on a big addition to the house and we said, ‘Why go through all the work and the mess?’”

Instead, the Jennekes took a trip through Cobblestone Lake, its narrow, winding boulevards and walking trails stretching across the neighborhood and eventually linking up with the gigantic lake in the center of the community.

“I had driven by the houses, and I knew Craig had to see them,” Shannon Jenneke said.

“As soon as we entered the neighborhood, I was sold,” Craig Jenneke added. “I loved the whole concept behind the neighborhood, having family values. It’s the whole sense of community and walking trails, of not having to shut your garage door right away when you get home or feel like you have to lock your doors. Up until this point, my life had always been go, go, go, seventy and eighty-hour workweeks. Now my priorities have shifted, and this place fits perfectly.”

For Tina Ellis, a single working professional, a trip to Cobblestone Lake confirmed the sense of community she had been craving.

“The more I heard about the boulevards, the way people had front porches again, the whole community concept, I knew this was a place I wanted to be,” she said. “I felt right away like I could become part of a group of people I could eventually retire with. And now, everybody, I’ll be coming over to your houses for dinner!”

The group broke into laughter again, and the conversation eventually shifted toward the types of homes being built at Cobblestone Lake.

### **“Each home has its own personality”**

With five different builders – Rock Creek, Senn & Youngdahl, Meadowcroft, Cottagewood and Kissner – working in the Cobblestone Lake development, the choices homeowners have are quite literally limitless.

“There are five unbelievable builders here,” said Eric Wold, who stood next to his wife, Christine, while holding the couple’s three-month old son, Xander. “We picked out our lot and started interviewing the different builders. With the first one it was like, ‘Yeah, that’s what we want.’ With the second one, it was like, ‘Yeah, that’s what we want.’ With the third one it was like, ‘Yeah, that’s what we want.’ It was so hard to choose a builder, because there were so many cool things about each one.”

What all five builders aim for is creating a home uniquely tailored to its residents' needs, whether they choose to live in an apartment, detached townhome or single-family home.

“We wanted a house that fit our lifestyle and the process was so easy,” Craig Jenneke said. “They sat down and asked us questions, and they were able to come up with exactly what we were looking for.”

Added Ellis: “With my builder, it was ‘What’s your lifestyle? We’ll build a house to fit it’ more than anything else.”

Christine Wold said that after seeing the atmosphere of Cobblestone Lake, she realized how every home in her old neighborhood was boringly similar.

“We lived in a place where it was just a production neighborhood,” she said. “There were five different models and you could change little things about each one. After we saw Cobblestone Lake, I went home and said, ‘Oh my gosh, all our houses look exactly the same!’”

One look that has become very popular at Cobblestone Lake is the traditional, turn-of-the-century feel, with the front porches and pillars many of the neighbors could remember growing up with or visiting as children.

“My husband will have to commute from here to St. Louis Park, but he doesn’t care,” Sue Crandall said. “His family came up from Iowa to visit, and his aunt said, ‘You know, this looks just like your grandma’s home used to!’ And he got the biggest smile, because that’s what he was trying to do, recreate his grandmother’s home.”

“The whole feel of the neighborhood is like walking into yesteryear,” Ellis said. “I should have been born a hundred years ago, because I love that feel. Each home is so distinct – they all have their own personality.”

Tim Quady says he still gets goose bumps coming home every day from work.

“I moved out of a 1977 box that looked like one of a hundred in a row,” he said. “We’ve been in this house at Cobblestone Lake for almost a year, and every day I walk through the door and I’m still giddy about it. I can’t put a price tag on what it is to come in and feel like my house is a part of our family. People at work say, ‘You know, you ought to start putting pictures of your house in your wallet!’ But I just love it. I get so excited when people walk through our home and see it.”

### **The Feeling of a Real Neighborhood**

Walking along the sidewalks of Cobblestone Lake, one sees neighbors out on their front porches, sipping cold drinks and greeting each other as children play in the street or ride by on bicycles.

“We want our kids to have it like we did when we were children,” Toni Sullivan said. “Where they can ride their bikes around the neighborhood and mom and dad don’t have to be worried, where everyone is going to help you raise your kids.”

Along with the sidewalks, trails and parks, Cobblestone Lake is located in Apple Valley, a place where Quady says “everything you need is within a mile and a half.”

“It’s got it all,” he said, and the rest of the neighbors nodded their heads in agreement. “Everything you need is right here.”

Cobblestone Lake also sits in the middle of 40 acres of public and private parkland, providing plenty of green for residents concerned about retaining a relationship with Mother Nature. The community will also have several “open spaces” designed to let neighbors gather and gab, including a large gazebo overlooking the lake, picnic areas, public dock areas and shelters, along with a traditional “town square” and “town center.”

The lake will support several types of fish along with canoeing, kayaking, paddleboats, sailing, pier fishing, hobby boat racing and even water ski shows, rowing competitions and other activities. The neighborhood’s commercial district will be home to retail shops and services, entertainment venues, restaurants, specialty shops, professional offices and civic/institutional services.

While the entire Cobblestone Lake community is not expected to be finished until sometime around 2008, Craig Jenneke says he couldn’t wait to move his family into a new home there this spring.

“I actually grew up in Apple Valley in the 1970s,” he said. “The city has really grown and changed, and what I love about Cobblestone Lake that we’re getting to create our own tradition.”