

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Peace on Earth

THE VANCOUVER SUN

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SERIOUSLY WESTCOAST SINCE 1912

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The Grenier family enjoys an afternoon around the Christmas tree in their home at Six Mile Ranch, on the Thompson River near Kamloops.

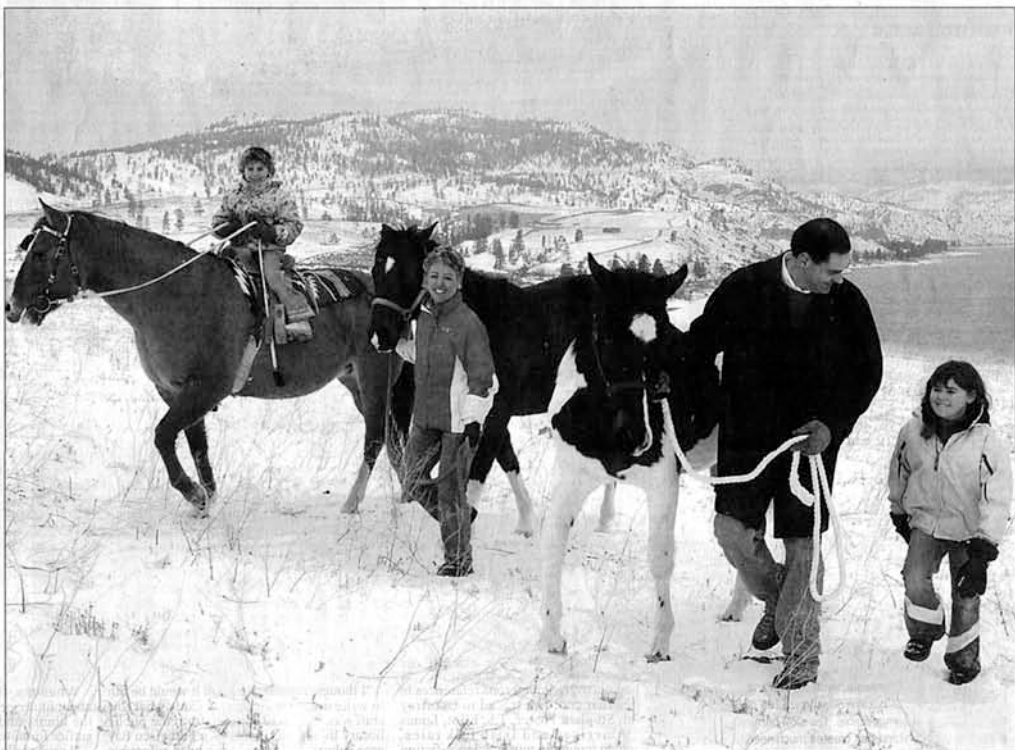
MURRAY MITCHELL/SPECIAL TO THE VANCOUVER SUN

WESTCOAST HOMES

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 24, 2005 • E-mail msages@png.canwest.com THE VANCOUVER SUN, E21

High country Christmas

KAMLOOPS | Family marks welcome transition, from ranch to residential resort



They named their dream after a horse! Tobianos like Wiseguy, with Mike Grenier, and Magnum, with Shelley Grenier, are one of four variants of the Paint breed, although the tobiano pattern graces many other breeds around the world. (Little sister) Allison rides Santi. (Big sister) Rebecca walks, Kamloops Lake below. The family home, a 'Georgie' competition finalist in the last decade, sets a standard for 'all aglow' at Christmas in the Thompson-Okanagan

NEW HOMES PROJECT PROFILE

Tobiano

Location: Six Mile Ranch, 15 minutes west of Kamloops on the Trans Canada Highway

Telephone: 1-877-236-8800 (Sotheby's International Realty Western Canada)

Web: sothebysrealty.ca or tobianoliving.ca

Project size: 615 residential lots, 500 multi-family residences, three hotels

Developer: Pagebrook Inc.

Design: Civitas Urban Design & Planning Inc.

STORY BY DIANA SKOGLUND

PHOTOS BY MURRAY MITCHELL

SPECIAL TO WESTCOAST HOMES

This Christmas is a half-way-there Christmas for Mike and Shelley Grenier. It is their last before they start to convert their Thompson River ranch into a residential resort they call Tobiano. And it is their first since they started to publicize their intentions with metro Vancouver investors and builders.

Their journey to market has been arduous, brutal even, its mileposts consultations and public reviews and studies and panels and litigation on everything from environmental issues, first nations concerns and unease over water licenses. (In a place in which there is less than eight inches of precipitation annually, water rights are a big deal).

"It's like a sailboat in the water: You can't make wind. You can only be ready when it comes," Mike Grenier, 46, says of



the 10 years he and Shelley have lived on the Six Mile Ranch property.

The views from the Greniers' award-winning home, of snow-covered hills

above and Kamloops Lake below, help explain his perseverance: Here urban baby-boomers and Kamloops-area professionals might fulfill their residency

dreams, first home and second home. Grenier, with his father Bill owner of

See **CONTRACTOR PRAISES** E22



Mike Grenier's unbelievable, Kamloops Lake, is one boundary of Six Mile Ranch, 'a large body of water so close to major centres that was undeveloped.' The railways got there before him, their presence exacerbating the steep-embankment isolation of the lake for more than a century.



Contractor praises developer's patience

From the previous page

the Pagebrook Inc. development company, first saw the Six Mile Ranch property in the mid-1990s, while looking around North America for property with recreational-development potential.

What he saw was a singular, if unpolished, jewel that soon enough put two newly west central Canadians on a working ranch in B.C.'s high country.

"We'd been down in Montana, at Niagara-on-the-Lake, Bracebridge, Fla., all over North America looking for unique sites for development. When we saw this place we couldn't believe there was such a large body of water so close to major centres that was undeveloped."

The working ranch is situated on a plateau above Kamloops Lake, its 20 1/2 square miles of surface area suitable for power-boating, swimming, sailing, windsurfing, kayaking, rafting, canoeing, fishing and water-skiing.

But railway lines and the steep topography limit public access to the lake, which is really a widening of the Thompson River.

The nearest boat launches are, to the west, at Savona and, to the east, at Cooney Bay, in Kamloops or on Shuswap Lake. (The South Thompson connects Kamloops Lake and the Shuswap country.)

"The problem for using the lake has been refuelling," Grenier said.

When Pagebrook bought the 18,000-acre ranch in 1995, one of the first projects was construction of a marina. Now summer boaters can gas up - and buy ice cream - as they cruise the lake. Tobiano plans call for the construction of a 100-slip marina.

"Tobiano says it all," Grenier said in an interview. "It's known by equestrians as a painted horse, but to us Tobiano is an expression of homage and intention. This



property has been a ranch for more than a century and it will continue to be a ranch. It pays tribute to first nations too, because painted horses were prized in their culture for their intelligence and heart.

"The name, for us, symbolizes a type of lifestyle that is casual yet refined, where you can jump in your boat, or cruise the lake, or golf, or ride your horse through the hills."

All of that and only 15 minutes from all the shopping and services of Kamloops. Which means Tobiano is an easy drive to Vancouver (3 1/2 hours) and only an hour from Sun Peaks. There, Grenier says, "when you put your kids in a Nancy Greene ski program, they ski with Nancy Greene."

Soon Rebecca, 8, and Allison, 6, will have other children to play with in the

neighbourhood, and their mom Shelley, 39, will have use of the equestrian centre she's wanted since she was as old as her daughters.

Grenier expects the first building to begin in the fall of 2006 or at the latest spring of 2007. Construction of a golf course is under way; footings are being poured for the sales centre.

Jeff Arnold, president of A and T Developments in Kamloops, is building the Tobiano sales centre. "I've got a lot of respect for Mike Grenier, he's stuck by his vision for this property, he obviously believes in the project and stands behind it. He has had amazing patience."

The father and son duo of Pagebrook Inc. are used to local skeptics scoffing at the potential they see in prospective projects.

For Expo 86 they built the Pagebrook Hotel, now the Marriott Residence Inn in downtown Vancouver, and the Seawalk condominiums, a two-tower project on False Creek. You can't do it, Mike Grenier recalls being told in the early '80s.

"Kamloops is coming out of its shell in terms of development," builder Arnold says.

"Grenier sees that and has the courage to offer something different. He's not just selling houses he's offering people a chance at a whole new lifestyle."

That lifestyle will include single-family-detached lots; almost 500 multi-family residences on nine development sites; 450 hotel rooms on three hotel sites; the 18-hole golf course; the marina; the stables and a 40,000-square-foot retail/commercial development.

All on a 200-head cattle ranch. All set within an area dotted with fly-fishing lakes, a rich deer and wildlife habitat all accessible by a network of trails to accommodate equestrian, hiking, mountain-biking and bird watching activities.

Arnold likens the sales centre he is building to a museum. "It's post and beam with the gull-wing roof line, and with its other design elements it's more like modern art."

"The intent is for visitors to see the entire project and its potential, not just to be locked into what a prospective home could look like."

If getting to market has taken longer than he expected, the timing of his arrival couldn't be better, Mike Grenier says. B.C.'s economy is on a tear; people from other parts of B.C. and Canada are recognizing the long-term benefits to living and working in the Kamloops area.

And the 2010 Games are only five years away.