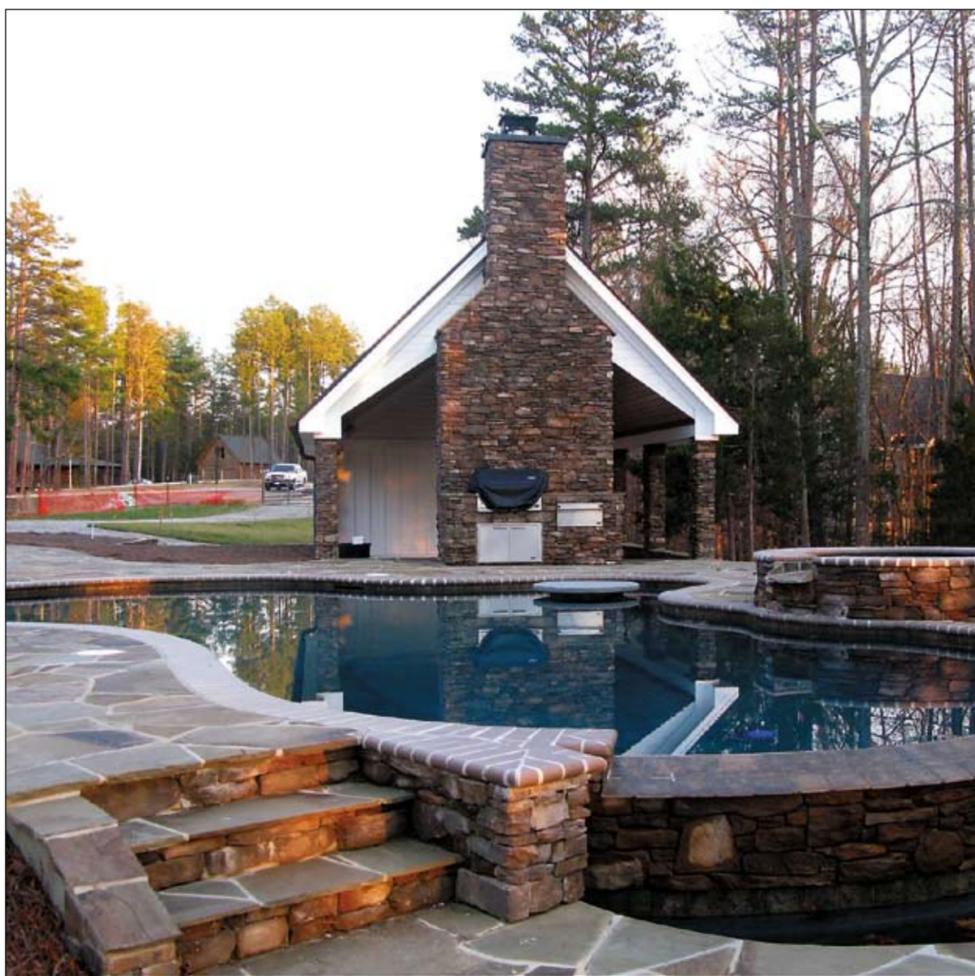


REAL ESTATE



Above, builder Sid Cutts examines plans for one of his home construction projects. Cutts' company, Corbitt Hills Construction, has housing developments on Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston; homes that have qualified his firm for inclusion in Southern Living magazine's Custom Builders Program. At left, a Cutts-built home on Kerr Lake features a distinctive pool and poolhouse along with outdoor grilling and other entertainment features.

Old South turned new, with a lakeside view

Local builder gains Southern Living's endorsement

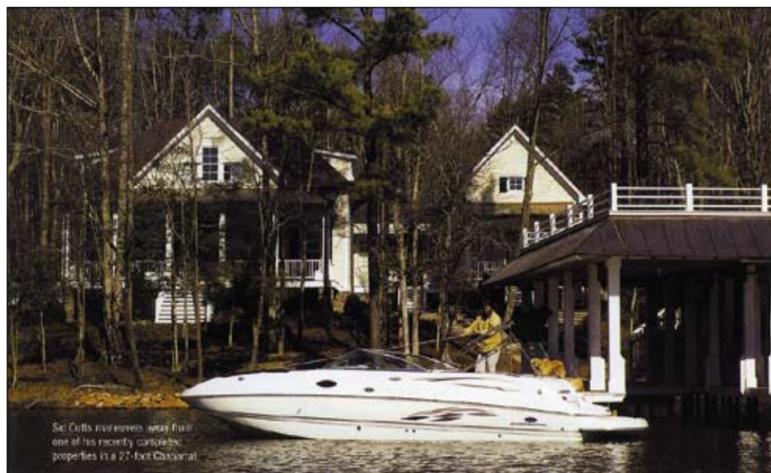
By DAVID IRVINE
DAILY DISPATCH WRITER

LAKE GASTON — Sid Cutts believes that historic names give meaning to the present. As evidence, he named his company to commemorate the shopping center his maternal grandfather once owned in Henderson. That was John C. Church's Corbitt Hills Shopping Center in the 600 block of Dabney Drive. Cutts' contracting firm is Corbitt Hills Construction.

If more evidence is needed of his affinity for history, the subdivision that Cutts and others are developing on Lake Gaston in Warren County is called Eaton's Crossing. Old timers may know that at one time the only way to cross the Roanoke River from that part of Warren County into Virginia was by Eaton's Ferry.

His passion for tradition and attention to quality construction has earned Cutts membership in the Southern Living Custom Builder Program. The program includes 100 builders whose work Southern Living magazine has determined to be highly distinctive. Selection to the group might be considered the "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval" for the building trade. Selection is based on the builder's reputation among local businesses and consumers, innovation, superior quality, attention to detail and similar criteria. Cutts said his background, work and customer satisfaction were given a thorough evaluation when he was being considered for the honor.

Typical of the recommendations he received was the comment by Mike Gupton of Lake Gaston's South Shore Realty: "Sid's projects have just the look and the detail that people are after. Everything goes together — the house, the boathouse, the landscap-



Sid Cutts Repeats History on Lake Gaston

BY MARGIE YOUNG
PHOTOGRAPHY BY DAVID WILSON

Sid Cutts' grandfather was 92-years-old when he passed away, but before he died, he found deep satisfaction in watching his grandson finally pursue his dream. Sid, a 1984 political science graduate from the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill (UNC), went to work selling roofing products instead of heading to law school. In his 18-year career in the business, he also sold for a clear manufacturer and for a manufacturer of building supplies. Along the way, Sid felt the tug of wanting his own construction company. His grandfather pushed him to follow his passion. "I had talked to so many builders and been to so many sites in my career. I had seen a lot of builders do it wrong, and I saw a lot who got it really, really right. It made me want to try," says Sid. "Being on that side of the business has been so beneficial."



Sid particularly enjoys cozying up to the wood-burning stove and working on her Creative Memories scrapbooks or watching movies with the kids. Sid Cutts Construction formally made it to Lake Gaston in 2007 but went through a name change after Sid's grandfather's death in 2004. "We changed the company name to Corbitt Hills Construction LLC because my grandfather had a shipping center in Henderson named Corbitt Hills Shopping Center," explains Sid. The shipping center's name had been a tribute as well. It was named after the Corbitt Motor Truck Company in Henderson that made trucks during World War II. Sid Cutts' building. While Julie is the company's president, Sid refers to himself as the "idea man" while Julie's job is to keep things in check. Sid is passionate about creating homes that have architectural interest and blend in with their surroundings. This is what projects him when it comes to building at Lake Gaston.

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ing. Nothing is missed." Decorator Vicky Seren said, "His attention to detail and hands-on approach during every phase of the construction process is a win-win situation for everyone, especially the homeowner." Brent Warren, manager of the Southern Living Custom Builder Program, said, "The builder program is a natural extension of our overall homes effort, which aims at offering quality designs and new ideas to consumers across the Southeast." Being elected to this exclusive group is a distinct honor. Southern Living magazine is the seventh-largest monthly consumer magazine in the country, reaching almost 16 million

readers. Cutts has ties to both Oxford and Henderson. He grew up in Oxford, where his father owned Salem Farms on Tabbs Creek Road. The family home is still there, along with 14 acres of the farm. After growing up in Oxford, Cutts earned a B.A. degree in political science at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. He has also studied at the Kenan Flagler Business School and the Darden School at the University of Virginia. He is married to the former Julie Swanson, whom he met in high school. They have three children, daughters Taylor (20) and Bryles (13) and son Beau (17). A ride with Cutts is a

history lesson, starting with his grandfather and Corbitt Hills Shopping Center. The lesson continues with Eaton's Crossing, near the site of the old ferry on the Roanoke River. Cutts' grandfather, whose 92 years of life spanned most of the 20th century, told Cutts he remembered when the ferry was drawn by a team of mules on each side of the river, before the installation of a "modern" ferry that was drawn back and forth by motors. All of that was before Lake Gaston was created in 1963, back when the Roanoke River was one of the main regional "highways" for transporting freight. Back in those days, homes faced the river because, in the era of water



Above, Sid Cutts and his wife, Julie, stand beside a display honoring the selection of Corbitt Hills Construction as a member of the Southern Living Custom Builders Program. The program is restricted to 100 builders whose work Southern Living determines to be highly distinctive and which meets the magazine's standards for design and quality of construction. At left, Corbitt Hills' development on Lake Gaston, called Eaton's Crossing, was profiled in an issue of N.C. Boating Lifestyle magazine.

transportation, they were most often entered from that side. Homes on Kerr Lake and Lake Gaston are still built that way, even though nowadays they are most often entered from the road. But facing the lake lets the residents take advantage of the panoramic view the lake provides.

One home Cutts has just completed in the Somerset area of Kerr Lake illustrates how placement of the house gives the owner the benefit of the lake view. A wide front porch faces the lake. Windows of the dining room/family room have transoms and open onto the porch and the lake beyond. A pool set partially behind the house offers a visitor entering the property from the road a vision of continuous water, with the surface of the pool blending into the lake in the background.

"When the sun sets beyond the lake, it is stunning," Cutts says. Cutts' development on Lake Gaston, Eaton's Crossing, is a 100-site gated community. It is located not far from the site of that ferry that Cutts' grandfather remembered, the one Charles Eaton operated when there was no bridge to cross the Roanoke River for some miles in either direction. Cutts and Chris Dalton are founders and managing partners of the development.

Homes in Eaton's Crossing combine historic styles with contemporary atten-

tion to the environment. Tall, gabled houses with imposing columns and wide porches stand among the trees and look out over Lake Gaston. Adding to the attraction of the area are its natural beach areas and walking trails.

Asked if the current economic downturn is affecting his projects, Cutts said, "It's definitely slowed down." He is able to keep his crews busy, however. One project he is set to begin is a clubhouse at Eaton's Crossing.

"I'm counting on 2010 for things to pick back up," he said.

In discussing his construction projects and the subject of architecture, Cutts' love of history and appreciation of building materials become clear. His eye catches details from bygone eras.

When stopping across from the ACTS building on Chestnut Street in Henderson, Cutts pointed out the tapered columns on the front porch.

"You don't see those today," he said. "They are unbelievably hard to make."

That building also features plain glass in the bottom half of the windows, while the windows' upper sections are framed into individual panes.

"That house was built when people wanted to be able to look out (while) sitting down," he explained.

On the Web:
• <http://www.corbithills.com/>