

Pine Lake provides plentiful appeal

BYLINE: Bill York

For the AJC

DATE: August 7, 2010

PUBLICATION: Atlanta Journal-Constitution, The (GA)

EDITION: Main; The Atlanta Journal-Constitution

SECTION: Opinion

PAGE: A15

Pine Lake is the smallest city in DeKalb County. If you happen to blink while going out Rockbridge Road, you might miss the place. That would be your loss because **Pine Lake** is really unusual and has lots to interest. City Hall and the police department can be found in an old church. When you compare the faded brick building to glitzy designs in other towns you realize that the folks are conservative. Unlike the federal government, states and major cities, **Pine Lake** is not choking on unaffordable debts.

Pine Lake was part of a large farm until 1937 when it was divided into 20 "X100" lots that sold for \$69. Rockbridge had gravel in those days. People in Buckhead bought the lots and built cabins to be enjoyed in summer, a la German gartenhauses. Later, when they decided to have permanent houses, they had to buy one or more of the adjacent lots. The city is made up of smaller homes, each one unique, like an alpine village. There is a small lake in the middle of the city, dredged in 1940 by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. Snapfinger Creek provides water for the lake. There is a beach and clubhouse where meetings are held.

They have great goings-on around the water; an annual arts and craft festival, concerts, sunbathing, a playground. It looked like a good place to watch ducks feeding, contemplate, forget, remember, find tranquility, doze and for a moment drift away in the healing arms of Morpheus, oblivious to our writhing economy. I met Police Chief Sarai Y'hudah-Green, the first black female chief of police I've come across. She is gregarious and smiles a lot. We talked about social problems, contemporary blight, criminals, slave ships, beyond horizons. She is inquisitive and interesting. She asked my age. I said 84. She inquired how I stayed youngish. I said, among other interests I was learning to say thank you in every language. She asked why on earth would I want to do that. I said to keep my mind stimulated and because no one else had ever done it.

She hesitated, grinned and said, "Russian?"

I said, "Spasibo."

She said, "Croatian?"

I said, "Hvala."

She squinted up her face. "Ethiopian?"

I said, "Amesgnalu."

Her telephone rang.

She said, "Got an emergency, got to run. Have a good day."

I said, "Thanks. Have several good days, chief."

I hope she does. I like people who smile.

The city has an innovative neighborhood watch program. Someone in each block volunteers to keep an eye on the neighbors, reporting things suspicious to the police department. Their program, applied in other communities, is guaranteed to reduce crime.

On my first visit to **Pine Lake**, as I turned into the village, I spotted a cop car. I felt his eyes lock onto me, a stranger in his community. I checked my seat belt and used my turn indicator. Possibly he was profiling me because of my gray hair. More likely he was checking on my license plate. He was muscled, like Arnold Schwarzenegger. When driving around the place, I would see the patrol car cruising. I must have aroused his curiosity. I wanted to move there. I would sleep very well with a muscled cop on the prowl, keeping potential miscreants under surveillance.

Bill York lives in Stone Mountain. Reach him at sioux2222@gmail.com. Rick Badie is on vacation.