

BY ANDREW PHILIPS // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY

BACKYARD *Bliss*



ABOVE: Randy and Laurie Porter relax on their waterfront deck.

If the sun's shining on Lake Simcoe, there's a pretty good chance **Laurie** and **Randy Porter** are entertaining friends and family.

The Hawkestone couple always wanted to live on the water, a dream that became a happy reality a decade ago when they found a picture-perfect location on Lake Simcoe halfway between Orillia and Barrie.

Married for 25 years, the pair along with their children, Andrew, 18, and Danielle, 21, have created an oasis celebrating all things summer with a picturesque backyard complete with a large lap pool, an eight-person hot tub and, of course, a lake that's ideal for every type of water activity.

"We've always been water people," explains Randy. "We had a big boat before and were living in Barrie and looking for a cottage. We decided why not try to have a house that's like a cottage so we only have to carry one property."

Originally from Toronto, Randy now operates Traffic Ticket Experts in Barrie while Laurie works as a supervisor with Community Living Association for South Simcoe. "This house is built for entertaining," Randy says, noting the home has hosted live bands and even a wedding. "It's a lifestyle. This is our home and cottage."

And since it boasts 75-feet of waterfront shoreline and solid deep-water docks, the panoramic location affords excellent boating and even the opportunity to travel to either Barrie or Orillia for dinner. "When you come home here, you immediately feel like you're at a cottage," Laurie says. "Boating here is just beautiful, especially in the fall."

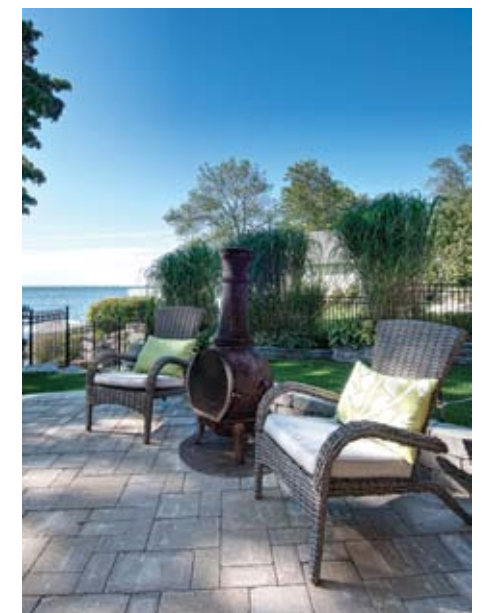
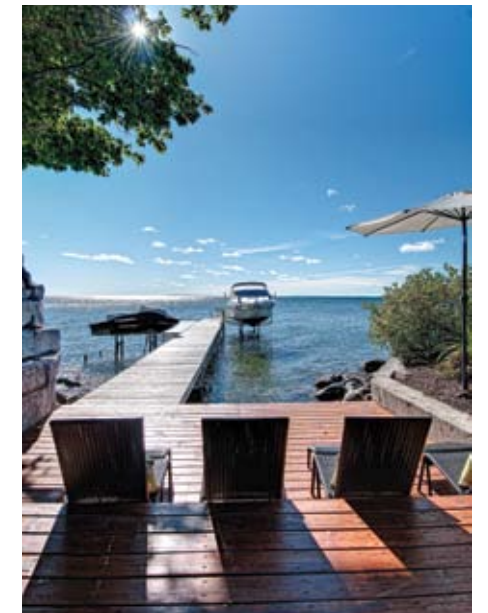
The Porters had a very good idea on how to best create their waterfront paradise, eventually going to Barrie-based **Majestic Outdoor Living** to help see their dream become reality several years ago.

"We accomplished everything that Randy wanted," says Majestic Outdoor Living President **Chris Bowman**, noting the Porters' large inground pool is ideal for entertainment day or night given its ambient lighting. "It's a contemporary style of pool – a very modern design."

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Just a stone's throw from the lake, the Porters enjoy outdoor living at its best. An inground lap pool with a soothing waterfall is surrounded by multiple sitting areas, a covered outdoor kitchen and bar area. Majestic Outdoor Living designed and installed the pool and all the stonework.



The heated lap pool is the focus of this stunning lakefront property. **OPPOSITE PAGE BOTTOM:** The pool is surrounded by impressive stonework and a raised deck for lounging next to the bar and hot tub. **TOP:** The kitchen area is protected from the elements and wired for TV and audio.



But besides the nine-foot-by-28-foot saltwater pool and accompanying waterfall, the backyard also features a complete outdoor kitchen along with impressive stonework, all designed and installed by Majestic Outdoor Living.

Bowman, who points out landscape design actually represents a large chunk of his company's business, says the company had to ensure setbacks required by the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority were followed throughout the construction process.

Using a combination of Unilock dimensional stone and Brussels Block tumbled stone, Bowman's crew created a visually stunning backyard overlooking the lake's widest expanse.

Randy says some have questioned the need for a pool while living lakeside. "With the lake, it's only warm enough to go in from the first week of July to the second week of September. The pool and what we've created allows us to enjoy being outside for a much longer period." The lake remains a favourite, however, for the appropriately-named Laker, a friendly Newfoundland Landseer dog "who just loves it here."

Some of the landscaping work was done out of necessity due to erosion caused by the lake's continual ebb and flow. The new design not only helps combat that problem, but also likely helped save a couple of large trees from eventually tumbling down. "The tree roots were visible," Randy says. "We ended up tearing out all the cedar decking and replacing it all with interlocking stone."

But the Porters' obvious love of entertaining extends well beyond the backyard. Guests arriving through the home's front entrance pass through double French doors and are greeted by a warm "party" room that not only connects to the back patio, but also serves as a wonderful spot to celebrate with friends and family.

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feature

With enough seating for more than a dozen, this entertainment space features a large leather sofa, plenty of comfy chairs and a corner gas fireplace installed by [Napoleon Home Comfort](#) in Barrie.

Like many areas throughout the home, the Porters relied on local retailers like Heritage Homestead for much of their furnishing and décor choices throughout the room, which also features a huge wet bar and high island table with chairs.

After purchasing the home in 2004, the Porters embarked on a number of major renovations that included converting a garage into the aforementioned party room, adding a three-car garage and, perhaps most impressively, extending the building's shell closer to Lake Simcoe. This move not only created a much larger master bedroom overlooking the lake, but also helped provide a much larger living/sitting area with exposed beams and windows reaching all the way to the vaulted ceilings and a cosy ledgestone gas fireplace along with a fully-accessible patio.

Inside, the renovated upper main floor has gleaming hardwood floors, floor-to-ceiling windows that allow the sunshine in, a stone fireplace with a cosy sitting area and a contemporary glass railing along the stairs that lead to the lower level. There is a walkout to a huge deck and barbecue area overlooking the decadent waterfront outdoor space.



The kitchen has a pub-style, quartz-topped island with a handy beverage fridge. The Porters opted for a dark island and white custom cabinetry along the perimeter.



There's also an adjacent dining area and an impressive kitchen complete with custom cabinets, quartzite counters, high-end Maytag appliances from [Bayfield Appliance](#) in Barrie and a wonderful granite island workspace created by Orillia's [ORA Kitchens](#) that's perfect for either cooking up some quick munchies for friends or creating an elegant sit-down meal. "The house was 1,800 sq. ft. when we bought it and it's now up to 3,500 sq. ft.," Randy says. "We've gone as far forward towards Lake Simcoe as we can go."

The extensive revamp was actually completed by the home's original builder, Orillia's [Marty Veenstra](#). Randy says the amiable builder did much of the work himself, which included adding solid oak hardwood flooring throughout the home along with installing in-floor radiant heating and spray-foam insulation to provide effective protection from the elements.

Laurie also credits [RCM Custom Glass & Mirror Ltd.](#) with helping to open up the main floor, which also features two other bedrooms as well as a short staircase leading to a hidden loft bedroom. RCM created a stainless steel and glass wall section that links the home's front, back and downstairs portions. "It really changed the look of the house," she says. "It creates more flow from one area to another along with more light."

The home features warm colours throughout, many selected by Randy, who also did a number of renovation projects such as installing the kitchen backsplash himself. *Continued on page 36*

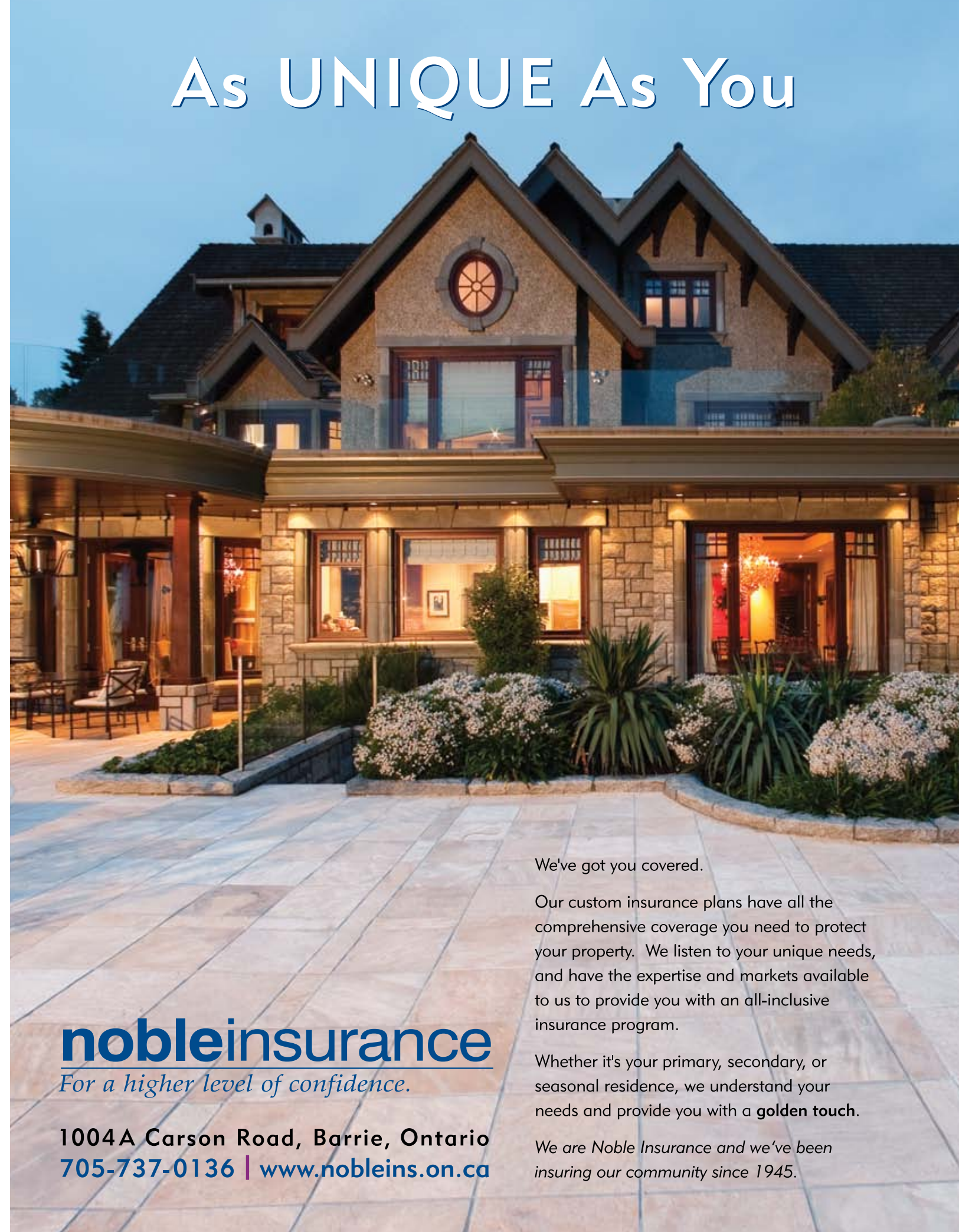


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The master bedroom is located on the upper main floor with a private deck and separate en suite.



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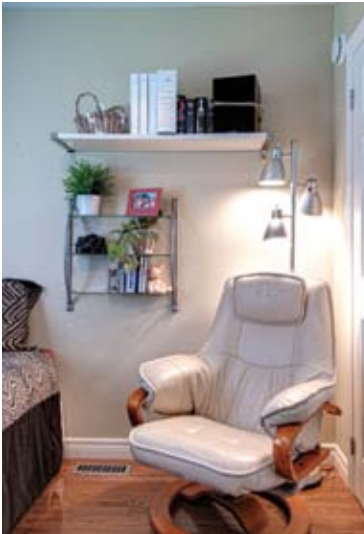
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A self-described TV aficionado, Randy has also ensured almost every room, including the master bath, comes equipped with a television.

The large basement features a bedroom, a third full bathroom and another large entertainment area that features surround sound, making it perfect for one of the Porters' karaoke parties. "There are so many levels here and so many places to sit and hang out," Randy adds.

Barrie's **Bayfield Carpet Inc.** supplied all tiling and flooring for the home, which also features ductless split air-conditioning units installed by **Foster's Heating & Cooling** along with a Lifebreath heat recovery system, tankless water heater and an on-demand natural gas generator.

But after a decade of great times and warm memories, the Porters have decided it's time to move on. "We're downsizing... it's just getting too big for us with our kids getting older," Randy says. "This is the longest we've ever lived in one house, but we've had a lot of fun here." **OH**

TOP LEFT AND MIDDLE: A full four-piece bath on the main floor is close to two other bedrooms. **TOP RIGHT AND BOTTOM LEFT:** The lower level is an ideal space for entertaining. There's a comfortable living area, a wet bar, a huge granite island and walk-out to the pool and waterfront. **RIGHT:** Daughter Danielle's bedroom.



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