

LAKE magic

STORY LAUREL FORTIN
PHOTOGRAPHY SANDY MACKAY



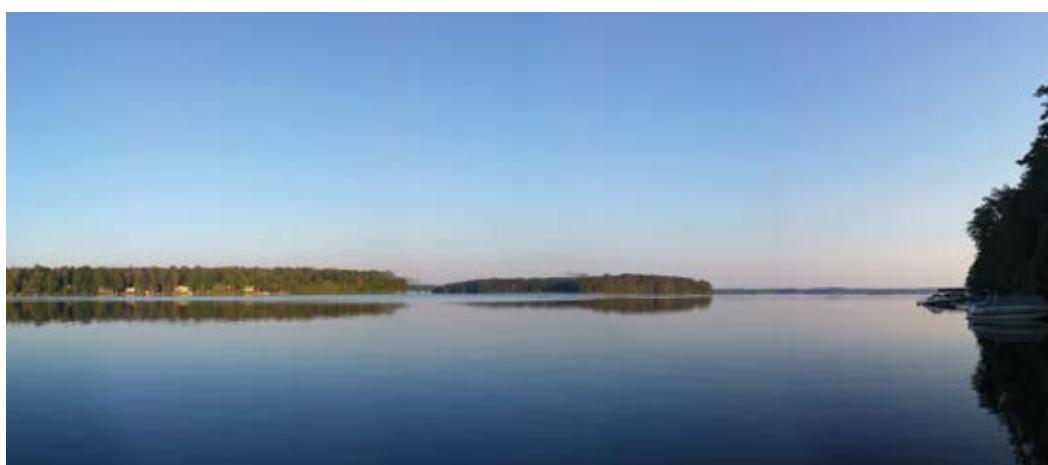
The heart of the timber-frame home is an open-concept great room featuring a view of the sparkling lake, adorned with a floor-to-ceiling stone fireplace.

T"The lake was frozen

solid, clear as glass when we first saw it 25 years ago," tells Frank Gerencser. "The temperature had plummeted early in the season and no snow had fallen. It was a once-every-ten-years, magical weekend." From Plantt's Point on Lake Eugenia, Frank and his wife Shirley watched a lone skater trace circles on the endless rink. This would be a spectacular escape from the city for the entrepreneurial couple.

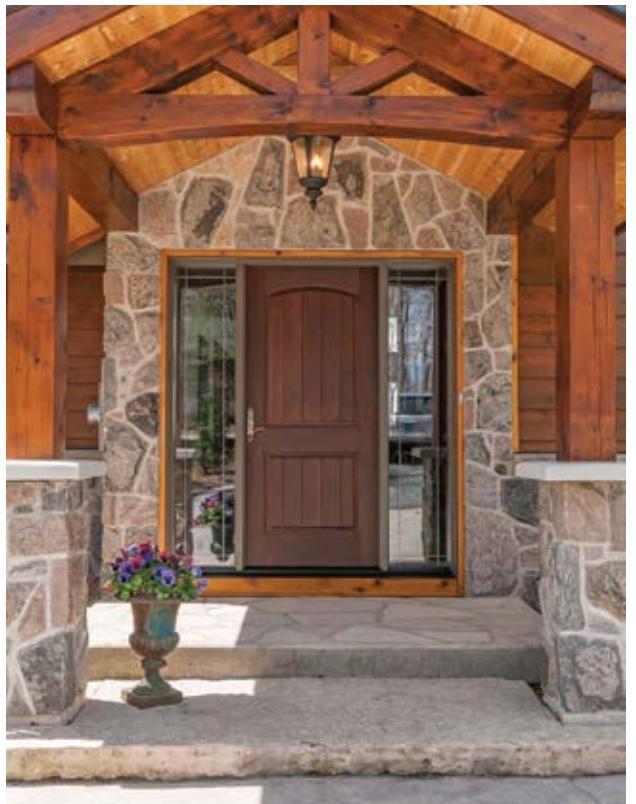
They turned to the east end of the lake where a few forested lots were staked out on the shoreline. They chose the one on the ridge with a sunset view straight down the channel. "We were one of the first three cottages here," says Shirley. Each season since has brought its own magic as their cottage evolved, the family grew, and the area developed. The Gerencser's son and daughter, now in their early 20s, grew up spending entire summers at the cottage and winters skiing at the Beaver Valley Ski Club. Their daughter continues to compete nationally in snowboarding slalom and giant slalom.

This summer's excitement will be to enjoy the threefold evolution of the property that tapped into local and neighbourly talent. An indoor renovation was executed by a neighbour's niece and her partner: Breanne Firth and Steve Conroy of Conroy Contractors. *Continued on page 24*

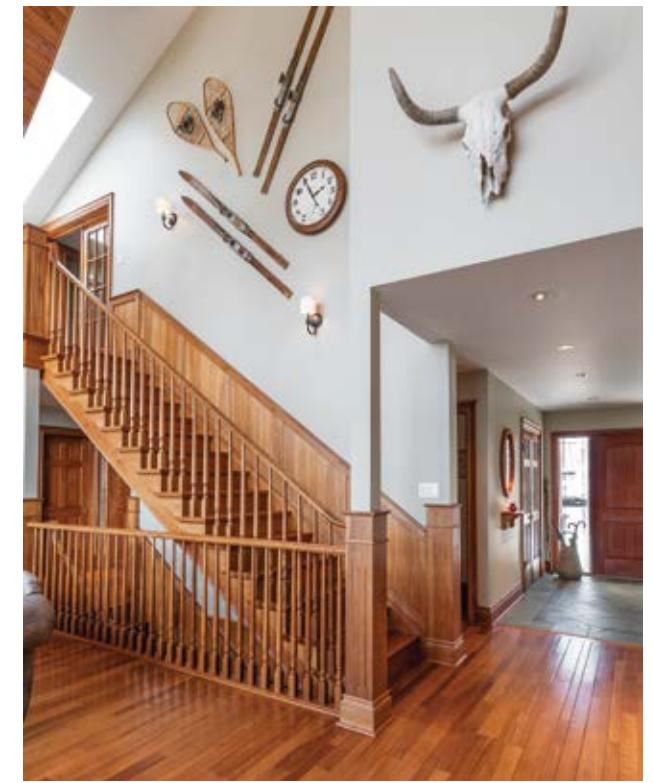


TOP: The lake side of the cottage offers stunningly landscaped curb appeal to passing boaters, while stacked windows provide a beautiful view for the cottage's owners.

ABOVE: A beach-bar cabana located above the dock area is a refreshing respite for the Gerencers and their neighbours on balmy summer days. **LEFT:** The Gerencers' lot looks straight down the channel of Lake Eugenia, and in mid-summer the sun sets precisely in the centre.



ABOVE: The front entranceway to the family cottage has been updated with new stone and timbers. **RIGHT:** An antique sitting bench welcomes guests into the foyer. **BELLOW:** Family sporting heirlooms adorn the stairway and give the cottage a vintage all-season feel.



They also embarked on a curbside facelift on the cottage, adding a garage (foundation by **GBL Construction**) and enlisting **Scott Hay Handcrafted Log Homes** to add timbers and a welcoming portico to the face of the cottage.

The Gerencser's beachside landscaping makeover, including a neighbourhood-renowned beach bar, was designed by Vogel Landscape Design and implemented by **Rocksolid Landscapes**, which helped the couple's vision for their backyard become a reality.

Frank and Shirley say that from the cottage's early days and through the decades, their "cottage construction was a labour of love." Their approach was they never wanted to complain about quality. "You can complain about price once, but not about quality," says Frank. The land was selectively cleared and the shell of a well-built Viceroy home in 1992 became their cottage. The couple got to work on the insulation and painting themselves.

PHOTO: BECKY MCCREARY & AMY KELL



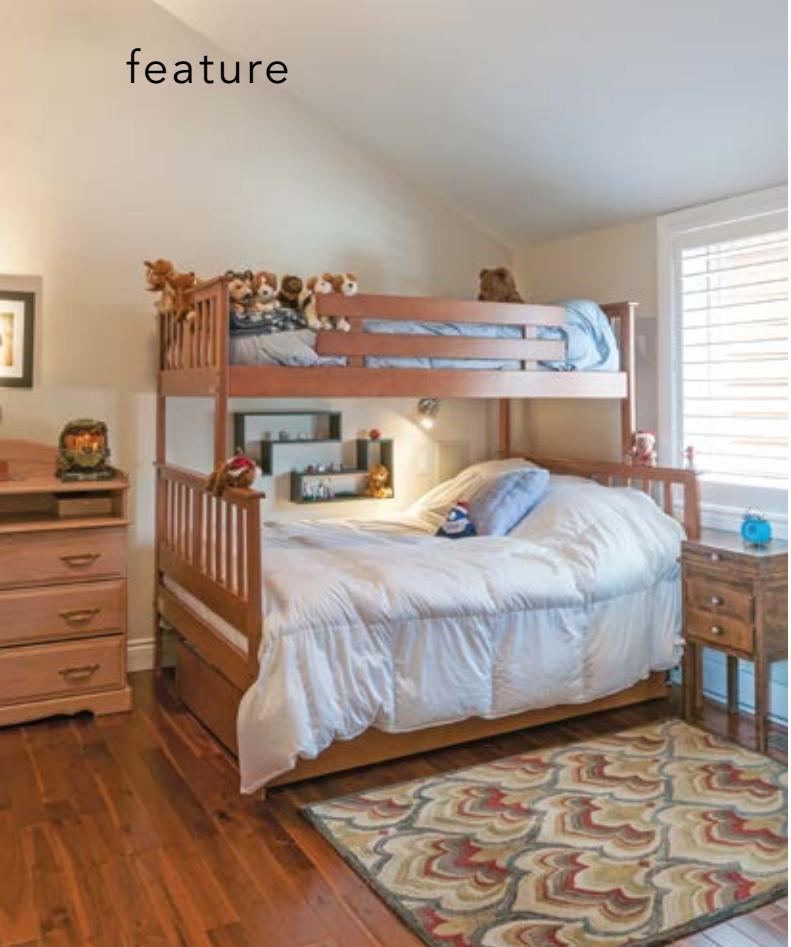
Entrepreneur Frank had just established TriOS College, a private career college in Toronto. As the school expanded over the years – currently into nine campuses across Ontario – the Gerencser's spent the following years saving up and planning for the cottage's next phase of work.

For example, the kitchen they installed 20 years ago is still solid today, needing updates only to the colour on the walls and the backsplash. But waiting for quality also meant the family lived with a simple plywood subfloor, painted white, throughout the great room and bedrooms until they had the time and funds to install the cherry hardwood that was on their wish list. Today, the cottage features gorgeous cherry floors, doors, windows and trim to match.

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TOP LEFT: Shirley and Frank Gerencser lounge in a pair of Muskoka chairs on their private dock. **ABOVE:** Light wood cabinets give the kitchen a timeless appeal. **LEFT:** Looking down the hill toward Lake Eugenia, the new stone landscaping and bar area take centre stage.



The indoor transformation included gutting and reconfiguring the master bathroom (Conroy Construction) by installing a walk-in shower and dual vanities under the existing skylight. Elsewhere, since the exterior renovations necessitated moving the existing oil supply tank, the family opted to convert their heating to propane ([David Petch of Petch Heating](#)), and a propane granite fireplace is the new focal point in the master bedroom.

Out front, Scott Hay added a portico at the front door that ties in with the new exposed timbers at the roofline. Local stonemason [Glen Weatherall of G.W. Masonry](#) skirted the house with decorative granite. The new two-bay garage (Conroy Construction) is sided in cedar to match the house. It was designed so that one bay is deeper to store the family's boat trailer. The new driveway is edged in flagstone, which ties into the stone pathways that flank the house. They also updated the windows and matched the soffit, fascia and eavestroughs to their existing facade with help from [Advanced Aluminum](#) and [Centre Grey Builders & Supplies \(1975\) Ltd.](#)

[John Pedlar](#) from Rocksolid Landscaping ran 250 feet of stone and rocks leading from the driveway right down to the edge of the lake to create a sweeping stone staircase. "He helped us find rocks and boulders that were covered in moss and were blackened, that looked more natural," says Shirley. The family loves Pedlar's interpretation of Fran Moore's design from Vogel Landscaping, which involves several pit stops on the descent to the dock, including a patio area, beach bar and stone fire pit.

They coordinated with truss expert Scott Hay to install an arbour over the entrance to their waterfront. "We were looking for something with character," recalls Frank, "Scott said, 'I've got this crooked tree' and he took it sideways and planed it and it formed

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TOP: One of the children's bedrooms has been preserved with relics from childhood cottage adventures, despite the fact the Gerencser children are all grown up. **ABOVE:** The pool table dominates the lower-level rec room, which is adorned with neon lighting and fun vintage signage.

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ABOVE: The master en suite has been updated with new granite countertops and sleek modern cabinetry. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The freshly renovated master bedroom features exposed timber frames and rich hardwood flooring. **RIGHT:** An antique vanity and jewelry box lend a simple rustic vibe to the master bedroom.



a perfect arch at the top of the stairs leading to the water.” The sight line from the lower fire pit runs through the arbour to the cottage above. The three waterfront patios are accented by three dry-stacked stone knee walls repurposed from the flagstone from the property’s original patio.

“As we went along we would talk to our neighbours – it’s a very social area here,” says Frank. “They would say, ‘Have you thought about...’ and gave us a lot of ideas, like that we installed power, Internet and coax cable (**Darryl Verbeek, DV Electric Auto Parts Plus**) down to the shore so we can have movie nights or watch the game.”

The couple entertain a lot – as evidenced by the waterfront log post bar Frank designed: Frankie G’s. They run a “bar is open” flag up the dock’s flagpole and roll up the shuttered windows to signal boaters and neighbours to stop by for a sampling from the margarita blender or the stocked fridge (countertop by **The Old Barn**). The dock and patio fill with cottagers at sunset, and as the evening wears on, the Gerencseres turn up lights, music and light a fire, creating a magic of their own at the lake. **OH**

LOCAL SOURCE GUIDE

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