

twisted WILLOW



TOP: A stepped deck with a covered area off the dining room at Heather and Stephen Tobey's new home overlooks a creek and a quiet conservation area beyond the backyard. **ABOVE:** Expert lighting lends a welcoming look to the home's front entrance.

STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **SANDY MACKAY**

When Stephen Tobey designed and built his family's new home he used an original and unusual formula.

"I took everything that I liked in every other house that I built and I put it into this one," says Stephen, owner of **Gordon Tobey Developments Ltd.**, a company founded by his father, Gordon. The firm has been building homes in the Brighton area for more than 40 years.



LEFT: Hollandale Landscaping & Garden Centre Ltd. groomed and planted the property to give it a natural look. **BELOW:** Complete with a wood-burning fireplace and television, the three-season room near the pool has screens that can be lowered to keep out the bugs. **BOTTOM:** An inviting swimming pool completes the outdoor amenities at the Mountain Craftsman-style home.

Stephen finished his family's 2,995 sq. ft. Mountain Craftsman-style home on Butler Creek last year. Like all the homes he builds, it is named after a tree – The Twisted Willow. "My son came up with that," he says. "In the backyard, there's these gnarly willow trees, which run all along the creek. They twist and turn and fall down in the creek continuously."

Inspired by mountain homes in Whistler, B.C., the Tobey home is built with simple, straight lines and natural materials. The master bedroom suite is on the main floor while two children's rooms are upstairs in the loft. Exterior walls are clad with rock, brick and western red cedar shingles, punctuated with board-and-batten siding. Timbers and heavy beams frame entrances and gables.

"I just love the house," says Stephen's wife, Heather. "It's full of light and has a cosiness that you might not expect given the size." The home has plenty of little spaces, niches that soak up sunlight, cushioned window seats, places to sit and read or look outside. "It's just very comfortable."

Stephen designed the home to take advantage of sunshine and the view. "There's sections of the house that stick out all over the place," he says. In the dining room, for example, the sun rises on one side of the space, travels across the centre windows during the day and sets in the opposite windows.

While Heather trusted Stephen to design most of the home, she had one main requirement. "I wanted big windows

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LEFT: Extending from one end of the house, the dining room was built so its windows catch sunrise and sunset as well as sunlight throughout the day. **BELOW:** Stephen shaped walnut to make the elevated bar on the kitchen island.

everywhere possible, specifically the kitchen,” Heather says. “All the natural light in the kitchen is very important to me.”

The kitchen is one of her favourite spaces. “Stephen and I both love to cook so the kitchen is great,” she says. “Two people can be working in there at the same time, or the kids can be sitting at the counter, doing their homework, while I’m making dinner.”

Canadian Shield Stonecraft supplied the grey granite countertops. Granite atop the kitchen island was leathered – wire brushed to create a surface with the look of naturally weathered stone. At one end of the island, Stephen built an elevated bar out of walnut.



Open to the dining and living rooms, the kitchen is well-suited for entertaining because the chef is not stuck alone in the kitchen. “Everybody’s together.”

Large windows and sliding glass doors from **Vanderlaan Building Products Ltd.** flood the dining room and great room with natural light. When masons cut stone for the great room fireplace, they found ancient fossils embedded in the rock. The stone with those petrified creatures was set in the fireplace where the fossils can be seen. Recessed ceiling lights, pendants and sconces by **VanVark Electric** augment the daylight.

European oak, chosen for its pronounced grain, covers the main-living-area floors, upstairs and in the basement, where in-floor radiant heating warms the large recreation room and a guest bedroom. Large format porcelain tiles, from **Sine’s Flooring**, in the entry and baths are heated from below by in-floor radiant tubes running hot water. **Monaghan Lumber Specialties** supplied the trim work.

The Tobey children, Max, 13, and Grace, 10, enjoy the privacy of loft bedrooms. “They can go up there and spread out their toys and listen

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ABOVE: The gas fireplace with a dark cherry mantel in the living room contains visible fossils exposed when masons cut stone for its construction.

LEFT: The Tobey children, Grace and Max, have plenty of space for donning and removing outerwear in the mudroom, which also serves as the home laundry.



ABOVE: Wooden cabinetry forms a vanity with two rectangular sinks in the master bath. A sliding-glass door opens to a shower bathed by double-rainfall shower heads. **LEFT:** The master bedroom has a small sitting area in which to read or quietly enjoy a morning coffee. **BELOW:** The Mountain Craftsman-style wood and metal staircase, with a stone wall accent and window bench, leads to the home's basement.



to their music," says Heather. Max often has friends over to play pool or watch a movie in the downstairs recreation room. "They're on their own. We're not, sort of, bugging them," she says.

Their home, Heather says, fits her family's lifestyle perfectly. "The laundry room/mudroom is huge," she says. "When you have children that makes life easier. Everybody has their own space, in terms of coming and going, and where you put your shoes and your coat and your hat and your mittens." There's no such thing as a mudroom that's too big, says Stephen. "A large mudroom keeps everything confined in one place," he says. "It keeps the mess out of the body of the house."

Stephen's favourite space is an outdoor, three-season room that overlooks the pool and backyard. Finished in brick and stone with exposed wooden rafters, a wood-burning fireplace and a television, it's furnished with woven resin chairs. "I love that room," he says. It's

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LEFT: Stephen and Heather furnished their home office with a curved cherry desk that Stephen made. **BELOW:** In-floor radiant heating keeps the basement recreation room warm and comfortable while large windows and recessed lighting brighten the family space.

halfway between indoors and outside, a place to relax in front of a fire, have a dip in the pool and watch TV. The family viewed the PanAm games in this room last summer. There are screens that descend to keep the bugs out.

Coming home from work to this house is a delight for Stephen. "That whole kitchen is open, the smell from the kitchen, the fireplace is on, the table's getting set, people are all in one spot. That's my favourite time of day, in that spot," he says.

Heather enjoys winter. "My favourite time in the house is when it's snowing," she says. "Outside, there's snow all around you, but you have the fire going inside. It's cosy. It's quite nice all day."

The Tobey's landscaped their home with the help of **Mike Bores** of **Hollandale Landscaping & Garden Centre Ltd.**, who worked closely with the couple. "We had a specific look we wanted," says Heather. "That sort of mountain look – unpruned trees all around the home, placed like they might have naturally been there. Mike was fantastic to work with and he really pulled it off. At times, I wasn't sure I could even explain what I was looking for, but he totally understood and accomplished what we were looking for. I can't say enough about his work."

Like his father, Stephen is a professional engineer who has built many homes, including several for his own family. The Twisted Willow is his favourite. **OH**



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