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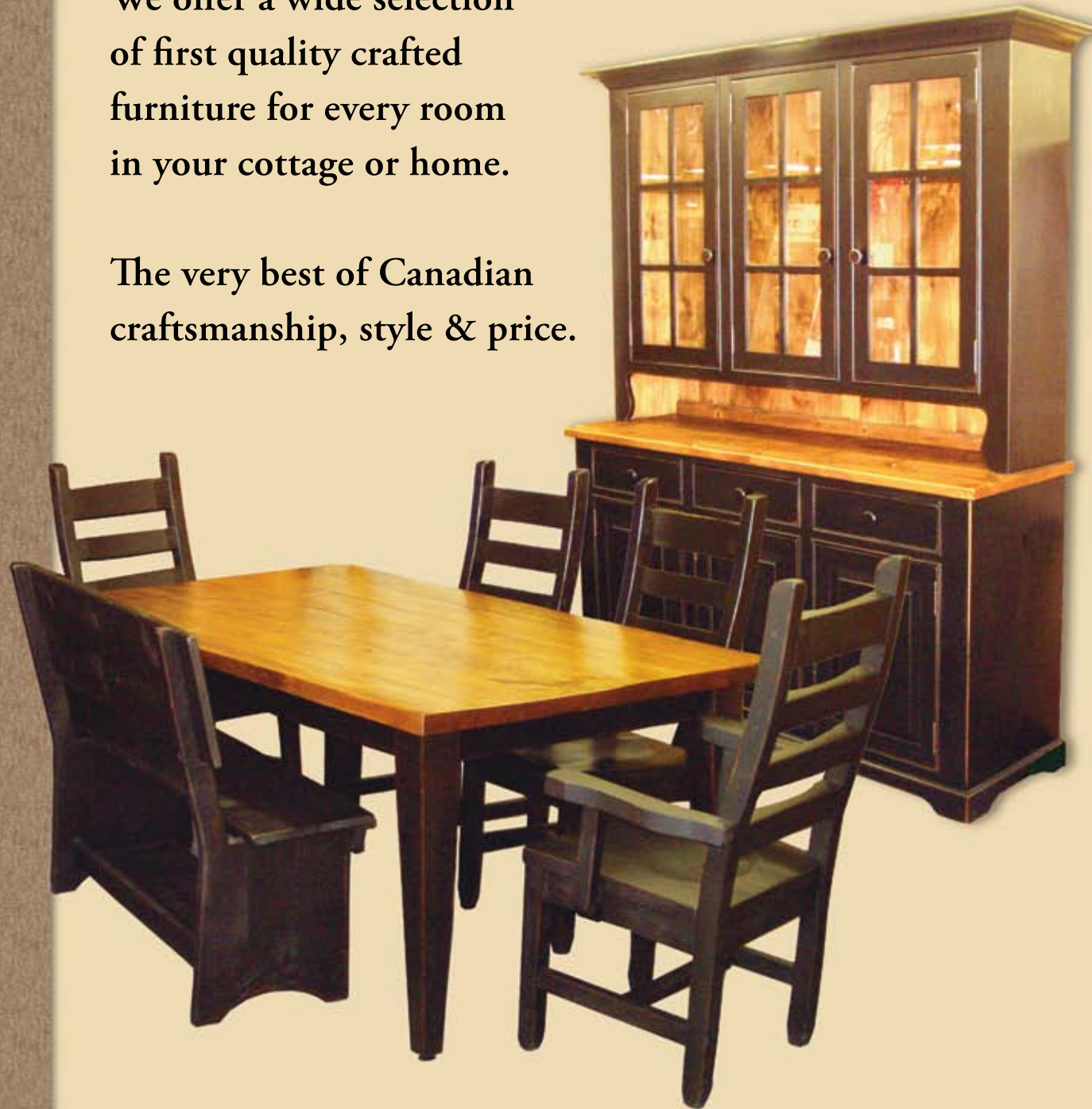
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editor's note



Gladys Clark in her
100th year at Sans Souci.

MANY CALL IT THE
SUMMER THAT WASN'T.

So much of what was supposed to be our warmest season of the year was cool, cloudy and damp that a great deal of people felt cheated by the weather.

A late spring delayed planting. Overcast skies and chilly temperatures stalled garden vegetables so that many growers worried they wouldn't have much to offer for

a homegrown dinner. Some were literally knocked out of the competition at local fall fairs without ever swinging a winning cauliflower.

It wasn't an entirely bleak season, however. Some folks prefer the cool nights and brisk, sunny days that arrived in August. Although rain swept swimmers off the beaches of Muskoka and Georgian Bay, it drove them into town for shopping. Merchants counted their good blessings along with the cash. Despite the sometimes dismal weather, summer was an exciting and pleasant time for many cottage country denizens.

At age 100, Gladys Clark came back, once again, for her annual summer holiday at Wild Duck, a modest cottage on a tiny island in the Sans Souci area. It's a wilderness retreat she has enjoyed every year since she was a child. Clark shares her secret to a long life on page 52.

Summer was also a thrilling time for Nancy and Derek Bowen and their children Steve and Jen. They moved into a brand new, custom-built cottage on their piece of Georgian Bay shoreline. Built by Rose Point Contracting, the new home offers a splendid view of the bay and a large deck, screened porch and plenty of windows from which to watch it. See the results of their careful planning and some fine craftsmanship on page 36.

In Bracebridge, Bill and Jan Morrow's sunroom has been the perfect place to relax at the end of a work day. Flowers, including some of the town's tallest bee balm, the toast of neighbourhood hummingbirds, surround their new house, constructed by Evanco Homes. Their builder's versatility allowed them to modify floor plans and build the home of their dreams. For a glimpse of the final product see page 20.

Up in Magnetawan, staying indoors or spending time outside was made all the more pleasurable, no matter the weather, by Ilona Charlton, owner of Summer's Attic. Her gift boutique offers home décor and garden accents seldom found anywhere else. Her story is on page 30.

While far from perfect, summer was an excellent time to get out on Georgian Bay and the many local lakes to enjoy the natural beauty that makes this area such a great place to live, work and play. This fall promises to be even better. For the evidence, just check the pages of this magazine.

Sincerely,

Walter Franczyk

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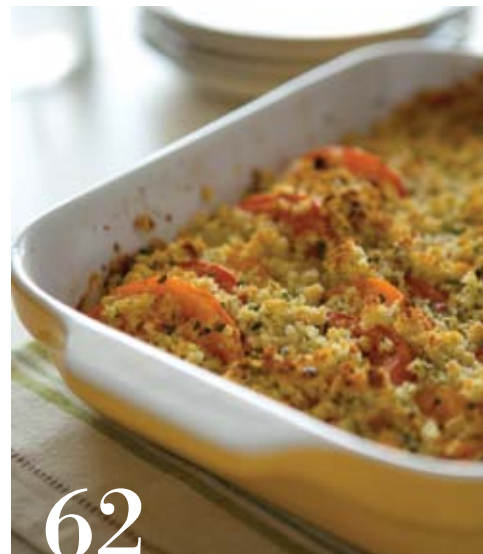
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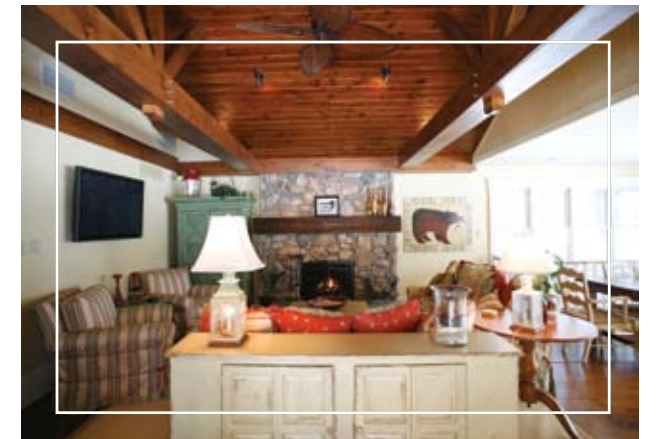


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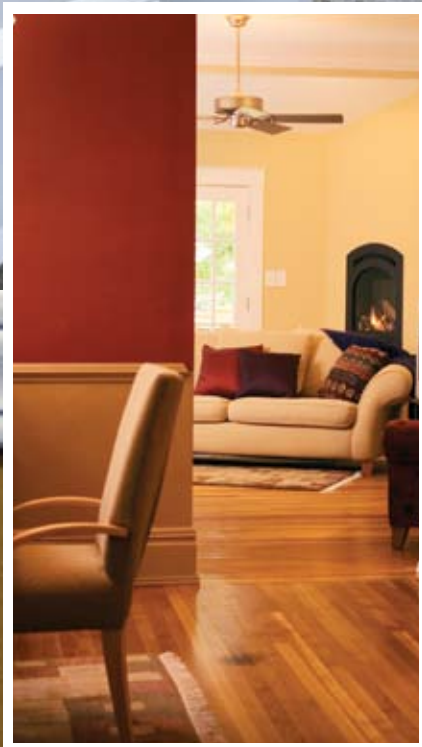
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Designer **Stephanie Redmond** answers your questions. If you need help, send your questions to stephanie@ourhomesmagazine.com

Dear Stephanie,

A lot of my friends never pay full price for anything. I've never had a knack for negotiating and I always spend more than I've budgeted for. How can I find a good deal on big (and not so big) ticket items? When is the best time to buy furniture, appliances and seasonal items and is there room to haggle on the ticket price? – *Faith R.*

Stephanie Redmond replies:

Patience! People who tend to find deals scout out shops and wait until the end of a season (when sales begin) to make their purchases. There are certain items worth waiting for (the expensive ones!), but you run the risk of an item selling out. A lot of new lines launch in spring or fall, but don't be shy about asking when a sale might start. Explain your budget and ask if it's realistic. You're not asking for a discount, you're doing your research.

On another note, be realistic about your budget and allow a bit of leeway. Remember that long-term purchases are worth saving for and make sure to avoid impulse shopping!

Dear Stephanie,

The holiday season is fast approaching. We go to a lot of parties and I always bring a hostess gift, usually a nice bottle of wine. I want to change it up. Can you give me some ideas on what I can bring that will be useful in the home? – *Janine L.*



Stephanie Redmond replies:

A general rule to follow for a hostess gift is giving something that can be consumed. Avoid knick-knacks and dust collectors that your hostess will feel obliged to politely keep on display. Keep in mind what your friends are interested in and go from there. Perhaps a cooking magazine (*Donna Hay* or *Anna* are really nice), white tapered candles, chocolate truffles or a book, movie or CD you've enjoyed. Having said that, if you ever come over to my place, I like an oak chardonnay.

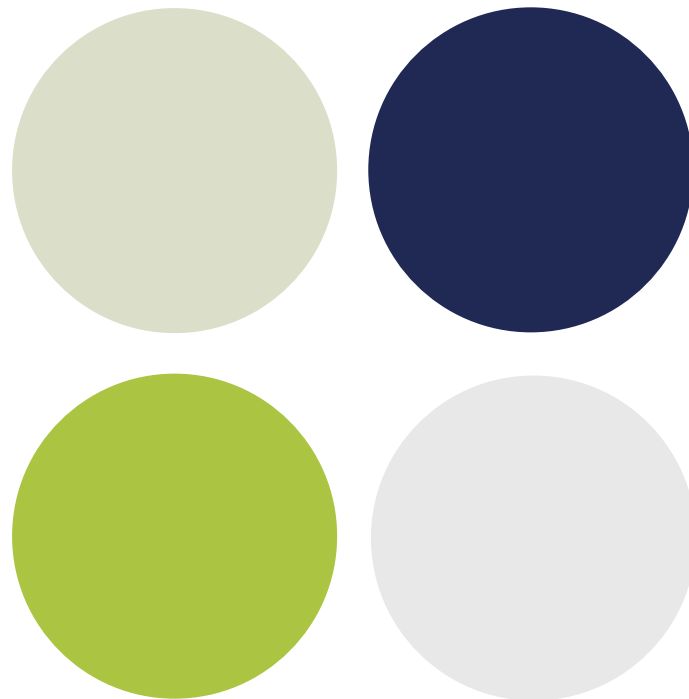
Dear Stephanie,

What's hot in decorating for 2010? My house is ready for a change and I want to know "what's hot" and "what's not" so I can start planning my projects. I don't want to make any mistakes. Can you help? – *Carolyn S.*

Stephanie Redmond replies:

My bet is more sustainable style to come for 2010 – think eco-chic in all shapes and forms – Low VOC paints, furniture in recycled materials, organic cottons and linens.

As far as colour trends go, use earth tones or, in direct contrast, shockingly bright colours and metallics. Primary tones are everywhere from kitchen utensils to appliances in red, yellow and blue. Going "green" could take on a whole new meaning next year. And the good news about paint is, if you make a mistake, you can always get out the paintbrush and apply another coat.



This mix of neutrals and shocking colours can be really interesting and easy to accomplish. Look at the décor mags and pay attention to the rooms you like. A lot of the colour comes in the form of "changeables" – painted walls and throw cushions. These items jump out from a neutral base, which is where you can use your organic linens. If you don't want to make any mistakes, take a chance on low cost items and stick to the basics for the forever pieces. **OH**

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Continued on page 18

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AT HOME IN *The Glen*

BY WALTER FRANCYK // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



Jan and Bill Morrow had never owned a new home before they found Inveraray Glen.

Bracebridge residents for more than 20 years, Jan, a law clerk, and Bill, an electrical inspector, were preparing for semi-retirement when they downsized from a large, four-bedroom home and bought a condominium. After a few months, however, they weren't happy in the condo.

"The condo did not feel right," says Jan. They started looking for another home. When they couldn't find a house they wanted, they started entertaining the idea of buying a new one.

Their search brought them to **Evanco Homes**, developer of **Inveraray Glen** in Bracebridge. "It was a great move," says Jan. Evanco has built more than 500 homes in Muskoka, including 160 single-family homes and 363 condominium units, says Evanco Properties President Wayne Simpson. In business for half a century, the company is committed to development that preserves and enhances Muskoka's natural attractions. "We believe our principal contribution as a development company has been successfully demonstrating that the beauty of Muskoka can be preserved in the urban communities through the sensitive treatment of the natural landscape," Simpson says. "This is accomplished, in part, by minimizing site alteration and maximizing opportunities for nature spaces."

At Evanco, the Morrrows were able to create their ideal home. With the help of the company's interior designer, Sandy Sellens, they used the existing floor plan of a 1,293 sq. ft., two-bedroom bungalow and stretched it by adding two feet of space to the master bedroom, widening a hallway and enlarging the garage. Sellens helped them envision what they had in mind. "She was outstanding, helpful, courteous and accommodating," says Jan.

With Evanco as their builder, the Morrrows could change plans for any room, make it any size or shift doorways. "It didn't cost you any money until you increased the overall square footage," Jan explains.

Instead of an all-season family room at the back of the kitchen, as proposed in the original design, they had Evanco construct an extended roof for a larger, three-season garden room that they built themselves. It opens onto a large deck overlooking a lush back yard. "It was less expensive," says Jan. "We could get a much larger room, with bigger windows, for less money. It just suited us better." *Continued on page 23*

The sun room at Bill and Jan Morrow's home in Inveraray Glen is an ideal place to relax and enjoy the backyard scenery at the end of a work day.

RIGHT: A pine harvest dining table lends an elegant touch to the large front room.

BELOW RIGHT: Daisies crop up indoors as well as outdoors for these avid gardeners.



With two married sons, Doug and Tom, daughters-in-law, Jenn and Nikolina, one infant grandchild and twin grandchildren due in January, the Morrows wanted a large family room. They had that built downstairs along with another guest bedroom. They also moved the laundry room off the main floor to create space for a large closet. In all, the bungalow was enlarged to 1,370 sq. ft. With the garden room it is 1,540 sq. ft.

Construction, as promised, took only 90 days. "We were very happy," Jan says. During construction, she and Bill lived in an apartment nearby and kept an eye on progress during many site visits. She praised Ken and Roy Dehann, Evanco's lead carpenter and master carpenter. "Both those gentlemen were outstanding," Jan says. "All of Evanco's employees have been outstanding. They were always so courteous, welcoming and cautious," she says. "They were wonderful."

Chamberlain Tim-Br Mart supplied the lumber, roofing, siding and hardware for the home, while Homebridge Canada was responsible for heating and cooling. Gravenhurst Plumbing, Heating and Electric installed the plumbing, supplied by Wolseley Mechanical Group. P. Medley & Sons excavated the property while Fowler laid the asphalt. Surveyors T.A. Bunker of Bracebridge and John Jackson of Huntsville also lent their expertise to the project.

It has always been Evanco's goal to offer housing that meets, or exceeds, customers' expectations, says Simpson. "We do so by giving personal attention to each client, hearing and accommodating their desires and constructing homes with an attention to detail and craftsmanship that instills pride of ownership. We recognize that our future success depends upon the testimonies of past customers." *Continued on page 26*

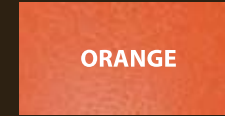
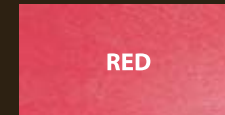
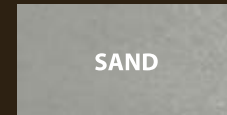
In the living room, the soft green hues of furniture and walls complement oak flooring from Bayfield Flooring. Windows throughout the home were supplied by Window World.



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All About Kitchens outfitted the efficient cookery, one of Jan's favourite rooms.

In addition to master carpenters and an interior designer, the company employs electricians, a landscaper, accountants, sales and marketing personnel as well as a planner and senior management. It has built 61 homes in the quiet Bracebridge neighbourhood where the Morrrows live and intends to build 229 more on the banks of Beaver Creek. It has plans for another 1,000 homes in a variety of forms on the 530-acre Inveraray Glen property. They include single family and executive homes on lots ranging from 65 to 110 feet frontage, estate homes on 1.5- and two-acre properties, detached town homes and maintenance-free condominium units. Evanco offers homebuyers plenty of choice. "We have 12 standard

bungalow models and nine modified plans in Inveraray Glen, another seven bungalows and six, two-storey plans offered in **Muskoka Highlands**," says Simpson. The Muskoka Highlands residential development borders the golf course of the same name on the west side of Bracebridge.

The company recently reduced the price of some homes by \$20,000 to boost sales in what was perceived to be a sluggish economy and keep the company's growth plans on track, says Simpson. Evanco is currently offering single-family homes on lots with 65 or more feet of frontage in Bracebridge and Huntsville. It also has a few remaining luxury residential condominium suites at the **Muskoka Wharf** in Gravenhurst. *Continued on page 28*

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The Morrows modified the original design of their bungalow to create a larger master bedroom.

BELOW: Wooden furniture adds country charm to a modern look.

BOTTOM: The spacious main floor bathroom.



In the Morrows' new neighbourhood, all homes have quaint, covered front porches, with plenty of room to sit, relax and stay connected with their neighbours.

"The people are all so nice," says Jan. "We're all at the same point in our lives. We're just starting to have grandchildren," Jan says. "It's just a great neighbourhood. Everyone gets along well. People are very considerate and outgoing."

Jan and Bill sit in the garden room when he comes home from work and they entertain there in the summer. Jan enjoys sitting in her living room in the early morning, sipping coffee as the sun beams through the windows. She spends a lot of time in her garden and kitchen. The garden teems with impatiens, daisies and black-eyed-susans. The wine-red bee balm, so popular with hummingbirds, is some of the tallest in town. Future plans include a vegetable garden that will give their grandchildren the thrill of picking a fresh tomato or cucumber.

"I love our house," says Jan. "I'm happy with every part of it. We're very content." **OH**

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THE PLACE: Summer's Attic is a gift boutique with a little bit of everything, from home and garden décor to baby clothes, souvenirs and fine art prints. Situated in the heart of Magnetawan, its home is a former Pentecostal church that retains much of its original character and charm. Owned by Ilona Charlton, the store is full of interesting items from across North America and around the world.

THE STYLE: "I try to offer a mix of things because I'm dealing with mostly seasonal residents, as opposed to tourists," says Charlton, now in her sixth year of business. Furniture, home décor pieces and garden accents are augmented with greeting cards, fine art and charming figurines, including many by Jim Shore of South Carolina. The eclectic mix includes jewelry, stuffed toys, knitted clothing and antiques. "I try to find things that are different," Charlton explains.

Continued on page 32

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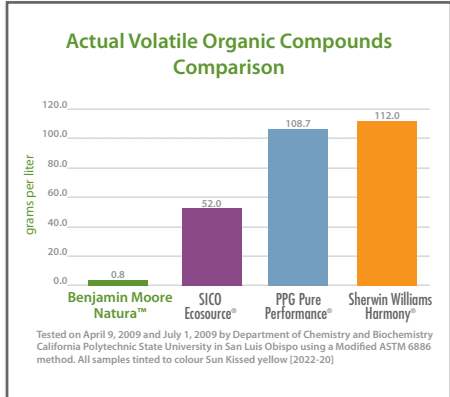
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SEASONAL: Christmas lasts all year long at Summer's Attic. Many people from Toronto buy their Christmas gifts here because Charlton's overhead is lower than that of stores in Southern Ontario and they can pick up items seldom seen elsewhere. Outdoor garden decorations, sculpted metal animals and bird houses suit the taste of many summer shoppers while a new line of Canadian cider and apple preserves will tickle the palates of autumn visitors.

FAVOURITES: Books by writers John Macfie of Parry Sound and Julie Boucher of Ahmic Harbour. In addition, moose and bear motifs are always popular.

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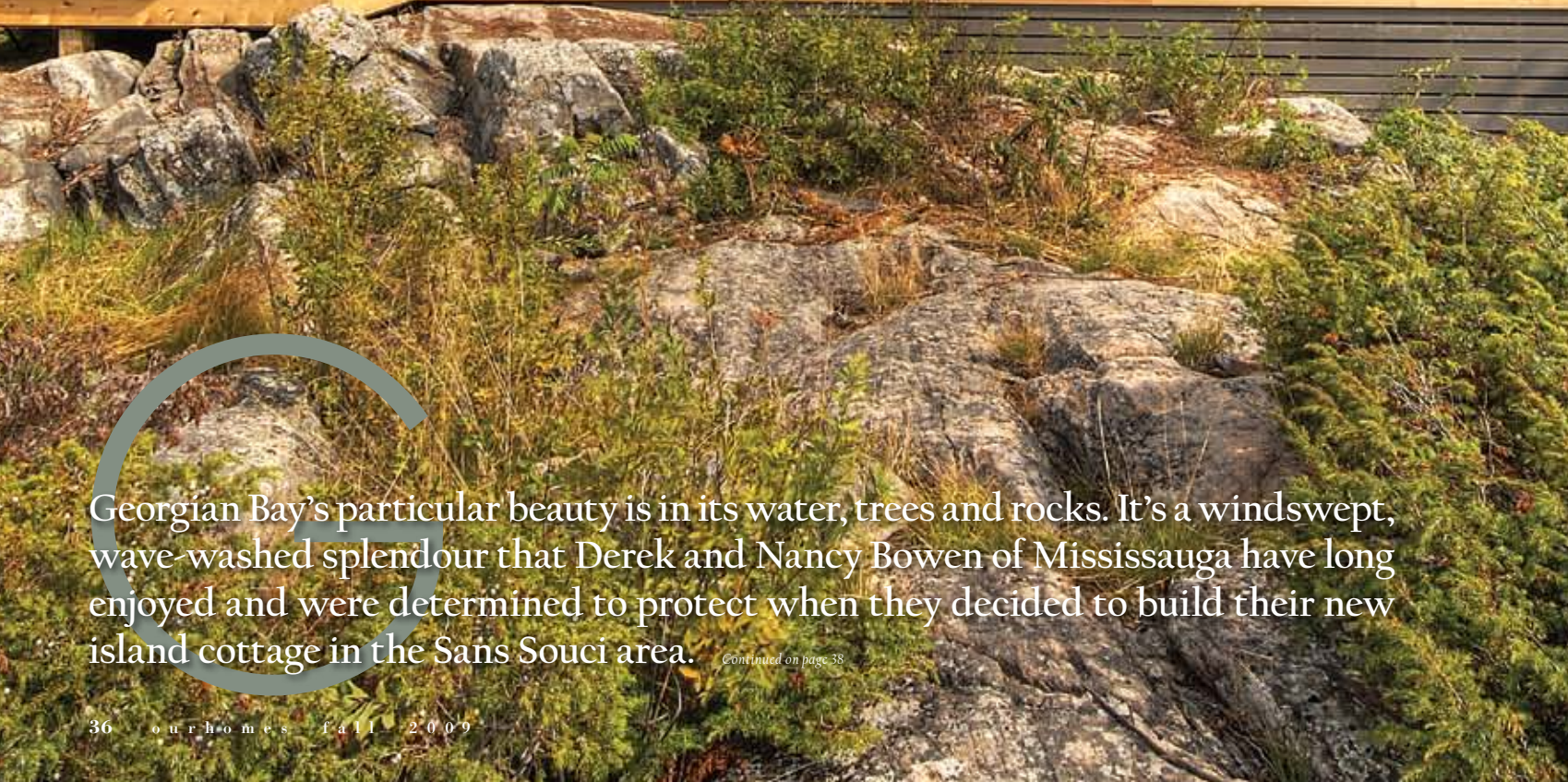
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Building Gently AMID THE ISLANDS

BY DARLENE WROE // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SANDY MACKAY



Georgian Bay's particular beauty is in its water, trees and rocks. It's a windswept, wave-washed splendour that Derek and Nancy Bowen of Mississauga have long enjoyed and were determined to protect when they decided to build their new island cottage in the Sans Souci area. *Continued on page 38*

LEFT: A large deck creates an inviting look for the front of the Bowen family's new Georgian Bay cottage.

RIGHT: A tiny cove on the north shore of their island provides a safe harbour for the family's watercraft.

MIDDLE: The Bowen family, Steve, 18, Derek, Nancy and Jen, 17, with Georgia, their Nova Scotia Duck Tolling Retriever, are thrilled with their new summer home.



A large screened porch, separating the main living area from guest bedrooms, is a great place to unwind and escape from the rain or bugs.

TOP RIGHT: An airy breezeway leads from the great room to the master bedroom.

BOTTOM RIGHT: Vacationing in the Sans Souci area requires an assortment of appropriate apparel suited for a maritime climate.



“Everybody around here loves the rocks,” says Derek. Geologists determined that when the world was still young, a large land mass floated from the other side of the planet to collide with the Canadian Shield in the Parry Sound area, creating the bay’s rugged islands, shoals and inlets. “This particular rock all came from India,” says Derek, pointing to the rock off the deck of his new cottage.

The Bowens have had a long affinity with the craggy allure of the area. For years, the couple had sailed Georgian Bay, at first, just the two of them, and then with their children, Steve, now 18, and Jen, 17. Eight years ago, the Bowens purchased an island where, more than 50 years previously, Wellington Welsh built the original cottage, a building that still stands.

Derek is an electrical engineer in Mississauga. Nancy works with him and is an active volunteer with groups that include the Sans Souci and Copperhead Cottagers’ Association. With a planned

2008 construction date for their new cottage, they contacted Harold Blower of Rose Point Contracting to get the ball rolling. His company works throughout the Parry Sound area, Georgian Bay and Muskoka constructing houses, cottages, docks and doing renovations. “Harold took us around to several cottages that he has built,” recalls Nancy. He also took them to his own cottage, which they immediately loved. Blower’s cottage is built in pods or components, which allow positioning a cottage in connected units over varying ground levels and around trees with as little impact on the natural environment as possible. “We have done quite a few like that,” says Blower, who tries to avoid rock blasting and tree removal. “We do our best to work around the rocks and trees when we can.”

Based on this concept, architectural designer Kelly Dixon of Parry Sound created three-dimensional concept drawings for the Bower’s new cottage. He explained the advantages of building pods. “You get to move

the components around to fit the site. A lower roof line is a huge benefit of using pods.” The 2,250 sq. ft. cottage has three main areas. The great room encompasses a fireplace and sitting area, a large dining table, a kitchen area and screened-in sitting room. The master suite has a bedroom and bathroom. The guest area includes two bedrooms and a bathroom. The three pods are connected by the same roof and are each separated by either a screened-in porch sitting area or screened-in breezeway.

Because bedrooms can be separated from the great room, “you get noise reduction from the core space,” notes Dixon. The front deck and windows offer a spectacular southern view of the bay.

Rose Point’s crew, including site foreman Paul Looby and carpenter Kelly Teneyck, began construction on this cottage with the removal of an existing building late last summer. They continued throughout the winter, once the ice was safe to travel by snowmobile. *Continued on page 44*



The great room is an open concept living area that encompasses the dining room and kitchen. Warm hues of the pine ceiling, walls and cupboards are enhanced by reclaimed elm flooring. The room offers a spectacular view of Georgian Bay.

feature

Designed as a piece of furniture, with legs mirroring those of the dining room table, the kitchen island is a favourite spot for hungry teens and guests.



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LEFT: Derek designed and built a machine that picks and places thousands of tiny ceramic tiles to create images such as this one in the shower stall of the guest bathroom.

BELOW: A glass wall in the en suite shower of the master bedroom provides outdoor ambiance and a great view of the woods. Tile work by Mike Watkinson of Dack Tile.



In order to further reduce impact on the environment, solar panels power one of two fridges, a reverse osmosis system and UV filtration clean water drawn from Georgian Bay, eliminating the need for bottled water, and all appliances are energy-efficient.

Northern Living Kitchen and Bath designer **Lindsay Schultz** says the objective for the interior was to “keep it very cottagey. It was important the cabinetry blend with the interiors.” Tall cabinets were used to draw the eye up to the high ceiling. The kitchen island is built of subtly contrasting material, allowing it to stand as a piece of furniture, Schultz explains. Heavy legs under the island reflect the shape of the dining table legs for continuity.

Further design features include the wood windows and doors from **Golden Windows**. Full glass double doors in the great room are placed opposite each other, following Blower’s suggestion “because you get a nice cross breeze,” says Derek. Transom windows create further breeziness. “You do get really good ventilation,” says Dixon. Flooring, provided by **Century Wood Products**, is reclaimed elm. Custom-made lighting by Matt and Wayne Church of **Artisan’s Gallery** at Severn Bridge includes a dining room chandelier, inspired by tree branches, where three birds perch. Fellow Sans Souci cottager **Claire Murray’s** hand-hooked rugs in the guest room hall and bath evoke Nantucket and Cape Cod. They, in turn, inspired Derek to create a software program and design and build a machine that picks and places tiny ceramic tiles in 40 colours to recreate images. “I thought it would be really neat to have a mosaic back here,” Derek says of the guest bathroom. A shower wall now features a sailboat scene comprised of 18,000 small tiles. “That whole bathroom was very unique,” says Schultz. The nautical theme was picked up with rope detailing on the vanity, the faucets and hardware. The other bathroom, with its huge glass shower window overlooking the woods, has natural stone on the floors and walls. Claire Murray’s rugs also inspired the décor for the guest rooms, named the Bear Room and the Chart Room. *Continued on page 46*

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feature

A vaulted ceiling and unobstructed views lend a sense of great space to the master bedroom. It was furnished by Harris' Furniture and Antiques in Parry Sound.



Furnishings were bought from **Harris' Furniture and Antiques**, which brought the goods to the marina in Parry Sound for transport to the island, and **Huckleberry's**, which delivered to the cottage. All the lumber for the project came from **McNabb Home Building Centre** in Parry Sound. "They were great," says Derek. "They understand the island thinking. Island people have a tendency to do things right the first time." When islanders have a project on the go and boat into town for hardware or supplies, they make sure they get all the right components because if they don't, it's a long ride back to town, he explained. McNabb, he says, sells only the best materials

and did a fantastic job of supplying defect-free lumber for their project.

Artwork in the cottage is all local. "They are all Georgian Bay artists," says Derek. They include such names as **Lu Robitaille** of Victoria Harbour and **Ed Bartram** of Sans Souci. Other art was found at the Parry Sound Art In The Park annual event.

The Bowens are so thrilled with their new cottage, they plan to acknowledge the construction and design team with a commemorative engraving on a rock near the cottage. It will be one more rock to cherish and preserve. **OH**

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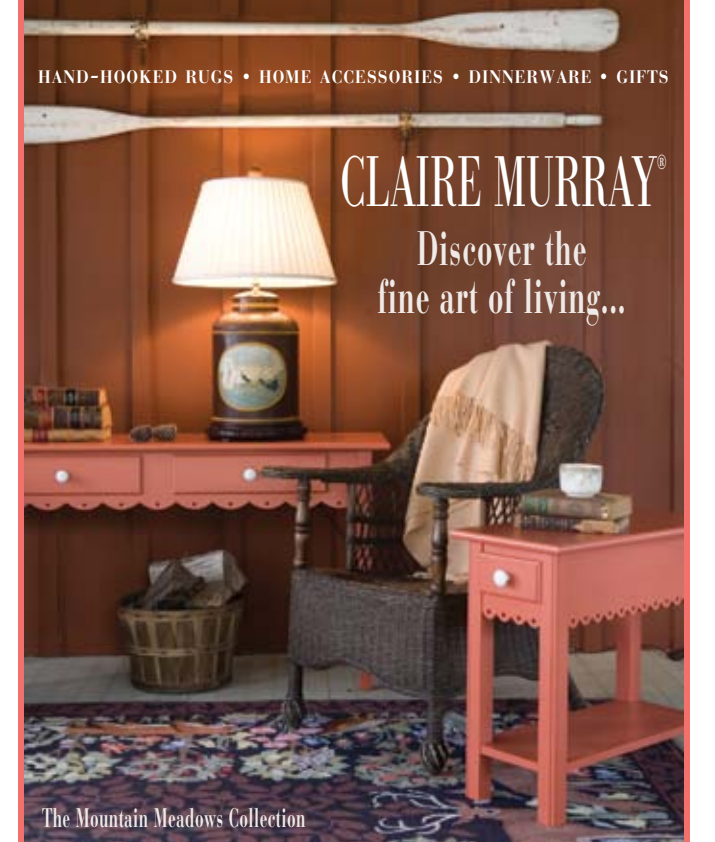
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HOW TO STAY WORRY-FREE

WHILE AWAY

BY JIM FOX



Are you leaving your home for any length of time this year? Perhaps you are closing your vacation home for the season. Whether you are leaving for a week or several months, your home should be left secure, inside and out.

Rob Thorburn, Executive Vice-President of Huronia Alarms, provides individualized security systems for his clientele while they're enjoying the warmth down south or at a second home. Thorburn's firm provides blanket security protection 24/7, all-year-round.

When posed with a series of questions every homeowner tends to ask, Thorburn's answers are unequivocal. Should I keep my driveway shoveled? "Yes." Should I turn off the water? "Yes - as much because of pipe fatigue as for the fear of freezing." Should I turn off my heat? "No, best to install a Low Temperature Sensor to monitor the ambient temperature of the house and if the furnace fails, the client is notified of the low temperature." Should I have my mail picked up? "Yes." What should I do about the car I leave behind? "Park it in your locked garage."

Thorburn believes there is a separate solution for each customer because not everyone's security needs are the same. "Our aim is to talk to people and educate them about what package will best suit their needs."

What's surprising is that Thorburn's company provides more security from flooded basements and furnace failures than from burglary. Whether you hire professionals or provide your own home security, there are a number of ways to eliminate the possibility of returning to a tragic disaster. Here are some of the ways suggested by the editors of *Consumer Guide* and the Canadian Snowbird Association.

Plan to "burglarize" yourself. You'll discover any weakness in your security system that may have escaped your notice.

A spring latch lock is easy prey for burglars who are experts at slipping a plastic credit card against the latch tongue to depress it and unlock the door. A deadbolt defies this attack. It is only vulnerable when there is enough space between the door and its frame to let the intruder use power tools or a hacksaw.

Burglar proof your glass patio doors by setting a pipe or metal bar, the same length of the track, in the middle bottom track of the door slide.

Before turning your house key over to a house cleaner, make sure the person is reputable. Check all references thoroughly. If the cleaner is from a firm, call your local Better Business Bureau to check on the company's reputation.

Don't leave notes for service people or family members on the door. These act as a welcome mat to intruders.

If entrances to your home are dark, install lighting with an infrared or motion detector. Thieves don't want to be observed in the act.

Continued on page 50



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Ask neighbours to keep in touch with you if they notice suspicious people or unfamiliar cars lurking about your home.

Have neighbours use your garbage cans when you're on vacation so your absence won't be so evident.

Trees located near windows or shrubbery that might shield a burglar from view can be a major flaw in your home protection plan. Consider restructuring your landscaping plans to meet your home protection needs.

Garages present special challenges for security. Frost or cover your garage windows so intruders won't be able to tell if your car is gone. Keep your garage door locked and closed even when your car is not in the garage. To prevent an intruder from entering your house through your attached garage, tighten a C-clamp on the track next to the roller. Be sure to remove all automatic garage door openers from vehicles left at your home during your absence.

To protect valuables, store them in a safety-deposit box offsite or in a secure fireproof home safe that is too heavy to be moved. Avoid hiding small valuables in obvious places such as mattresses, drawers, behind pictures, inside figurines and under carpets. Many police departments offer the use of an engraving tool to mark a code number that will identify valuables in case of theft.

Finally, burglars always look for signs that a house is uninhabited. The longer your house is empty, the more vulnerable it becomes. So, if you're traveling to warmer climes this winter, maintain an air of normalcy by keeping your driveway shoveled, rerouting mail delivery and canceling newspaper delivery. Likewise, use timers to switch on lights, heat and radios while you're away.

Follow these tips and your trip or extended absence will be worry-free and your return a happy one. **OH**

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Barbara Nettleton Photo

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A LONG LIFE ON THE BAY

After a century of summers on her Georgian Bay island, Gladys Clark doesn't like talking about her age. But she enjoys joking about it. Asked to name the key to her longevity, she points to her afternoon cocktail of whisky and water. *Continued on page 54*

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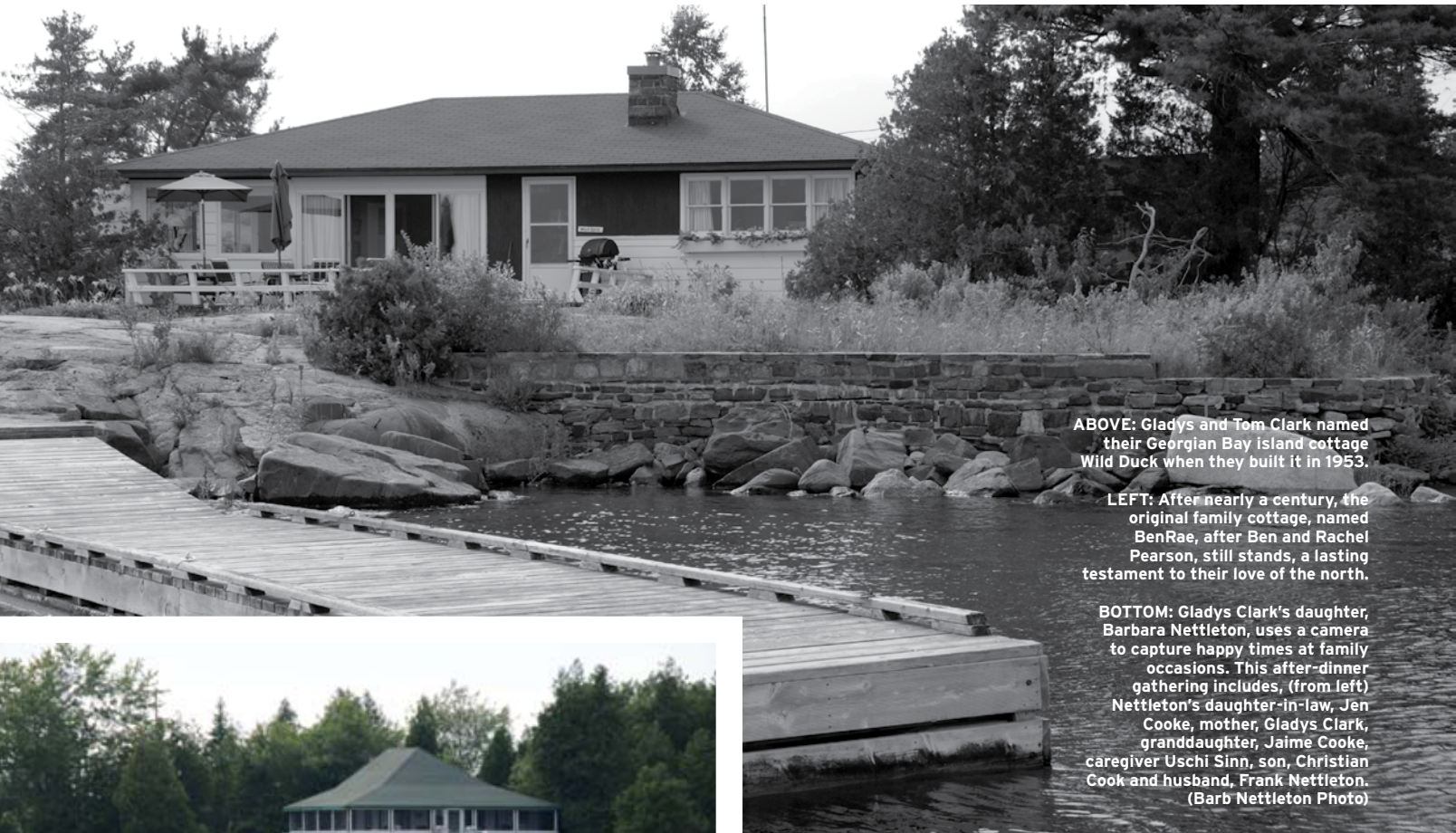
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ABOVE: Gladys and Tom Clark named their Georgian Bay island cottage Wild Duck when they built it in 1953.

LEFT: After nearly a century, the original family cottage, named BenRae, after Ben and Rachel Pearson, still stands, a lasting testament to their love of the north.

BOTTOM: Gladys Clark's daughter, Barbara Nettleton, uses a camera to capture happy times at family occasions. This after-dinner gathering includes, (from left) Nettleton's daughter-in-law, Jen Cooke, mother, Gladys Clark, granddaughter, Jaime Cooke, caregiver Uschi Sinn, son, Christian Cook and husband, Frank Nettleton. (Barb Nettleton Photo)



Pearson loved hunting and fishing and would often bring friends north for the sport and adventure.

Every summer the Pearson children swam, explored the islands and fished. They feasted on fresh bass and picked a ton of blueberries. "We didn't want to go anywhere else," Clark says. When they got older, they went to Friday night dances with other cottagers at the nearby Copperhead Hotel.

Clark worked as a legal secretary. She married Tommy Clark, a car dealer, who owned St. Clair Motors in Toronto. They had one child and named her Barbara. In 1953, they built their island cottage, a stone's throw from the Pearson family's original cabin, and named it Wild Duck. "We had a lot of fun with that name," says Barbara, who spends summers with her husband, Frank Nettleton, on another low, rocky island just across a narrow channel from her mother's. Her father, Tommy, went to work for Grew, the renowned Georgian Bay boat maker. "So we always had terrific boats," Barbara remembers. *Continued on page 56*



"The rye?" a visitor asks.

"The water," she replies, a trace of mischief in her smile.

Water surrounds Clark every summer. It laps relentlessly at the shore of the three-acre island her parents Ben and Rachel Pearson bought near Sans Souci in 1911. Sometimes, driven by howling winds, waves pound the rocky beaches of her wilderness retreat. It's a peaceful and inspiring sliver of land on the western edge of the Georgian Bay archipelago.

"The sound of the water, the breeze. It's so beautiful here," Clark sighs.

She celebrated her 100th birthday in Toronto on January 11. When the weather warmed up, she came north once again to spend a few weeks at her favourite summer spot. Officially called Penhale Island, the granite outcrop was named BenRae Island after her parents built their cottage there. "They loved the north country," says Clark. Her mother and father owned a grocery store on Yorkville Avenue in Toronto. Each summer they would take turns, spending a month at a time at the cottage with their four daughters and three sons. The island offers sublime views of the sunset and has shallow edges where the seven Pearsons could safely play. "We loved it," Clark recalls. "We wouldn't miss it for anything." Ben

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The Hands of Time are kind at Sans Souci

BELOW: An undated photo shows Gladys Clark flanked by sisters Edna (left) and Marjorie (right).

A deep love for the outdoors, an active lifestyle and a caring family has kept Clark healthy. "She's always thinking of everyone else. That's what keeps her going," says her son-in-law, Frank. For her 80th birthday, her family bought her a rowboat, the perfect vessel for some healthy exercise or a leisurely visit to nearby islands. Ten years later, Clark got an outdoor shower for her birthday. At age 89, when lightning sparked a fire in a corner of her cottage, she singlehandedly tackled the blaze while telephoning her daughter to say, "I think I've got it under control."

Barbara and a small army of neighbouring islanders rushed to help. It's a vivid image seared into Barbara's memory. "There's mom. She's in her nightie, standing there with a hose. The roof is puffing. The whole place was smoking," Barbara says. "She was trying to put it out with a hose." Neighbours and relatives rushed to the scene, hauled furniture and other belongings out of the cottage, put out the fire and



saved the building. "You've got to love her spirit," Barbara says.

A widow for more than 25 years, Clark continued operating the mortgage business her husband started. She retired from that venture last year, at age 99, after a couple of mini-strokes diminished her short-term memory and mobility. She now uses a walker to get around and is helped by her caregiver, Uschi Sinn, who accompanied Clark on her summer vacation.

Although electricity has come to these remote islands, refrigeration has retired the ice saws and tongs and speedboats have replaced steamboats out on the bay, cottage life remains much the same for Clark. On the surrounding rocks and bays, new generations of cousins, nephews and nieces spend their summer holidays much as she and her brothers and sisters did a long lifetime ago.

"I haven't noticed very many changes," Clark says. **OH**

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FROM TRASH TO *Treasure*

When Decorative Artist Deborah Masters saw a lonely old chair at the side of the road with a “FREE” sign attached to it, she just had to take a closer look.

“It was covered with a fake 60s or 70s brown vinyl,” she recalls. “I stopped because the chair had a great shape and was in good condition, other than being a bit wobbly.”

Masters decided to “Upcycle” the chair.

Upcycling is a reinvestment in the environment. It involves taking something destined for the landfill and giving it new life by transforming the item into something of greater use and value.

HERE'S HOW MASTERS CREATED A DAZZLING NEW CHAIR.

- She tightened a few screws and used some glue to make the chair sturdy again.
- The dated fabric was removed.
- The arms were sanded, primed, painted and then silver-leafed.
- Masters then selected a contemporary orange fabric with white and

black accents. “I wanted the fabric to make a real statement,” she says. “A one off – a piece of art!”

- She took the fabric and chair to Eryn Carter of Bouj Custom Sewn Goods and Upholstery, who reinforced the chair, covered it with the beautiful fabric and added rivets.
- Once the chair was back in Masters’ hands, she sanded the arms back to the wood and then dry-brushed black paint into the exposed areas.
- Finally, the chair was varnished.

The result is stunning.

So give it a go. Take something old and make it new again. Tap into your creativity and make something destined for the trash heap totally cool and beautiful... again. **OH**

Living

BY PAUL WILSON

"OFF THE GRID": A Tale of Two Houses



Bill Bartram and Janet Bartram-Thomas in front of their home.

One chilly October in the late 1980s, I spent a weekend deep in the New Hampshire woods with an acquaintance who had built himself a small, airtight cabin far beyond the reach of any electrical service. It was a classic “off-the-grid” setup, with an array of solar panels that pumped and heated his water, and allowed him to run a few small appliances. But as the darkness closed in and the Coleman lamps kept sucking oxygen out of the air, the place, with its tiny windows, began to feel more like a Hobbit’s house than a human dwelling, and my host’s enthusiastic banter about the joys of self-sufficiency began to sound hollow. Nor did it help that his wife remained sullen and silent most of the time, as though she had heard it all before and wasn’t buying it. When Monday came, I couldn’t wait to get back to my unenlightened life of parasitic dependency on the grid.

And that was pretty much where my thinking remained for the next couple of decades: “Off the grid?” Nice idea, but I didn’t want to live there. Then I met the Bartram-Thomases.

Bill Bartram and Janet Bartram-Thomas are retired school teachers who have a beautiful, modern home in a rugged forest area on the Niagara Escarpment, about a quarter of a kilometre from the nearest side road. They designed it themselves and it would fit right into any upscale urban neighbourhood. The ground floor is a bright, airy, open space that combines kitchen, dining and sitting room, with large windows on three sides affording a panoramic view of the surrounding forest. In winter, when I first went to visit, the place was cosy, warmed by radiant floor heating and an airtight wood stove. To the naked eye, it was just exactly what it appeared to be – a well thought out, comfortable dwelling made for contemporary living.

Yet a few dozen yards from the Bartram-Thomas home, across a small clearing, there is an insulated shed with an array of photovoltaic solar panels on one wall, slanted upward to catch the sun. Inside the shed, batteries collect and store the electricity the panels generate and an inverter transforms the power – just over one kilowatt – from direct to alternating current to feed the household appliances. As long as the sun is shining, they have plenty of electricity. Another part of the shed houses a diesel generator that kicks in automatically when the batteries need recharging at night or in cloudy weather.

The south-facing roof of the house holds a second array of panels – solar thermal panels this time – that heat up a glycol solution that powers the in-floor heating system and warms water for household use. The airtight stove has a water-jacket that feeds additional hot water into the heating system. The electronics and mechanisms that control these systems are discreetly hidden away in service areas and for extra cold spells there’s propane backup to keep the house at 50 degrees Fahrenheit even when no one’s home. “We were pioneers,” Janet said, “but we also wanted our creature comforts.”

Bill and Janet built their off-the-grid house six years ago and, despite advances in solar technology, I realized that the real difference between their lovely home and that cramped, uncomfortable cabin in New Hampshire lay in the priorities. My American friend had built his dwelling to accommodate the technology; design, for him, was secondary and he accepted the notion that a certain amount of roughing it went with the territory. The Bartram-Thomases, no strangers themselves to roughing

it, had designed the technology to accommodate their notion of creature comfort. Two different approaches – two different outcomes. There was no question in my mind which I preferred.

Of course, Bill and Janet freely admit to making some mistakes along the way. The builder and the solar technicians were often at loggerheads. “It was as if they were speaking two different languages,” Janet said. “Now I’ll bet you can get a contractor who has people trained to work with alternate energy.”

“And it wouldn’t have cost too much more to have a basement put in,” Bill added. “That would be a much better place for the batteries and the inverter, because they are temperature sensitive. And we’d put a monitor right inside the house that would tell us how much power is being generated and what load we’re putting on the system.”

But their biggest druther surprised me. “In hindsight,” Bill said, “we wouldn’t go completely off the grid. We’d still have put in solar, but we’d also have brought power in, because then we’d be in a position to sell back.”

Bill was referring to a revolutionary approach to power generation and distribution that is lurching into life in Ontario, a system that some analysts say is one of the most forward-thinking in the world. With a series of new acts of parliament, most recently the “Green Energy Act” passed this May, Ontario, among other things, is poised to activate a program called “net metering” (go to www.hydrooneonetworks.com to download their Net Metering brochure) in which people who generate their own domestic power will be able to send any excess back into the grid in exchange for credits on their electricity bill, thus precluding the need for expensive batteries and generator backup. But you can only take advantage of it if you’re connected to the grid.

Building or retrofitting a home with solar or wind power can be expensive and is not to be lightly undertaken. Even the best designed system requires some changes in one’s lifestyle; a badly designed system can put serious strains on a relationship. Janet and Bill were both equally committed to the project, but they told me of a couple with a poorly installed system that almost destroyed their marriage.

“Still, if we can do it, anybody can do it,” Janet said. “We’re English teachers. We’re not immersed in the science or technology of it. We just took a flying leap and trusted that, somehow, it would work. And it did.” **OH**

Paul Wilson is a writer, editor and translator who lives full time in rural Ontario. He can be reached at paul.heathcote@sympatico.ca.

cooking at home

A Tomato FOR YOUR THOUGHTS

BY MARIA DASILVA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HUNTER



As Indian summer stretches into fall, sun-kissed tomatoes still hang heavy on plants patiently waiting for harvest. And even this late in the season, nothing beats the taste of a tomato, fresh from the vine and still warm from the sun. My absolute favourite way to enjoy tomatoes at the peak of their existence is simply sliced into a toasted tomato sandwich. But some occasions in life call for something a little more spectacular than a sandwich! Enter the Tomato Gratin – a simple side dish of meltingly soft, warm tomatoes with a crisp garlicky topping, perfect for a fall dinner with friends and family. Use a variety of heirloom tomatoes for a stunning visual effect, or perfectly ripe beefsteak tomatoes, or whatever type you have on hand. But one thing is certain, no matter which tomato you slice, the result will have you wishing tomato season lasted forever.

TOMATO GRATIN Serves 6 to 8

- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 2 cloves garlic, minced
- 1/2 cup fresh sourdough bread crumbs
- 1/4 cup grated Parmesan cheese
- 2 tbsp chopped fresh parsley
- 1/4 tsp each salt and pepper
- 2 1/2 lbs firm, ripe tomatoes, sliced into 1/2-inch rounds
- Half large Vidalia onion, thinly sliced

- Heat oil in small skillet over medium heat. Cook garlic until just beginning to turn golden (30 seconds to one minute). Immediately pour over bread crumbs and toss to combine. Stir in Parmesan, parsley, salt and pepper; set aside.
- In shallow 2.5 L casserole dish, arrange tomato and onion slices, overlapping slightly to fit. Sprinkle with bread crumbs. Bake in 425°F for about 25 minutes until tomatoes are soft and bread crumbs are golden. Let stand for five minutes before serving. **OH**

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PRESERVING HERBS

BY MARIA DASILVA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HUNTER

Whether you are a beginner or advanced gardener with a rambling English-style garden, a tiny deck or a sunny windowsill, growing culinary herbs can be one of the most satisfying adventures. These hearty plants are relatively easy to grow organically and are immediately rewarding with their scents, colours and pungent, flavourful foliage. A generous harvest can be preserved to keep that summer-fresh flavour lasting throughout winter. Here's a list of the best ways to preserve some of the most common culinary herbs.



BASIL – Although its rich, licorice-like taste might lead you to believe otherwise, drying basil causes it to lose much of its flavour. The best way to preserve basil is to freeze it. Blend a combination of fresh basil leaves with just enough oil or water to make a thick paste. Freeze the paste in ice cube trays then transfer to resealable freezer bags to keep until needed. These cubes are great to boost the flavour of soups, stews and sauces. Another great way to preserve basil is to make pesto, a blend of fresh basil leaves, olive oil, garlic and pine nuts. Pesto can be stored frozen for months. Add grated Parmesan cheese just before use.

CHIVES – Freezing is one of the best methods for preserving chives. Chop the leaves into the lengths you will require and freeze them on a baking sheet to prevent them from clumping together. Transfer the frozen chives to resealable freezer bags to use as needed. Fresh chives can also be preserved in vinegar. Bring a vinegar of your choice (white wine or champagne vinegar would be nice) to boil and pour over tons of chopped chives in a heat-proof jar. Cover and let the mixture stand in a cool-dark place for at least 2 weeks. Drain before using. *Continued on page 66*

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finishing touch

CILANTRO – Like basil, cilantro loses much of its peppery appeal when dried so freezing is best. Chop or blend the fresh leaves with water or oil and freeze in ice cube trays, then transfer to resealable freezer bags to store. Harvest and freeze the carrot-like white roots of cilantro to use in your favourite Thai recipes. The light brown, unopened seed cases can be harvested and stored for use in your favourite Indian recipe by cutting the stalk at the base and placing them upside-down in a paper bag. Keep the bag in a warm, dark place until the seeds fall out. Gently shake the bag to loosen the seeds and leave them in the bag for two weeks to dry out.

DILL – Dill weed can be preserved by drying or freezing. To dry, spread whole stems on a screen or cooling rack and keep at room temperature until dried through – this can take about a week. Crumble the leaves and keep them in a sealed glass jar. To freeze dill, place whole stems in a resealable freezer bag and snip off pieces as needed. It can also be blended and frozen in ice cube trays. Gather dill seeds the same way you gather cilantro seeds for use in pickles, stews or savoury baking.

MINT – Like dill, mint can be preserved by drying or freezing. Spread whole sprigs on a screen or cooling rack and dry in a cool, dark place. Store thoroughly dried leaves, crumbled or whole, in a sealed glass jar. Blend and freeze mint in ice cube trays, transferring to resealable plastic bags to store.

OREGANO – The best way to preserve oregano is to dry whole stems. Loosely tie three or four stems together and hang them in a cool, dark place until the leaves and stems are dried through – this can take up to two weeks. When the leaves are dry, strip them from the stems and store in a sealed glass container. Oregano also makes delicious flavoured vinegar. Bring red wine vinegar (or vinegar of your choice) to boil and pour over tons of fresh chopped oregano in a heat-proof jar. Cover and let the mixture stand for at least two weeks. Drain before using.

PARSLEY – To preserve the bright, fresh flavour and vibrant colour of

parsley, it is best to freeze it rather than dry it. Freeze whole sprigs in resealable freezer bags and snip off pieces as needed. The fresh leaves can also be blended with olive oil, garlic and pine nuts or walnuts to make a fresh version of pesto. Freeze the mixture in ice cube trays and transfer them to resealable freezer bags to store.

ROSEMARY – Dry whole sprigs of rosemary by loosely tying three or four sprigs together and hanging in a cool, dark place until dried through. Strip off the dried leaves and store in a sealed glass jar. Freeze whole sprigs, snipping off pieces as needed.

SAGE – Freezing is the best technique to preserve the fresh flavour of sage. Spread fresh leaves on a baking sheet and freeze. Transfer frozen leaves to resealable freezer bags for use as needed. Sage can also be dried. Spread individual leaves on a cooling rack or screen and let dry in a well-ventilated, warm place. Because the leaves curl as they dry and their thick foliage holds a lot of moisture they need a lot of air circulation around them to inhibit the growth of fungus during drying. When the leaves are completely dry, store whole or crumbled in a sealed glass jar.

THYME – Thyme is best preserved by drying. Loosely tie together five or six sprigs and hang in a cool, dark place until the leaves and stems are dried through. When completely dry, strip the leaves from the stem and store in a sealed glass jar. Freeze whole sprigs of thyme in resealable freezer bags – this method is best for flavouring stocks, stews, soups or sauces to which the whole sprig is added during cooking and removed just before serving.

Herb Butter – Another great way to preserve any single herb or combination of herbs is to make herb butter. To make, soften a portion of unsalted butter, stir in the chopped fresh herb(s) of your choice and a pinch each of salt and pepper. Using plastic wrap, roll the butter into a log. Store in the fridge for up to two months and use to top grilled meats, steamed vegetables, simple pasta or in savoury baking. **OH**



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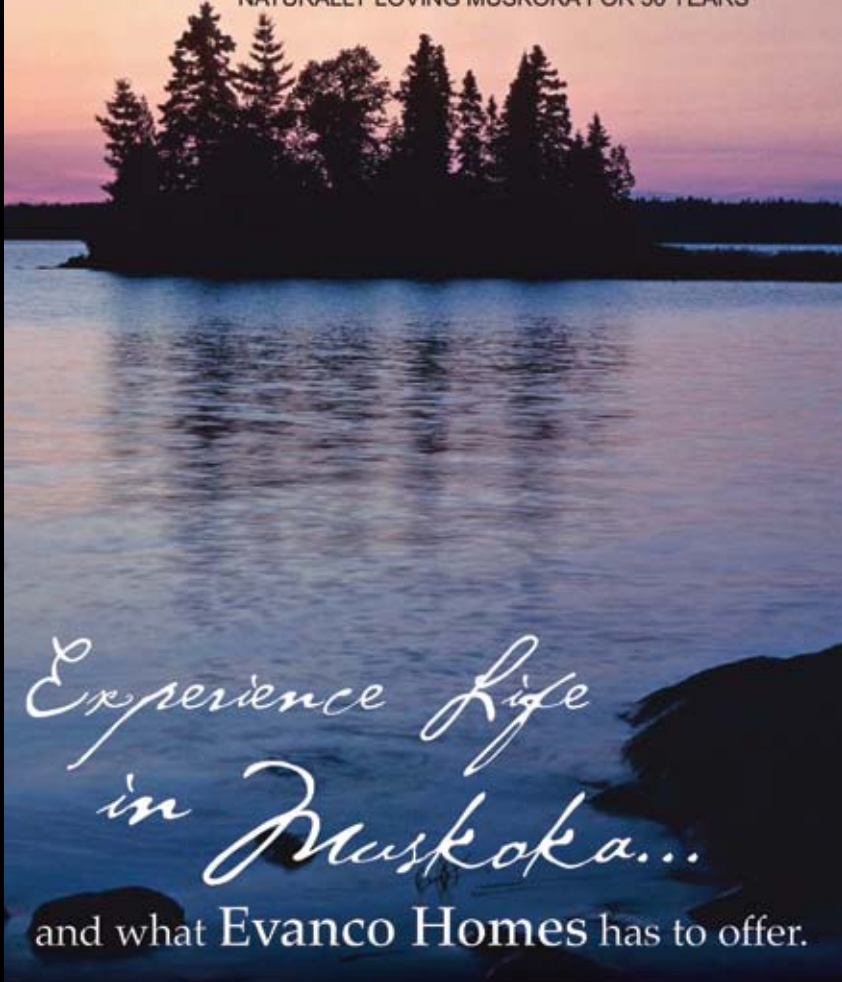
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