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# MUSKOKA

## *Life*

JUNE ISSUE 2014

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# THE DREAM HOUSE *next door*

STORY BY PATTI VIPOND

PHOTOGRAPHY BY ANDRÉ CARRIÈRE, VIRTUAL TOUR VISIONS

*Can a photo in a calendar change your life? For Doug and Sandy McIntyre, a random house photo sent them on a long journey to their dream home.*

**T**he dream began in 2002 when a calendar from a real estate company entered the lives of Doug and Sandy McIntyre. Among 12 photos of various homes was a house with an interesting roofline and a couple of intriguing covered verandas. Seeing it, the couple had the same thought.

*"There's our dream home."*

As is usual with dreams, its realization was deferred for a time.

That year, the McIntyres had owned an older but beloved cottage tucked into a

sheltered inlet on Lake Muskoka for five years. The 1,200-square-foot traditional cedar-sided retreat near Torrance had 620 feet of shoreline that fronted 22.5 acres of land. The couple had added a guest cabin, boat port and a large garage. But in 2006, after four years of mulling over building plans inspired by the calendar photo, Doug and Sandy began serious consideration of what more could be done with the property. The frontage allowed more than enough room for severance, but the narrow inlet was protected by a special bylaw in that







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The trim in the McIntyres' new home was crafted from profiles created by Fred Haas. Tech Homes' trim is milled by a company that uses Tech Homes' own custom knives, so each piece of trim is unique.





*Because their cottage was a solid, well-designed Viceroy home, the McIntyres had Viceroy in mind as they looked for a builder.*

respect. Then, Doug found the solution.

"By law, only one residential house can be built per lot," explains Doug. "So, we bought a neighbouring property and transferred about six acres of land and some frontage from the original property to what had been the neighbour's property. Then we were able to build a new house because we owned two adjoining properties."

Because their cottage was a solid, well-designed Viceroy home, the McIntyres had Viceroy in mind as they looked for a builder. Accordingly, they dropped into the Viceroy sales office on Hwy. 11, just south of Gravenhurst and were introduced to Tech Homes Ltd., a Viceroy dealer and custom home builder.

Later, Doug and Sandy met owner and designer Fred Haas, who started his company 40 years ago, and his son Stephen at the company's main office in Markham to begin the design process. During his 25 year tenure at Viceroy as Executive Vice President and General Manager, he designed every Viceroy home model. Construction of a superbly customised Pasadena Viceroy model began in April 2010. The dream house was underway.

"For this house, we had to do some blasting because the area was so uneven," says Stephen, who describes his job as doing everything but picking up a hammer and doing design work. "We had to bring in several truckloads of crushed gravel to even it off before putting the footings down. A couple of times, a few black bears showed up. Once Fred and the crew had the drawings on the hood of a car and a bear walked by, looked at them and sauntered on."

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The McIntyres made some design modifications. The two upstairs bedrooms in the five-bedroom home have ensuites instead of the shared bathroom in the original plan. Also, the large walk-in closet in the master bedroom became two reach-in closets to enlarge the room's sitting area.





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Tech Homes Ltd. installs the home's foundation and builds the Viceroy home package but interior finishes like flooring, fireplaces and kitchen cabinets are chosen by the customer and custom installed by the builder.

*“Once, Fred and the crew had the drawings on the hood of a car and a bear walked by, looked at them and sauntered on.”*

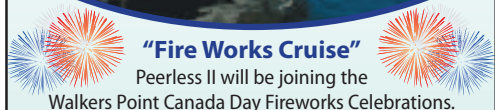
Tech Home Ltd., which is registered with Tarion and the Muskoka Home Builders Association, installs the home's foundation and builds the Viceroy home package but interior finishes like flooring, fireplaces and kitchen cabinets are chosen by the customer and custom installed by the builder.

“Choosing whether to have a Muskoka room and what type is all part of the design process,” explains Stephen. “With the McIntyres’ house, once we had established what they wanted and the model, they sat down with Fred who came up with ideas and suggestions. The whole process develops over time. We are constantly fine tuning it with additional ideas. For instance, the original Pasadena design has an open porch. We suggested turning it into a screened porch and further developed it into a three season Muskoka room by installing Sunspace Windows. They liked the idea and it’s a great room.”

Doug valued Fred Haas’ expertise during the year-long design phase, noting it’s difficult to see from flat drawings how a layout will look in 3D. Fred is an international designer who has built a number of Pasadena homes.

“Fred found certain modifications really improved the plan,” says Doug. “He was right on. He moved the main stairway so you could see the big window in the back from the front door instead of entering and looking at the stairway. He also moved the garage doors to the front of the garage instead of the side facing the front door. He said if the driveway crosses your front door, you will always have cars parked there. Now they are in the garage or hidden from view by the garage.”

The McIntyres also made some design modifications. The two upstairs bedrooms in the five-bedroom home have ensuites instead of the shared bathroom in the origi-



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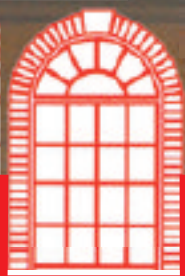
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Another special facet of this home, now the McIntyres' permanent residence, is its geo-thermal heating system. Lake water is used to heat the forced air system and a reverse process cools the house in summer.

nal plan. Also, the large walk-in closet in the master bedroom became two reach-in closets to enlarge the room's sitting area.

The trim in the McIntyres' new home was crafted from profiles created by Fred Haas. Tech Homes' trim is milled by a company that uses Tech Homes' own custom knives, so each piece of trim is unique. Trim workers laboured for two months at the house to install each piece of oak trim including intricate curved pieces for the window tops. Mouldings throughout the home are wider than standard and the handsome baseboards are taller.

"We've built a lot in Muskoka and built additions in the city, so we've dealt with many contractors and salespeople," says Doug. "The sub-trades that Tech Homes have are wonderfully skilled people. This is very much a custom home."

Another special facet of this home, now the McIntyre's permanent residence, is its geo-thermal heating system. Lake water is used to heat the forced air system and a reverse process cools the house in summer. Radiant heating was installed in the lower

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## DID YOU KNOW... Septics can stall your sale!

### Septic Use Permits

Septic Systems are a necessity to living in many areas of Muskoka with over 25,000 systems located in operation inclusive of waterfront and rural properties. A malfunctioning system can pollute both ground and surface water causing harm to the quality of water we all cherish. Water quality has a direct impact on Real Estate Values.

### What is a Septic Use Permit?

In Muskoka, private sewage systems are regulated by the Area Municipality and Septic Use Permits are a requirement of the Building Code. A final Occupancy Permit will not be issued without proper Septic Use Approval and Permit. Any new system or major repair to an existing septic system requires approval, insuring that they are designed, installed and operate properly. A sketch and details delineating the location and proximity to the dwelling, the size and type of tank, the length of the leeching bed or "runs" the date of installation and the installer are helpful details found in a use permit.

### Where and how do you get one?

A request by the property owner (or an agent on their behalf) to the local Township Office will usually result in obtaining a copy within a few days with an approximate cost of \$10.00.

### Why do you need a Septic Use Permit?

It is now common practice to provide a Septic Use Permit when selling your property. This helps Buyers determine if an investment will be required to update or enlarge the system, especially if the system is at the end of its life cycle (average 25 years yet some can last up to 50 years depending on use) or if considering building additions or bathrooms. It is considered a "large ticket item" in the process of negotiation.

### How do they calculate the size and type of system needed?

It is important to note there are choices when it comes to septic systems. Classic systems comprise a concrete or plastic tank with leeching runs, yet options are different when there is not sufficient room to install.

To determine the proper size of septic for your home or cottage, the total number of bedrooms and the total number of plumbing fixtures are calculated into fixture units.

For further information, please read out BLOG at:  
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The McIntyres' hilltop dream home, built above the trees and back from the lake to allow for a spacious patio with an unlimited view, was finished in August 2011.



*"The sub-trades that Tech Homes have are wonderfully skilled people. This is very much a custom home."*

level floors and all tiled floors for comfort.

"For geo-thermal, you only have a couple of pumps in the basement and nothing on the outside of the building so everything stays quiet and clean," explains Stephen. "We do a lot of this, particularly when we are build a home such as the McIntyre's. We also prep the building outside for back-up generators."

The McIntyres' hilltop dream home, built above the trees and back from the lake to allow for a spacious patio with an unlimited view, was finished in August 2011. The couple "eased" their way in and have been in residence for about one and a half years. The property includes a boat-house with a bedroom and bath upstairs that is currently a studio for Sandy who

is a visual artist.

Creating plenty of room for everyone was a priority for the couple who have two grown sons. And as of about a month ago, the wisdom of having that space was confirmed. Doug and Sandy will make room this season for twin granddaughters, their first grandchildren, courtesy of their older son.

"It's an amazing home – what's not to like?" Doug says with a smile. "I have what I call the Book of Bills which is a binder full of bills for this house. The first page is the house we saw in that real estate calendar in 2002. It took a long time, but it really is the result of a dream and a lot of thinking and planning. We are very happy with the result." ☺