

# Bayside BEAUTY

In 2002, Bob and Ruth Anne Morava of Williams Bay noticed that a piece of lake property in Cedar Point Park that they had long admired was for sale. In fact, Bob grew up just a few houses away and had been friends with the family since childhood. “Bob has a great love for the lake and Williams Bay itself,” explains Ruth Anne. “So when this property came on the market, we wanted to make that extra leap.” They purchased the property and moved in, but it was always their hope to replace the existing WWII-era house with a “forever” home they could enjoy with their two sons and extended family. Two years ago, with the help of architect Ken Etten, builder Randy Thelen and interior designer Katie Wozniak, that dream house became a reality.

Etten, of McCormack + Etten Architects in Lake Geneva, has over 21 years’ experience designing homes in the Lakes area, and he knows the challenges that come with that task. “The problem the Moravas were facing in the original house was that they had very limited views of the lake on that property,” he said. “They wanted to create a home where they could maximize their views.” The lot was relatively narrow — only about 80’ wide — and when the Village ordinances regarding setbacks were factored into the equation, the space constraints presented a particular challenge.

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Etten set to work solving the puzzle of designing a house and two-car garage to fit the lot that would also provide maximum views. He accomplished this by designing an open-plan house that stacks living space vertically. The result was a house that allows lake views from multiple rooms, including the master bedroom and the Great Room. “Now when you enter the main living area, the first thing that hits you is the view,” he says. “You can also see the views out the side of the house and from the tower on the corner. They have great views of the Williams Bay beach, views straight across the Bay, and you can look almost all the way down the lake to Fontana.”

Thelen, of Thelen Total Construction in Elkhorn, describes the views as the real “wow factor” of the house. “With the Wisconsin

climate, you have to create spaces where you can enjoy the views of the lake 365 days of the year,” he points out, adding that the design of the home also allows for plenty of outdoor space as well, including a patio terrace that connects to the lawn and the lake. Thelen describes the overall style of the house as “casual elegance,” a term Etten agrees with.



To maximize lake views, architect Ken Etten of McCormack + Etten in Lake Geneva designed a tower on the side of the house that offers 180-degree views of Williams Bay; on the first floor this space serves as a breakfast nook.



The master bathroom incorporates a Kohler Bancroft whirlpool tub, Kohler Katalyst showerhead, and Suntouch electric floors. The house also features a sauna room.

“The house is designed in a style we refer to as Lake Cottage,” Etten explains. “It’s a style that’s prevalent on Geneva Lake because it echoes the precedent that was set back in the original lake cottages that the people from Chicago first built.” According to Etten, Lake Cottage style includes a mix of siding, shingle-style roofs and Arts-and-Crafts-influenced design.

Inside, the goal was to design the home to be comfortable and welcoming. Wozniak, of Katherine Elizabeth Designs in North Barrington, Illinois, described the process of working with the Moravas on their dream home as extremely collaborative. “[Bob and Ruth Anne] know what they like, but they were open to ideas and that made the process flow very smoothly.” Wozniak is an award-winning designer who has more than

11 years of experience in the field; she went on to win a National Envision Design Competition Award in 2012 for her design of the Moravas’ master suite window treatments.

The Moravas included Wozniak in the planning stages of building. “We were involved with the project before the foundation was even dug,” Wozniak explains. “We start early so that during the building process, adjustments can be made to better fit the designs we suggest and we’re not holding up the building process.” Decisions like kitchen layout and appliances, traffic flow and luxury amenities often affect the overall architectural design and building method, so Wozniak feels it’s prudent to consult a designer early in the process.

Because the Moravas were building not just their

dream house but also their primary residence, considerations like use of space were particularly important. “They wanted the kitchen to function where one end of the island served as a bar and the other end served as a kitchen,” Wozniak said. “That was the first time we had done a bar incorporated into a main kitchen. The outer island houses the main bar, so that Bob can be serving everyone in the Great Room area and that traffic pattern won’t get in the way of anyone cooking.”

Thelen was particularly pleased with a view-maximizing trick the team was able to employ in the master bedroom. “From working with a designer, they knew how they wanted to position the bed in the room, and that was with the bed facing the windows to the lake,” he explained. “For the nights they want to watch TV, we incorporated a TV that drops down from the ceiling with the touch of the button. That way when it’s not in use, the TV doesn’t detract from the view.” To do this, Thelen built a cavity in the attic into which the TV can retract.

In the Great Room, a wood-burning fireplace presented an opportunity to solve an age-old dilemma: how to get more wood for the fire without bundling up and dragging wood in from the outside? Etten and Thelen worked with the Moravas to design a wood bin that would be accessible from the garage and from the Great Room itself. “Now they can open doors on the inside of the living room to get the wood from the pile without having to go outside,” explained Thelen. “This is a lot less mess.”

Little touches made a big difference as well. At every step of the building process, the Moravas tried to engage local businesses and craftsmen. “We’re really happy that we chose a lot of local tradesmen,” Morava said. “Most of them are from the lakes area.”

With Wozniak’s help, the Moravas selected their preferred style of cabinet knobs for the kitchen and the built-in cabinets in the Great Room. The knobs were then hand-made at a company in Lake Geneva. The walnut floors allowed them to include an elaborate inlaid design in the shape of a compass pointing to the lake, the execution of which Wozniak was particularly pleased with. Other luxury touches in the home include Sub-Zero refrigeration and Wolf appliances, Cambria Quartz countertops, a “whole-house” Nuvo sound system, state-of-the-art Pella windows with “Vivid View” screens to allow more light and visibility, rustic walnut floors, a Kohler Bancroft whirlpool tub, Suntouch electric floors in the bathrooms, a Finlandia sauna room and a master bedroom suite with a balcony overlooking the lake.

But when it came to designing the home, accessi-



The spacious master bedroom allows for a sitting area that enjoys wraparound views of the lake. Interior designer Katie Wozniak of Katherine Elizabeth Designs helped the homeowners select soothing, water-inspired colors for the bedroom.



The open plan layout of the house allowed the team to incorporate a bar space extending from the kitchen counter, so the homeowners can entertain guests and prepare food simultaneously. The Great Room and dining room feature wood-beam construction and built-in cabinetry while maintaining an airy, open feeling.

bility was just as important as luxury. The Moravas knew as they were building a house that they wanted to be able to live in it as long as possible. "They really wanted a 'forever' home," Thelen explains. To that end, they included an elevator and other accessibility touches like extra-wide doorways and bathrooms. "This is practical now as well as later," explains Melody Fehling of Thelen Total Construction. "When you think about the extended family coming to visit or you think about other visitors that may have mobility issues, it just makes good sense."

Energy efficiency was another major consideration. Thelen points out that the house's location on the lake makes it more susceptible to wind and the elements in the winter. To counter these effects, a variety of materials and products were chosen for their ability to keep heat in the home. "We've got triple-paned windows throughout the house, which increases the insulation provided by the glass," he said. "Then we use a foam insulation in the exterior walls and attics, similar to what you'd see in your refrigerator door. Foam insulation is very dense so no air moves through it, which makes it a much higher performing insulation."

For interior designer Wozniak, the aesthetic

choices were guided by the Moravas' desire to make the inside of their home reflect the view they saw outside. "We kept all the architectural materials neutral in tone to stand the test of time and be classic," she explained. "But then in draperies and upholsteries and accents, they really wanted to bring in the colors of the sunset. So as Ruth Anne and Bob watched the sun setting over the lake at various times of the year, we brought those colors in as accents."

Sleeping spaces also benefited from this nature-inspired design. "Upstairs for the bedroom colors, we brought in the blues of the lake," Wozniak continued. The soothing, water-colored palette also extended to the upstairs bathroom, where the natural stone and travertine featured a pattern of waves and hints of grayish blue. The overall effect is comfortable and familiar while maintaining the light and openness that the Moravas sought.

The house was completed in 2011 and is a testament to the power of collaboration. "One of the challenges [in building a house] is making all of the decisions so quickly," Morava explained. "This was a house that Bob and I designed on bar napkins throughout the course of our lives, but we needed guidance. We chose the team we

did because we knew we needed experts who would provide some input and direction into the process... they gave us a lot of creative criticism, ideas and led us down the right path for us."

"It was a really good team, and I look at projects as a team effort," said Etten. "Clients, architect, contractors, interior designer, landscape designer... there's a real satisfaction at the end of a job when you have a client that's happy, when they love the house, and everyone's still getting along at the end of the process. We worked together and were really happy with the result, and ended up with very happy clients."

Thelen and Fehling agree. "It's such a relationship during the building phase," Fehling said. "The client really has to pick a team that they're in sync with, personality wise. It's going to be a long-term relationship." Thelen adds the secret to getting the right end result is good communication.

It's a philosophy the Moravas embrace. "There's no way that I could have done this without Randy and Katie," Morava said. "The experts know what they're doing. Having that third and fourth opinion helped immensely."



The state-of-the-art kitchen incorporates Sub-Zero refrigeration appliances, Wolf appliances and Cambria Quartz countertops. A large pantry with built-in cabinetry hides clutter and provides plenty of storage space.