

Leather sofas and chairs surround a custom-made coffee table by the fire in the Hynes family living room. An old bucksaw occupies a prominent place above the mantel. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** Corinne and Robert Hynes, with their dog Pete, an Airdale terrier-German shepherd. The couple designed, built and landscaped their Kawartha Lakes home and gardens. **BOTTOM:** Clad in limestone from a Buckhorn quarry, the home has two residential wings and a two-storey garage. Originally a carpentry workshop, the garage's lower level now holds gardening equipment.



A DESIGN ALL THEIR OWN

STORY **WALTER FRANCZYK**
PHOTOGRAPHY **HAROLD CLARK**



For Robert and Corinne Hynes, home is more than a place to hang your hat.

“This house was built to enjoy,” says Robert, a former firefighter, renovator and cabinetmaker who designed and built their country house in the hills of rural Kawartha. As the owner of **Your Own Design**, he specializes in designing custom homes and renovations that meet the needs and reflect the tastes of clients. “The concept is to take your dream and make your project,” he explains. He and his son Mitchell design homes in a glass-walled studio behind the house.

The couple’s four-bedroom home is a combination of Robert’s skills and expertise with Corinne’s imagination and hard work. “I think it’s a great family house,” says Corinne, who works as a rental property manager. “We both are pretty creative,” she says. “We get thinking about things and I know that whatever we think of he can build. So it works well. He likes to do the building and I do the gardens.”

Built on a slope to maximize living space with a ground-floor walkout, the home has two adjoining wings. One, containing an open-concept great room and kitchen, faces a little to the west. The other wing, with the master bedroom, en suite bath and a games room, is turned slightly east. Connecting the two is an oversize, dog-legged hallway with a wicker-furnished sitting area and large windows overlooking the backyard waterfall, gardens and pond. It’s a favourite spot to sip morning coffee and watch the wildlife. It’s also a nice place to relax in the evening.

The open-concept great room with its cultured stone fireplace, adjoining kitchen and dining area, is one of Corinne’s best-loved features. “I find it very warm,” she says. “We entertain a lot of family and friends. It suits our lifestyle because everyone can be in the same room.” Their blended family of six grown children and Robert’s mother have a standing invitation to dinner every Sunday around the oak table that Robert crafted. Leather sofas and chairs invite gatherings around the fireplace. Slightly distressed, three-quarter-inch alder from **Monaghan Lumber Specialties** covers the floor. *Continued on page 25*





FAR LEFT: The front door opens to a foyer flanking the cultured-stone fireplace. **LEFT:** Robert built the oak table with inlaid porcelain tiles for the dining area. When hosting large family dinners, they use a second, adjoining table. **BOTTOM:** Using wood left over from exterior siding, Robert built the kitchen cabinetry and island. Nine feet high, the cabinets display family treasures on illuminated upper shelves. **OPPOSITE, TOP:** A footpath of sand-coloured concrete meanders from the back of the home, along the fish pond and over a small bridge. **BOTTOM:** Built of pine timbers and steel trusses, the horse barn roof over the back deck is finished with tongue-and-groove pine.



Corinne likes the fact that Robert built nearly everything himself. He installed the home wiring and plumbing and spent three years erecting the limestone walls that surround the home's lower level. He would lay stone for a couple of hours every morning and then go to work at his home-based design business. Two years were spent installing the board and batten siding, much of it stained by Corinne, on the upper walls. In his ground-floor workshop, built below the home's two-car garage, Robert used wooden scraps left over from the siding to build the kitchen cabinetry. "I didn't do every job alone," Robert says. "I had a couple of friends who worked with me." While in the renovation business, he tended to do a lot of the little jobs – a bit of wiring, a bit of plumbing. "It was just efficient. From there, I grew that basic knowledge," he says. "A house is a multitude of rooms that have the same pieces." **Kingdon Timber Mart** supplied floor and

roof trusses while **Rehill Building Supplies** provided masonry needs. **Alf Curtis Home Improvements Inc.** furnished the windows. The couple live mainly on the home's upper floor. When they have an outdoor party, they use the ground floor living room with its bar and illuminated dance floor. Outdoors is an integral part of life at the Hynes home. Their upper deck, built with pine timbers, steel trusses and dark-tinted glass railings to keep out the heat, overlooks a beautifully landscaped backyard. "This is where we spend a lot of time, weather permitting," says Corinne. "Sometimes we bring a fire bowl and sit out here. We eat out here all summer long and entertain out here a lot." In a corner of the deck, a table with two favourite chairs serves as a perch from which to enjoy and admire their landscaping and plan the next project. They're always collecting ideas and looking at different building techniques other people have used. *Continued on page 26*

A dock over the backyard pond offers a vantage point from which to view resident goldfish and turtles.
BOTTOM: Water, filtered and pumped from the pond, cascades over the man-and-woman-made waterfall.



Their garden is stunning. A three-inch water main from a dug well feeds a large pond rimmed with armour stone and equipped with a dock. The tiny lake is home to goldfish and three resident red-eared slider turtles that the couple rescued. "They love it," says Robert. "They've been here for probably four years." Once commonly sold as tiny pets, slider turtles can live 30 years and grow up to a foot long. Water filters from the pond and is pumped to the top of the custom-made waterfall where it cascades down rocky drops into a smaller pond thriving with red water lilies. It flows beneath a bridge and pergola back to the pond and recirculates. At the pond's eastern end is a comfortably furnished sitting area that catches the waning rays of sunset. **Russo Concrete** finished the sand-coloured concrete patios and walkways. *Continued on page 28*



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With its many flowers, hummingbirds, butterflies and bees, the backyard was the perfect setting for Robert and Corinne's summer wedding. They exchanged vows near the foot of the waterfall and entertained about 100 guests long into the night.

The home will get a few more finishing touches before it's complete. In the meantime, Robert is planning another unique backyard feature – a clock tower playhouse for the grandchildren. It will start as a 10-foot shed and reach skyward with a long shaft like a lighthouse to a play fort about 20 feet off the ground. On top of that he'll place a clock tower. "It's next on the list," he says. **OH**

TOP LEFT: The master bedroom's en suite has a beautiful corner view of the backyard waterfall and gardens. **TOP RIGHT:** Robert used oak treads on iron stringers and black metal spindles to build the staircase that connects the main floor and lower level. **MIDDLE RIGHT:** Corinne chose different but complementary colours for the walls in the master bedroom. **RIGHT:** Framed stained glass from a relative's home was repurposed as doors for the games room.

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