



GO WITH THE GRAIN

Jewellery designer Anne Sportun's family cottage is heavy on timber and light on clutter

By Jack Kohane

After years of roughing it in the wild, cooking on an open flame and bunking in a ramshackle shack with no running water, Anne Sportun says she's happy with the creature comforts of her new 2,000-square-foot Haliburton hideaway.

"There was nothing here when we bought the seven-acre property in 1996," Ms. Sportun recalls.

Their first summer was spent in a tent. The next year, they built a non-insulated, 12x15-foot bunkie. Later, a second bunkie was built. This 8x8-foot shack housed two girls on a bunk bed, a baby boy in a crib, a 100-pound dog, mom Anne, and dad Ian Woodbury. "It was glorified camping," she says. "We never really had a first cottage, but it was our long-term plan to build one someday."

Nestled along Cruiser Lake (which was Pine Lake until the name was changed in 1957), about two hours north of Toronto, this area was once part of the Haliburton Forest, a 50,000-acre private reserve. The origin of the lake's current name is a mystery, though residents think it may refer to a "timber cruiser," an individual who searches forests for marketable timber. "But when this area was Pine Lake, it was a nudist colony," smiles Ms. Sportun.

As the land became de-

veloped and lots sold for \$50,000 each, there were only outhouses and firepits to tend. Today it is still well treed, with just 13 cottages scattered around the lake.

"With a forest, shoreline and swamp to explore, the kids are never bored," Ms. Sportun says. "Sometimes they go on an adventure, looking for animal tracks, bugs and salamanders." The family just purchased a neighbouring lot, increasing their property to 10 acres and 900 feet of beachfront on this motorboat-free lake.

Having saved up enough money to transform their aging shacks into a new four-season cottage, Ms. Sportun and Mr. Woodbury went searching for an environmentally friendly builder.

"We didn't want to lose touch with the connection to nature we had with the bunkies," says Mr. Woodbury, who owns a software development firm in Toronto. "When we connected with MafcoHouse, we found they had the same philosophy as ours — a cottage that brings the outdoors inside."

It wasn't a far search. Toronto-based cottage design/builder MafcoHouse (mafcohouse.com) is situated a few blocks away from Ms. Sportun's Queen Street West studio and store, Anne Sportun Experimental Jewellery.

GRAIN continued on PH6

For a natural effect, the cottage interior is wrapped in wide-plank cedar and Douglas fir.

GEORGE WHITESIDE



WALK ON THE WILD SIDE

GRAIN

Continued from Page PH1

Trained as a goldsmith, Ms. Sportun creates rings, bracelets and earrings using nature as her inspiration.

Comprising Dan and Diane Molenaar and Joseph Franke, the Mafco team visited the Cruiser Lake property in December 2006. "As we walked in the woods, there was a white bunny in front of us, almost invisible in the snow, camouflaged and unobtrusive, just like the design we wanted for our cottage," Ms. Sportun says.

Mr. Molenaar explains that his company's designs are based on a 16x16-ft. post-and-beam modular construction that allows for layout flexibility. "Modules are configured to blend with the building site's topography, while considering both the sun's path and the views beyond," he says. Even the roofs are flat for less visual impediment.

During construction of the cottage's four bedrooms and main bathroom (in addition to an ensuite off the master bedroom) in the summer of 2007, the family stayed in the bunkies. "We helped work on the building," Mr. Woodbury says. "We wish we could have built more of the cottage ourselves, but our schedules

wouldn't allow it."

Naturally finished wide-plank cedar and Douglas fir were chosen for interior ceilings, walls and floors.

"The simplicity and lack of extra stuff which we seem to accumulate in the city, is shed and stripped down at the cottage," Ms. Sportun says. This is reflected in the design of the cottage and the way in which the family lives here. There are no baseboards or mouldings. The floor meets the walls and the walls meet the ceiling flawlessly, a continual sweep of natural wood. "[Our stuff] is tucked away behind cedar cupboard doors. Any sentimental items we keep tend to be things the children have made from wood and sticks they've scavenged from around the property."

Friends chipped in to help install the floors. Ms. Sportun winces at the memory of the three days she spent sanding and oiling the floors when she was there alone. "I was sore all over and lived on scones, red wine and radio," she chuckles.

Even though a primary hydro line was close by, the owners chose a photovoltaic solar system for most of their energy needs. Two high-efficiency wood stoves supplement a wall-mounted propane furnace to heat the cottage in the chillier months. More warmth is supplied in the winter

through south-facing windows.

The family's favourite gathering spot is the airy kitchen. "We spend most of our time together here, making fresh bread everyday, eating and talking," Ms. Sportun says. "Our six-year-old helps make the pancake batter — and he can flip them, too."

Though the family enjoys all seasons spent at their cottage, Ms. Sportun says that spring is her favourite. "So many birds are singing and making nests, it reminds me of [being] a kid at our family cottage." The air smells clean and fresh and the flowers are in bloom.

June brings with it the wild strawberries, and in August there are wild raspberries and blackberries. Good on those pancakes, Ms. Sportun says.

Summer evenings are no less active. On those long nights, these cottagers can be found singing around the campfire, playing guitar and roasting marshmallows. "We'll all do a before-dinner swim, then the after-dinner swim, and sometimes the before-bed swim in the dark to cool off before bed," Ms. Sportun laughs. "We come [back to the city] with our clothes and linens smelling of cedar from the cabins and campfire from the smoke of the fire — it's the perfume of heaven."

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