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The Rieth Family

DREAM HOME

At Klinger Lake

By Kelli Stopczynski
Photos by David Hubler





Most of us know exactly how our dream home would look. We know where it would be built and how many bedrooms it would have. We've imagined the theme for each room and can almost smell the freshly painted walls and newly installed cabinets. But for many of us, the dream home is just that...a vision that may or may not ever come true.

Andy and Teresa Rieth began planning their dream home in the 1980's, before they got married and began raising two beautiful daughters. Their dream location – Klinger Lake in St. Joseph County, Michigan – a property that has been in Andy's family since the 40's.

Before one can understand the significance of finally turning their dream into a reality, you must first know the Rieths' story.

Andy and Teresa grew up in Elkhart County, about eight miles apart. They attended rivaling high schools, went on to college and graduate schools and began successful careers. But their paths weren't meant to cross until the mid 80's, when they met in Florida – where Andy worked at the time, and Teresa happened to be vacationing with girlfriends.

They married in 1986. Within a few years, they welcomed daughters Allison (now 20) and Sarah (now 16). The Rieths spent summers in a cottage on the family's property on Klinger Lake, even though their permanent address changed from Indianapolis to Virginia on two separate occasions.

"It was great," Teresa reminisced. "Andy had the type of job that allowed him to do a lot of traveling and he was able to get up there – even from Virginia on weekends and for vacations. The girls and I got the opportunity to get to spend time with grandparents, aunts, uncles and the rest of the family."

The Rieths admit the area is beautiful, but spending time with family was the biggest draw. For them, the lake season traditionally begins on Easter or Mother's Day, and then goes straight through Memorial Day, Father's Day, July Fourth, and Labor Day. Nearly every weekend throughout the summer is filled with visits from friends and family.

Several years ago, the family named the property Blair's View – in memory of Andy's father who passed away in 1982. A successful businessman, Blair Rieth was president of Rieth-Riley, the construction company founded by his father in 1916.

"If you knew my dad, he had kind of a unique view of the world, life and people around him. He was very outgoing and caring, just really a servant leader," Andy described.

Naming the property after him was an opportunity to use the double meaning of both the incredible landscape views and honor Blair's view of the world.

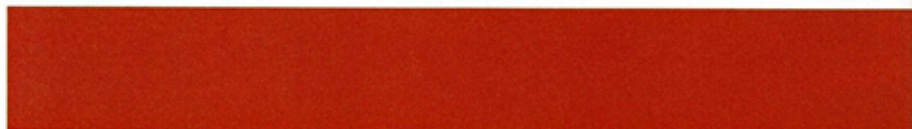
In 1993, the Rieths began buying portions of the 23 acre site from Andy's aunt and uncle. They purchased the final parcel of land in 1997.

"It put all the different pieces together for us," Andy said.

You see, Blair's View is so much more than a few homes on lakefront property. It features lots of fruit trees in what used to be a commercial orchard. Andy's Uncle Lee and Aunt Mary Jane Rieth also turned the property into an arboretum – planting at least one of each of Michigan's native trees.

"We are just very blessed with their kind of foresight in what this property could be, just in the landscaping," Andy said. "It's very natural, not sculpted or anything like that."

But in the middle of enjoying summers at their lake home, the Rieths faced a difficult decision – try to restore and add on to the property's original home that was built in the 40's then remodeled in the 60's





“The sunroom.

I like the way the space flows. It's a transitional space between the inside of the house and the outside of the house. It really just captures the essence of the lake home.”

and again in the 80's, or start from scratch. They describe that home as discombobulated. It had a cinder block foundation with a sand floor no footers underneath the frame and dated electrical wiring. An electrician told the Rieths updating the electricity alone would be a difficult and expensive task.

“We went back and forth for about 5 years, trying to figure out what to do,” Teresa recounted. “We had architects come up to talk about remodeling it. And it just always kept pointing to ‘by the time you remodel it, you might as well build a new home.’”

“It was really a difficult choice for us because we didn't want to ‘bulldoze and build,” Andy added. “But a neighbor came over one day and convinced us we could put up a new home and still keep the dignity of the property. He suggested we used Martin Brothers because he had used them to build his home.”

So on September 11, 2008, Martin Brothers raised the old house and began building a new one. The timing couldn't have been better. As the recession kicked into full gear and left many other local builders searching for work, Martin Brothers used the downturn to devote several foreman and a larger crew to build the home.

Even so, their biggest challenge would be to finish the 7,200 square foot home by Teresa's ten month deadline – Fourth of July weekend. “With a regular-size crew, a home that size would typically take at least a year to complete,” said project leader Clayton Detweiler.

Throughout the planning, design and construction phases, Teresa and a friend, Stacey Hamilton of Hamilton Design, decorated the home and



worked closely with Martin Brothers to make sure everything was exactly as the family wanted.

"Teresa does such a great job of collecting ideas," Andy said. "We had folders and folders of ideas and stuff. We've collected and taken pictures of things when we've been on vacation – themes of upstate Michigan, Martha's Vineyard. We really had fun over the years of dreaming about this."

Martin Brothers took those folders and ideas and turned them into reality – a dream home Teresa and Andy could use for entertaining friends and family. Architect Phil Jenkins said Teresa was very easy to work with because she was so organized and in-tune with the project. His favorite part of the home? The sunroom.

"I like the way the space flows. It's a transitional space between the inside of the house and the outside of the house. It really just captures the essence of the lake home," Jenkins said.

Detweiler said the most unusual space in the home is an area called the cupola, in the center of the home. Jenkins described the narrow, tower-like space as both a functional and aesthetic part of construction because it divided the mother-in-law suite over the garage (one of six bedrooms in the home) from the second floor of the home while adding character to the overall structure.

"We've built more unusual designs [than the Rieth's lake home]," Detweiler added. "I liked – for lack of a better term – the hominess of the home. It felt like a comfortable living lake cottage when we were done. And I think that's what made it kind of special."

The builders and sub contractors also found a special place in the Rieth family. Upon completion of the project last July, Andy and Teresa invited everyone who worked on the home and their own families to an open house at Blair's View.



"That was something very special," recounted Jenkins. "We build the home for people, but a lot of times we don't even get in after they install the furniture. Once we're out we seldom go back, especially as the whole project team. And for them to do that was just very generous."

Martin Brothers President Jeff Martin admitted it's easy for customers to pick up on how much builders care about their project.

"A lot of it is about relationships we build. The communication, the follow-through and detail are things that we really strive for," he said.

Martin, who bought the now 45-year-old company from his father and uncle about 11 years ago, oversees budgets and overall project management.

The Rieths cannot say enough about their experience with Martin Brothers.

"They were just so wonderful," Teresa gushed. "They're organized, they're honest, they're hard workers and they're diligent. They take care of any mistakes right away."

The family spent last summer in their new home, and Teresa pretty much has all the plans in place to continue her traditional schedule of parties and visitors this summer.

"The great thing about Klinger Lake is we're surrounded by childhood and family friends – it's just kind of a place everybody goes," she said. "We may have a wedding there someday. Our girls have talked about getting married there."

The couple also plans to make their new home at Blair's View a permanent residence after their youngest daughter graduates high school in 2011. It's the fourth home they've built and the ninth they've lived in since they wed, and the couple feels with the help of Martin Brothers, they finally got it right.

"We've literally been dreaming about this for close to 25 years. We've had the good fortune of being able to live in some really neat places – New Hampshire, Virginia – and this home really became sort of the 'greatest hits' of all the places we like to be and enjoy spending our time," Andy said. "We've obviously drunk the Kool-Aid and we're sold: hook, line and sinker."