



BUILDING YOUR LIFE

BY **DAWN RITCHIE** |
PHOTOGRAPHY BY **MIKE GUILBAULT**

Seldom does a home fulfill all of a homeowner's precise needs. Small room sizes, lack of storage, too few bathrooms and poor kitchen layout tend to be the main stumbling blocks. The only viable solution to get what one truly wants is to build from the ground up. For the majority of people that's a daunting endeavour unless you possess the steely determination of go-getting single mother to three Paula West Oreskovich who, not even for a moment, thought this an insurmountable task. "I never thought I could not do it. Being alone and building a house like this. I just did it," says Oreskovich matter of factly.

Oreskovich purchased the land and designed the nearly 7,000-square-foot, seven bedroom, six bathroom structure all by herself, taking into account every possible luxury and necessity her busy household would require. Then she sat down with architect Philippe Lamadeleine. "And we put it to life."

The home would have a two-level garage with six amazing garage bays. "I wanted to actually be able to park inside my garage instead of it being overcrowded with sports equipment," says Oreskovich, who drives children to hockey and horseback riding events up to 10 times a week.

There would definitely have to be high ceilings on all levels. The master bedroom would span nearly 1,000 square feet and have access to a treetop level deck. The custom made walk-in closets in all bedrooms would







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be adorned with high end organizing solutions. A double-sided gas fireplace in the master bedroom would gaze into a luscious spa en suite with a jetted tub lit by a chandelier. Every bedroom, in fact, would possess its own en suite to avoid bathroom arguments and each bedroom would have quaint dormers. Since televisions are not allowed in the children’s bedrooms, an upstairs TV room would be an evening gathering spot.

As a self-proclaimed “neat freak,” Oreskovich likes everything in its place which meant the mudroom on the first floor had to be tricked out with every imaginable organizational option. There would be hooks, drawers and cubbies for her three very active children who keep things rocking with all their rep sports. The tiled mudroom would have its own washer and dryer for sports togs, plus a doggie wash for her two



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the dining room had to be large enough to hold her harvest table



The stone chosen for the front exterior, Pennsylvania Fieldstone. It, carries through inside the home up the stairs on a handsome feature wall,

dogs, a standard poodle and a Yorkie. This arrangement would effectively leave the upper level laundry room just for bedding and wear-a-day clothing.

The home would also contain a recreation room level home theatre and a full-sized wet bar for the children's drinks so that the traditional Friday family and friends movie nights could be conveniently supplied by guilty pleasure snacks.

A spacious gym was also obligatory with above grade windows to provide good light and airflow for her robust fitness regime. Oreskovich is a tenacious "health nut" who participates in a roller derby league, cycling club and rock climbing adventures, so the gym was not going to be a dark little room tucked away in a basement. It was going to be a well-ventilated celebration of vigour and a place one would want to go on a daily basis.

The same held true for the extra guest rooms and baths. They had to be inviting and well appointed, not just those common throwaway rooms with old bedding and castoff furnishings that no guest really likes staying in.

Most important to her though was that the whole first floor be one big open welcoming space with a wall of windows that bathed the home in light. "We entertain a lot and at any given time there are eight to nine children in the house," says Oreskovich. "Two friends to each of my children." Which is just the way she likes it. "I wanted a real homey feel. Even though it's a busy home, I wanted to design a home that evoked peace and tranquility."

A spacious gourmet kitchen with top of the line JennAire appliances was required to support this horde and it had to be both highly functional and beautiful. The island needed to be supplied with roll-out fridges for kids' beverages and below counter cabinetry that allowed the children easy access to their own cereal bowls, spoons and breakfast items. A striking double basin marble farmhouse sink would make the tremendous 12-by-5-foot island a vision of beauty.

The generous walk-in pantry nearby would also have ample shelving to keep the home well stocked in order to feed the pack of kids that flowed through on a regular basis. And the dining room had to be large enough to hold her harvest table where family meals could be comfortably accommodated. For

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the yard, an in ground swimming pool with separate all season Jacuzzi and outdoor fire pit was compulsory to keep everyone entertained at home and off the streets.

Oreskovich also decided that the great room's Napoleon fireplace was to be two-sided, so she could supervise all the action in the main living area from inside the adjoining office when working. And on top of this huge laundry list of must-haves, the home had to be designed with a "rustique farmhouse modern look" that harkened back to Paula West Oreskovich's happy childhood in the agricultural town of Haileybury in northern Ontario.

Friends and associates were quick to warn of the pitfalls of building on your own and promised she would be fighting with her general contractor by the end. But, according to Oreskovich, nothing could be further from the truth. "There was not one disagreement. Not one argument. For a big project like this, with so many personalities and opinions to deal with, it went 99-per-cent smoothly. I was fortunate to be surrounded by such good tradesmen and 90 per cent of them were local."

Tim Perry was Oreskovich's general contractor. She now considers him a friend. His commitment to the partnership was so absolute that he joined her, saw in hand, to physically rip barn boards off an abandoned 1896 barn on the 7th Line in Oro-Medonte that Oreskovich had discovered on her travels. "We hand selected every beam and board we bought," says Oreskovich, who sought out only the most prized pieces with original pegs and nails still intact. She really wanted to incorporate that agricultural feel into the home's interior, going as far as to have barn boards installed on the ceiling over the kitchen's island as a unique décor element.

The stone chosen for the front exterior of the home was Pennsylvania Fieldstone, chiefly to impart that rustic agricultural look of farmhouses. It carries through inside the home to the great room's fireplace surround and up the stairs on a handsome feature wall, right into the master en suite, where luxurious nightly "de-stressing baths" could take place. The exterior stone facing on the sides and back of the residence is Old London Brick, which also reappears in the recreation room and around the wet bar, bringing continuity to the overall design.



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All the plumbing throughout the home is a replication of that “1920 rustique farmhouse” look she loves, from showerheads to taps and faucets. Restoration Hardware was Oreskovich’s supplier for 95 per cent of the lighting fixtures, with the beautiful Camino Vintage Candelabra repeating in the great room, dining room, foyer and master en suite in varying sizes and tiers.

George Gaffiero of Imagine Landscaping was hired to bring Oreskovich’s landscape sketches to life. He installed more than 200 tons of armour stone, plus skids and skids of Navascape Old English cobble around the pool.

The home sits on the edge of the Mining wetlands, so engineered fill was brought in to raise the grade of the land for the pool and ensure its integrity. “The back of the property is environmentally protected,” says Oreskovich. “I’ve seen heron in my backyard. Turkeys and deer.”

Construction began in August 2013 and remarkably only nine months later the family was unpacked and settled in. “I really built the house for the kids and their friends,” laughs Oreskovich. “But I just love Snow Valley. The houses are further apart. There are a lot of trees and yet we’re only seven minutes to Georgian Mall.” ❗

16 Heron Boulevard, Snow Valley is now on the market, represented by CENTURY 21 B.J. ROTH REALTY LTD.

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