

PREMIER ISSUE

# WEEKEND HOMES™

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Built into its wooded surroundings near Lake Michigan, this shingle-and-stone weekend home is a fairy tale come true.

# Fantastic Hideaway

**W**hen Avi and Nancy Bernstein wanted to build a weekend and vacation home where they could escape the hectic pace of everyday

life, they turned to architect Fred Wilson. To create the ultimate getaway, Wilson stitched together elements of childhood fantasy—a tower, a turret, and a catwalk high in the treetops—with near-perfect pitch.



From its turreted stone entry to its tower at the back, the Bernsteins' vacation home in southwest Michigan—which along with the northwest corner of Indiana is called "Michiana" by locals—announces a departure from life as usual. Here, miles from Avi's practice as a Chicago-area doctor and Nancy's school-year obligations to their three daughters, the fantasy of summer officially begins.

The home's starting point? Nothing less than a fairy-tale turreted entry, which extends out from the main body of the house. "The turret is an unusual space to encounter in a residential home," Wilson says. "It's like a lighthouse, and there's something very poetic about that. Because it's where you enter the home, it's where you start the getaway fantasy."

The rest of the architecture makes good on the turret promise. Exquisite details—the type often left out of weekend homes—make their mark here. Much of the beauty lies in the way the woodwork and masonry, hand-built using mostly local materials, tie into the home's wooded environment.

To make the spaces an inviting hub, Wilson used nature as a magnet. He pulled the outside in with wall-to-wall and floor-to-ceiling windows. Free from fussy treatments, the windows allow natural light to flood every room in the home. The abundant windows, particularly in the two-story-high dining area, also make the most of the lush setting.

Wilson also used architectural details to emulate nature on the inside. The woodwork on the stairway and its trellis

LEFT: A fireplace wall with a mosaic tile surround dresses up the living room. The space is carefree, and "the materials are beach-friendly," homeowner Nancy Bernstein says.

OPPOSITE: Floors of Australian cypress, like pine but even paler, enhance the home's casual look.









OPPOSITE: The staircase and catwalk are the dining room's pièce de résistance.

LEFT: Curved steel and wood make up the intricate catwalk.

catwalk, which he designed and had handcrafted, suggests a thicket of trees.

The family basks in the resulting aesthetics. "In good weather, we get incredible light and shadows," Nancy says. "The staircase has so many openings that when the light comes in, it makes beautiful shadows on the floor and the walls."

Inside, design decisions were made in a highly functional way so that nothing feels contrived. On the main level, which consists of the kitchen, dining room, and living room, fantasy and function are inseparable. "This is where we wanted everyone to live," Nancy says. "We wanted it to be the center of the house."

The dining room's two-story height isn't just for fantasy trips; it distinguishes the dining area from the kitchen, which has a standard 8-foot ceiling, and from the living room, which goes to 9 feet.

"The theory of the whole first floor was that the rooms all flow together, but that there are also these subtle demarcations of the spaces," Wilson says. In addition to the shift in ceiling heights, slate detailing set into the cypress floors varies from one living space to another so the visual clues are underfoot as well as overhead.

The wide-open main-level living area also features a mix of wood tones to further distinguish the spaces. The dark-stained pine fireplace wall in the living room makes the room warm and cozy. The natural wood tones of the dining room's farmhouse table and intricate stairway keep the space light and airy. In the kitchen, natural-wood cabinets make the room feel larger, while a green-stained island adds a punch of color.

While the main level is filled with roomy public spaces, upstairs is dedicated to private time. The children's wing includes three bedrooms for the Bernsteins' girls. An upper-



LEFT: Green granite countertops anchor the kitchen's natural-wood cabinetry, while butcher block tops the green island.

level office allows Avi to handle urgent work requests without rushing back to the hospital.

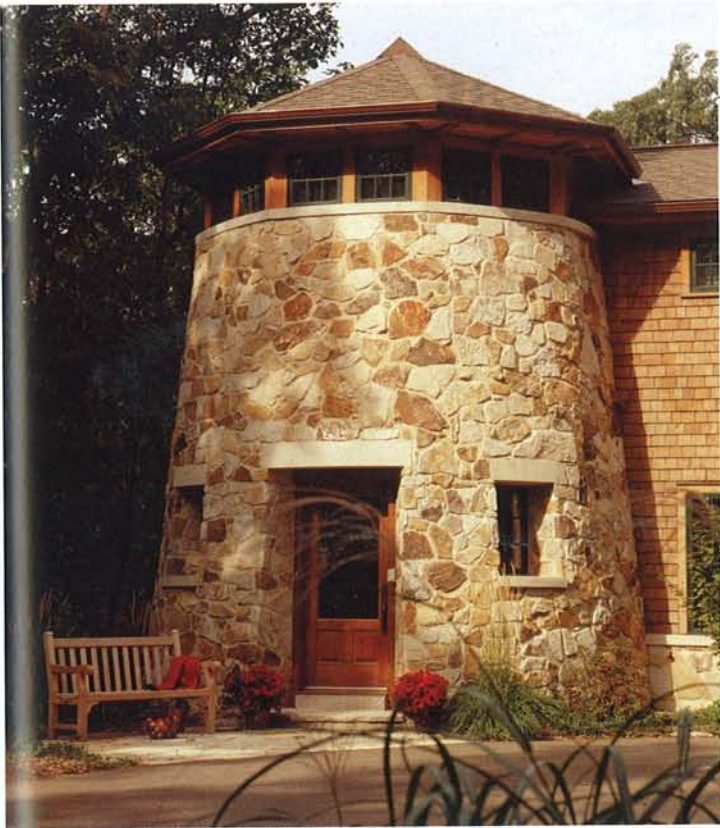
Across an open walkway from the girls' rooms is the large master suite, which includes a private balcony where Avi smokes cigars and a bright bathroom above the turret. The master bedroom "is almost like a tree house because it's so high up ... and you're in the tree line," Nancy says.

So much light and openness point to a modern design. But at its core, this home suggests nothing so much as the old vernacular seaside cottages at Nantucket, Massachusetts, one of Nancy's favorite places. Small-pane windows are the first tip. The living room's coffered ceiling is another. Yet another is the kitchen, with distressed cabinets and French casement

windows. Contemporary touches, such as stainless-steel appliances and chrome light fixtures, are offset by more traditional cabinets and furnishings.

One of the most telling testaments to the home's historical role model is the girls' bedrooms. "The cottagelike detailing of the ceilings, with the dormers and the beaded board, really lends a feel of summer rooms for the kids," Wilson says. "All the rooms have this neat detailing."

The summery architecture, along with the even more fantasy-driven turret and tower, all lead to the same place: "I'm a different person in Michiana," Nancy says. "It's a different life, one that's laid-back and relaxed."



## Medieval masterpiece

The centerpiece of Avi and Nancy Bernstein's Lake Michigan weekend home is the curved stone turret that serves as the main entrance. Windows encircle the top of the tower, which houses the master bathroom, sparking fantasy and playing games with light and shadow. The turret is one of several architectural elements that are often considered too special for a weekend home. Exquisite woodwork and masonry, as well as plentiful mullioned windows, also leave a memorable mark on the home.

