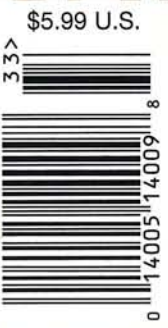


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where vacation fantasies begin

FAIRY-TALE IMAGES PERMEATE EVERY ROOM IN
THIS SUMMER HOME NEAR LAKE MICHIGAN.





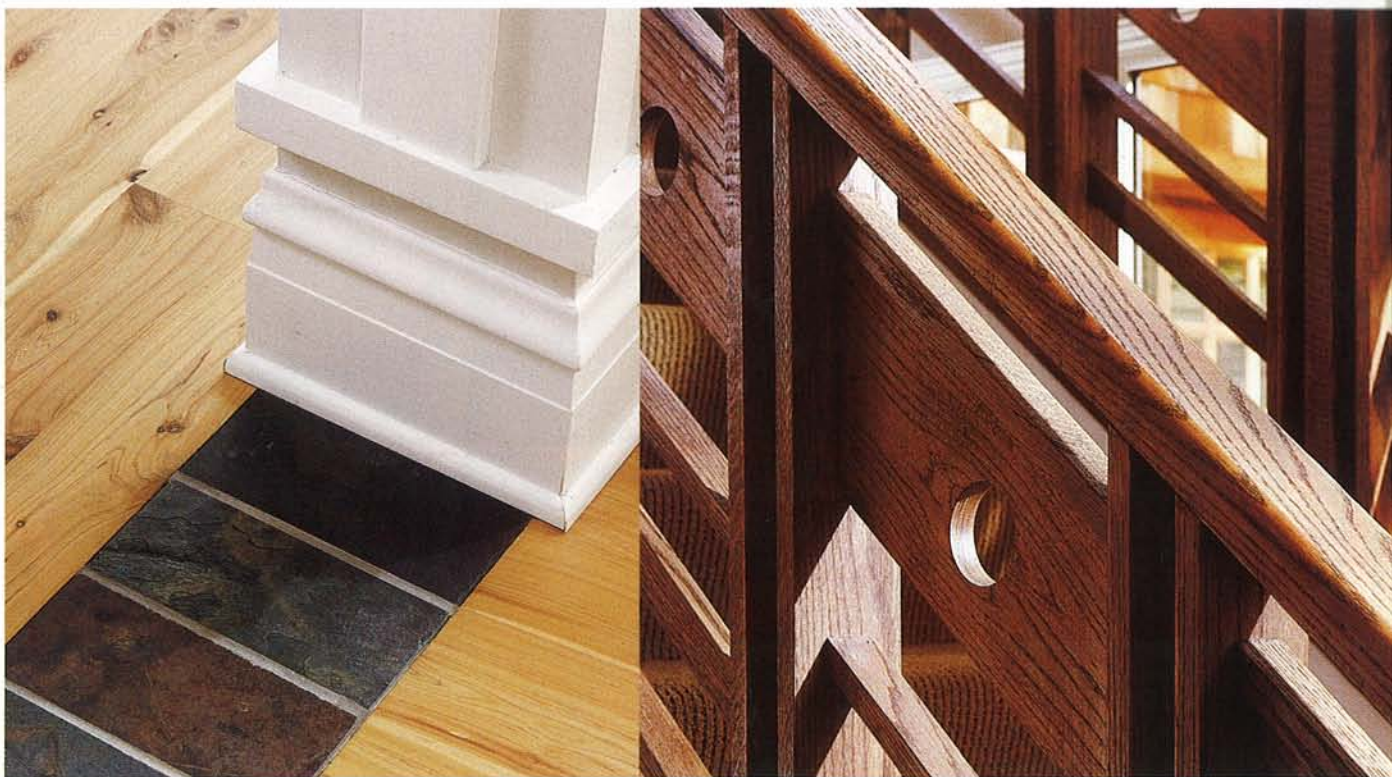
A tower, a turret, and a catwalk high in the treetops form the brightly patterned cloth of childhood fantasy. To create the ultimate vacation home, architect Fred Wilson stitched together all these scraps of early escape. With near-perfect pitch, he struck a primal chord in creating a vacation place that resonates with childlike abandon.

From its turreted stone entry to its tower at the back, Avi and Nancy Bernstein's 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.

ABOVE A fireplace wall with dark-stained pine cabinets and a mosaic tile surround dresses up the living room. Otherwise 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.







The woodwork on the stairway and its trellised balcony, which architect Fred Wilson designed and had handcrafted, suggests a thicket of trees.

The home's starting point? Nothing less than a fairytale 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's promise. And it does so in a highly functional way so that nothing feels contrived. On the main floor, 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."

To make the spaces an inviting hub, Wilson used nature as a magnet—but not in the ordinary way. He didn't just pull the outside in (though his wall-to-wall windows do a fine job of that); he also used architectural

ABOVE LEFT Slate detailing on the cypress floors announces changes in living zones—from living, to dining, to kitchen—in the open-plan main level.

ABOVE RIGHT The catwalk's intricate design consists of curved steel pieces at the bottom, wood-trellis cross members, and wood decking/railing on the top.

OPPOSITE The dining room is the main floor's focal point—and the staircase and catwalk, evoking a forest, are its pièce de résistance.



At its core, the home suggests nothing so much as the old vernacular seaside cottages at Nantucket, one of homeowner Nancy Bernstein's favorite places.

detailing to emulate nature on the inside. The woodwork on the stairway and its trellised catwalk, which he designed and had handcrafted, suggests a thicket of trees.

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

The dining room's two-story ceiling 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 also be these

ABOVE Green granite countertops anchor the kitchen's natural-wood cabinetry, while butcher block tops the green-stained island. OPPOSITE Clad in wood, the refrigerator blends in with the rest of the cabinetry for a tailored look.





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.

So much fantasy, 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.

One of the most telling testaments to this 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." **BH**

ABOVE The master bedroom "is almost like a tree house because it's so high up ... and you're in the tree line," Nancy says. Husband Avi uses the balcony for smoking cigars. **LEFT** Each of the girls' bedrooms is built under the eaves, with quirky slanted ceilings that impart an old-fashioned cottage feel.



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Windows encircle the top of the turret, the main entrance to the home, sparking fantasy and playing games with light and shadow.

WHAT MAKES THIS HOME BEAUTIFUL

Exquisite architectural details—the type often left out of vacation 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. Plentiful windows, particularly in the two-story-high dining area, also make the most of the lush setting.



Architects **Elissa Morgante, AIA, and Frederick Wilson, AIA, Morgante Wilson Architects, Ltd.**
 Builder **Ted & Son Construction Co.** Interior Designer **Nancy Bernstein**