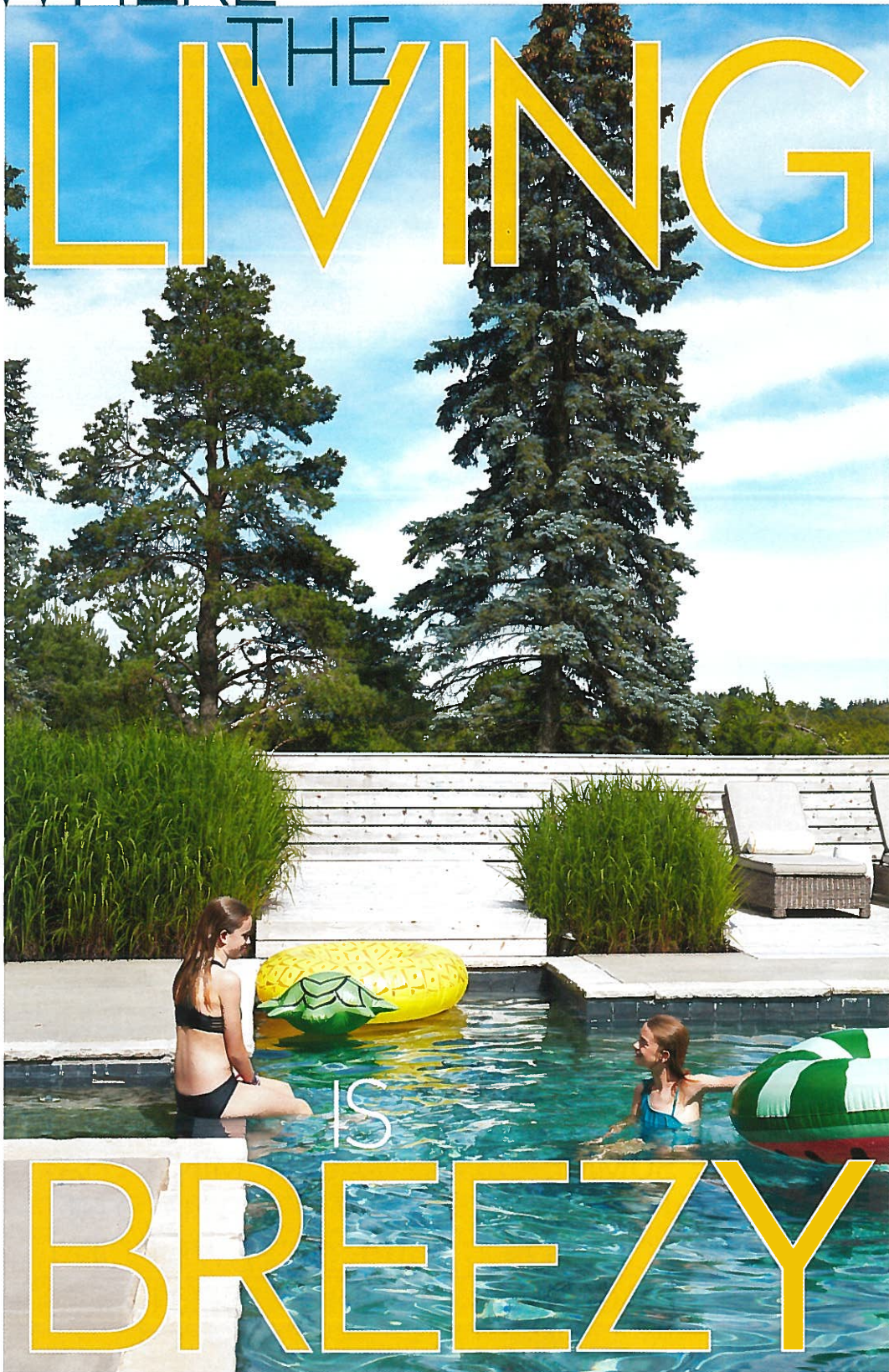


WHERE THE LIVING



IS BREEZY

As told to SYDNEY LONEY | Photography by KIM JEFFERY

STEPHANIE NERLICH REIMAGINES A CENTURY HOME NEAR GRAND VALLEY, ONT., AS A YEAR-ROUND ESCAPE WHERE HER MODERN FAMILY CAN UNPLUG.



Fencing salvaged from a nearby horse paddock was repurposed to give warmth and texture to homeowners Stephanie Nerlich and Chris Hardy's dining room ceiling. The wood also balances the sunlight flooding in from the 11-foot-high windows. A photograph by local artist Patrick Biller shows people in a park at night, bringing a little bit of the outside in. **Salvaged wood**, Century Wood Products; **chairs, light fixture**, Design Within Reach; **table**, Decorum Decorative Finds; **grey vases**, West Elm.

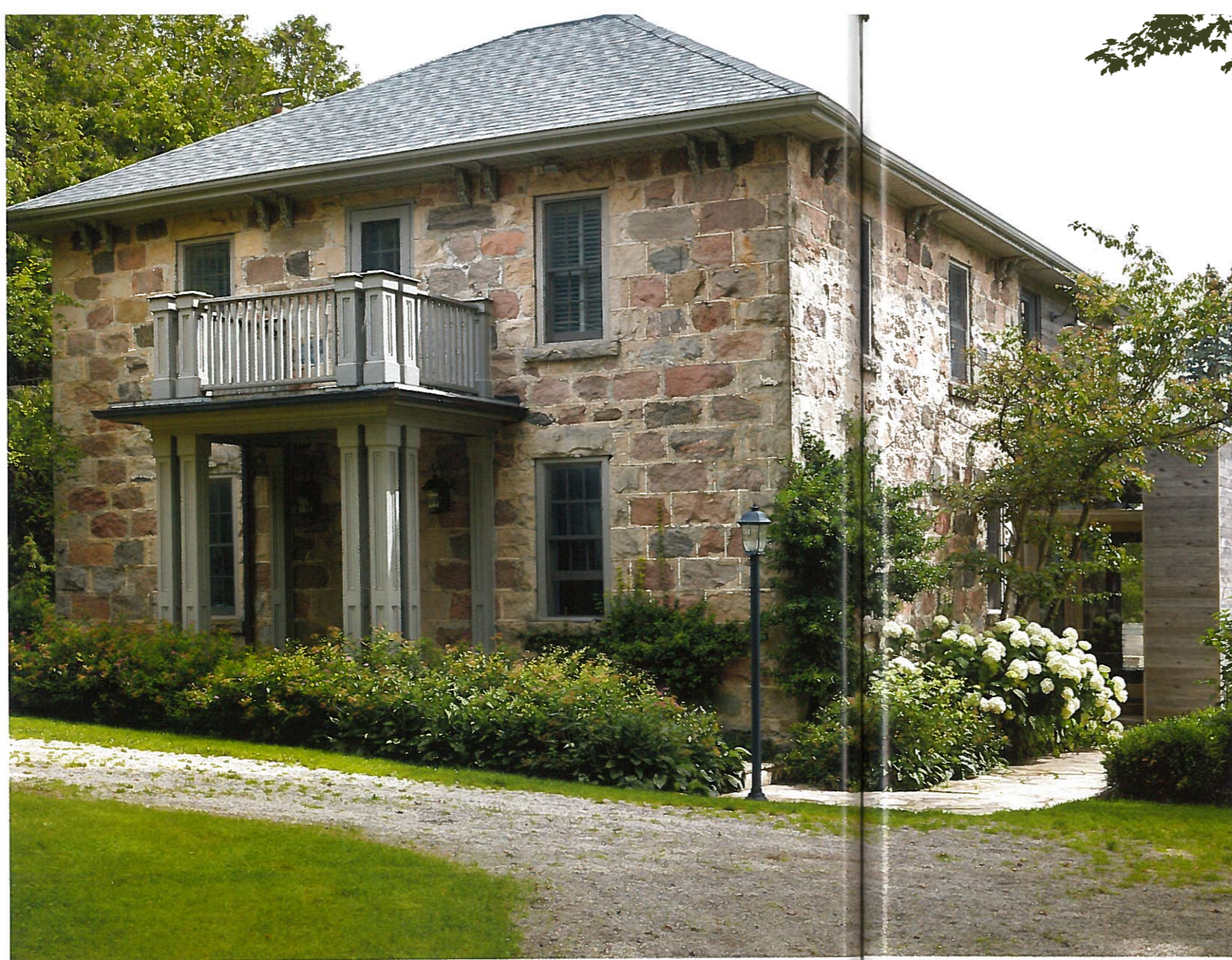
Produced by Sally Armstrong

ONE OF MY FAVOURITE things about this place is the amazing quiet. This is our weekend home and my husband, Chris, and I dream of retiring here someday. The house is a little more than an hour from Toronto, where I work in advertising and Chris works in the music business. The property is just over two-and-a-half hectares, but it feels like 60. All of our neighbours are farmers — you can see the roof of one barn off in the distance, but that's it. The loudest noise is the occasional rumble of milk trucks on their way to the dairy. When I pull onto the dirt road for the last couple of kilometres of the drive, my shoulders instantly sink back down and I breathe more deeply.

We bought the house seven years ago. At the time, we were debating whether to invest in a cottage or find a farm to fix up. Chris spotted the listing in a newspaper, and when we pulled up and saw this beautiful old stone house, I knew we had to buy it — I didn't even need to see inside. We did, of course, and a quick look confirmed it would definitely be a makeover project.

The house had been renovated 20 years earlier and the kitchen wasn't really holding up, the old addition was leaking and there were a lot of sponge-painted walls. After we bought the house, we painted everything white and called it a day, because that's what the budget allowed for at the time. Thankfully, in 2012, my friend Sarah Richardson came to our rescue and redid the kitchen for her television show *Sarah 101*.

Two years ago, we finally did a complete renovation. With the help of architect Andrea Macecek at Ma+ch and our builders, Caledon Building & Design, we rebuilt the addition, tying in the traditional hallmarks of the home with a modern, open-concept family room and dining area. We also added a spacious master bedroom with the kind of closet space I'd always dreamed of having.



ABOVE: An engraved stone above one of the stately windows dates the home to 1902. Stephanie and Chris named their country house Three Bird Farm after Bob Marley's song *Three Little Birds*. Not only does the name capture the home's calm vibe, but there are always birds singing, Stephanie says. It's a sound she loves that often gets lost in the city.

RIGHT: Stephanie placed leftover floor tiles from the mudroom on the tops of the side tables to carry the grey and white motif into the family room, where a wall papered with charcoal grasscloth anchors the space. Vases were wired and fashioned into table lamps and, above one sofa, pieces of hand-painted wallpaper from the Porter Teleo archives have been framed as artwork. **Upholstery fabric**, Tonic Living; **end tables**, CB2; **wallpaper** by Phillip Jeffries, Crown Wallpaper & Fabrics; **lamp bases**, West Elm; **wooden bowl** (on side table), **white vase** (on coffee table), **horn** (on coffee table), **white bowls**, Elte.



SEE SOURCE GUIDE



LEFT: Chris, Stephanie and their daughters Riley (left) and Livie (right) out for a stroll.

BOTTOM: Everyone in the family gets their own cubby in the mudroom for coats, hats and shoes, with helmets and other outdoor gear tidily tucked away in the cupboards above. Heated floors help snowy boots dry quickly in the winter. **Rug**, Walmart; **tote bag**, West Elm; **blanket** (on hook), Sarah Richardson Design.



All the work feels worth it because we use the house almost every weekend. So if we miss one, which is rare, it doesn't feel like a crisis the way it does if you have to give up time at a summer cottage. In the winter, we head into Grand Valley to our favourite little steak house, then come back and watch a movie in the family room. In the summer, we go for hikes and swim in the pool. I learned to garden and cook from my mother, and I love spending time in the vegetable garden. Cooking asparagus picked from your own plot, or pulling a carrot out of the earth, brushing off the dirt and discovering that it tastes nothing like the ones you find in the

grocery store — that's an everyday pleasure here. One of the reasons I was motivated to buy the house was the memory of my mother. Her greatest passion was her flower gardens, and there are a lot of gardens on the property. There's always something in bloom, from irises and lavender to poppies and peonies.

Best of all, our daughters Livie, who's 15, and Riley, who's 12, love it here as much as we do. There's a basketball hoop, a tetherball, a trampoline, and one winter we even built a skating rink on the tennis court; they're not sitting on their devices all day. And you know what? Neither are we. **H&H**

FARMHOUSE STORIES:

— THE MORE THE MERRIER —

We bought this house specifically to bring friends and family together, and we host every Canada Day. We'll have as many as 55 guests, squeezing in three full families, with a few singletons on sofas and other guests lodged in the hotel in town. I love this house most when it's overflowing with people, when kids and dogs are jumping in the pool and great friends are cooking meals together in the kitchen.

The music is cranked and there's always a heated tennis match followed by cocktails, a family-style dinner and fireworks lighting up the night sky to close out the day.



ABOVE: Barnboard creates a striking base for the kitchen island and complements the knotty pine floor. A long Calacatta marble countertop provides ample workspace for pickling, making raspberry jam and baking cookies with the kids. **Kitchen design,** Sarah Richardson Design; **barnboard,** Urban Tree Salvage; **backsplash tile,** Salttillo Imports; **cabinetry,** Ikea; **light fixture** (over island), Addison's; **hood, cooktop, wall ovens,** Lowe's; **sink, faucet,** Blanco; **stools,** Edison bulbs, Morba; **tea towel,** Elte.

LEFT: A small breakfast nook is the perfect spot for a quiet cup of coffee. The curio cabinet on the wall has been a handy hiding spot for many an Easter egg hunt. **Chairs,** A.H. Wilkins Auctions & Appraisals; **drapery,** Ikea; **lantern,** Decorum Decorative Finds; **napkins,** Sarah Richardson Design; **rug,** West Elm.

OPPOSITE PAGE: The living room is where the family gathers for evening card games. A salvaged barn door artfully mounted on a wall adds a rustic touch. "The windows are west-facing so there's nice light at the end of the day," says Stephanie. **Sofas,** Sarah Richardson Design; **black table,** Kiondo; **rugs,** Dash & Albert; **ottomans,** Ikea; **patterned throw pillows,** Susan Connor New York.



The principal bedroom has a calming palette of white, grey and pale wheat. "It's our simple little sanctuary," says Stephanie. **Side table, lamp, Vintage Fine Objects; bolster cushion, vase, bowls, Elte; wall colour, Simply White (OC-117), Benjamin Moore; artwork by Shane Norrie, Canvas Gallery.** **RIGHT:** Flowers snipped from the fields and set in a pitcher give the principal bedroom a pastoral feel.



Carrara marble cut into six- by 24-inch tiles was laid on the floor in an elegant herringbone pattern, with half the tiles honed and the other half polished for a mix of textures. The vanity spans the wall, but setting it on legs and combining open and closed storage gives it an airy look. **Soap, Lothantique; toothpaste, Aesop; soap dish, Ginger's.**



"I liked the idea of a palm leaf in the country," says Stephanie of the Cole & Son wallpaper in the principal ensuite. "There are so many ferns on the property, and the palm and the fern both have that lovely feathery leaf, so even though it's a bit more 'Miami,' it still feels right." A deep, freestanding tub adds to the escapist feel. **Draperies, Tonic Living; tub, Home Hardware; table, Vintage Fine Objects; bath products (on table), Lothantique.** **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM RIGHT:** Riley chose crisp blue and white for her bedroom. Her own artwork is framed on the walls, and the bed's vintage wicker headboard adds a layer of summery texture. **Linens, drapery, Sarah Richardson Design; rug, HomeSense; lamp, West Elm; wall colour, Milk Glass (WH31), Color Journeys by Para Paints.**



SEE SOURCE GUIDE



A flagstone path flanked by fragrant hydrangeas leads to the backyard. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** After the couple bought the house, they replaced prickly hedges with tidy flower beds. "There's always something blooming, from mid-May to October," says Stephanie. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** In the summer months, the family dines outside on the concrete deck, then gathers around the firepit for a cozy bonfire. "As long as it's not raining, we're out here," says Stephanie. **Table,** Fresh Home & Garden; **chairs,** Design Within Reach; **concrete deck,** Elite Concrete; **vase,** Elte. **OPPOSITE BOTTOM:** The artfully poured concrete pool deck looks like limestone. Peter Tosh (shown), a Portugese water dog, and David Bowie, a labradoodle, love the property as much as the family does. "When it's time to leave, we have to drag them to the car," says Stephanie.

