

GREAT LAKE STORY

CHAPTER TWO: DESIGNING HOME

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We've built four previous homes.

Jim has always kept a journal of these processes so that with each new beginning, we could avoid mistakes we've made in the past. What we've learned:

Set priorities early. Decide where you want to invest your money and where you won't mind exceeding allowances. Develop your list of "must-haves."

Listen, but don't be swayed by advice and suggestions from family, friends, builders and designers when making choices for your new home. Consider the functionality of your choices in relation to your lifestyle.

If you and your spouse disagree while making choices, choose your battles carefully. This goes back to setting priorities. You'll find that, like in a good marriage, compromise is very important during the building process.

Don't assume anything. Ask a lot of questions. All of the builders we have worked with have operated very differently.

Which is exactly why hesitation followed us into our first real home design meeting.

While we loved this South Haven development, so smartly tiered on a high bluff overlooking Lake Michigan, we also knew if we didn't feel comfortable with builder David C. Bos or his architect, Wayne Visbeen, we'd have to let go of the perfect property we'd found. They are The Boardwalk's team.

We already had connected with David; during a preliminary meeting, he had given us a "homework" assignment — a lifestyle survey that was so precise. The question I'd found most interesting was about furniture; we'd never before factored in its placement so early in the design phase. His personable, professional organization impressed us.

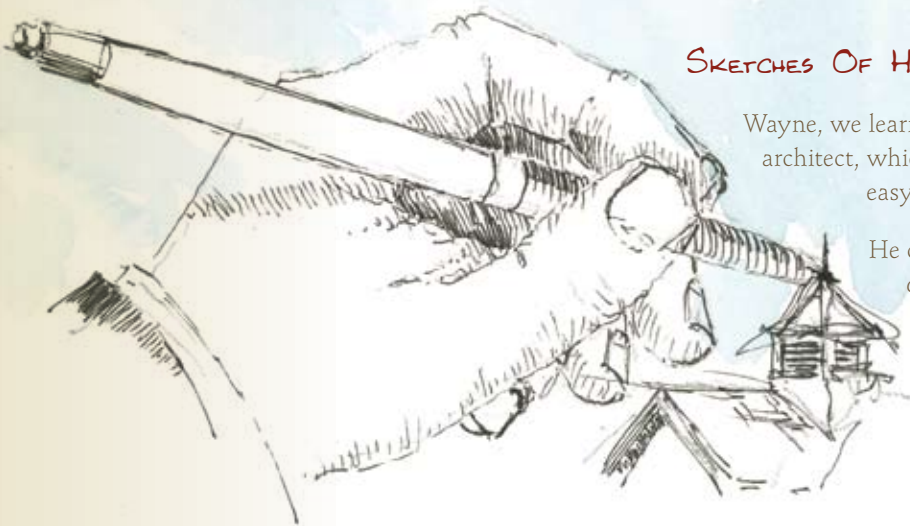
And, as part of that homework, David had also asked us to bring in five photos of home exteriors we liked. When I couldn't find any in magazines, I'd resorted to the Internet and found thousands of house plans. After printing several off, I discovered later that a few were actually Wayne's designs.

Fate? Maybe. But comforting, for sure.

SKETCHES OF HOME

Wayne, we learned, is an internationally recognized, award-winning architect, which also was comforting. But his genuine warmth and easy-going nature are what immediately put us at ease.

He carried paper. A lot of paper. And a lot of pens...at least a dozen.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY GARY W. ODMARK



Like David, Wayne asked a lot of questions: How often and where did we like to entertain? Where did we spend most of our time in our home? How did we envision our living spaces flowing together? How much natural light did we like to wake up to?

But the first of these was this: Was there something we really wanted?

Though we arrived without a definitive house plan in mind, there was — we didn't want our garage to face the street. Wayne explained because of our lot's width, a side-loading garage would be challenging. But even as he spoke, he began to draw...and make it work. And from it, our new home's design and character began to evolve, before our eyes.

More questions: How did we act in our house? How did we want our house to act with us? We talked, he listened, all the while sketching, sketching. And as our ideas became visual, they ignited our enthusiasm, catapulting our perspectives of what home could be: Conversational chemistry!

Meanwhile — as Wayne integrated onto paper wide views, porches, a beamed family room and wondrous kitchen with big, half-round island that angled 45 degrees toward the lake — David pointed out architectural features in The Boardwalk's model homes, lending lines of black and white real, three-dimensional appeal.

Five hours flew almost as fast as Wayne's hand.

And when we rose to go, we had in our hands reflections of our dream home: An eclectic, shingle-style design with interesting, layered rooflines, enhanced by board and batten, and more coastal character than we could have ever imagined.

We were on our way home.

The third chapter of Jim and Susan Buda's Great Lake Story continues in Michigan BLUE Magazine's 2010 Spring Issue. To learn more about the businesses making this dream home a reality, visit www.mibluemag.com. An extensive set of sketches from Jim and Susan's initial visit with architect Wayne Visbeen can be viewed at www.visbeen.biz