



Chapter Two

Great Lake Story 2015

Lakemore Retreat

For the award-winning founder of Bay Area Contracting, creating a sense of place at Arbutus Lake began with uncovering a sense of self.

Dean Adams' journey started with offers to mow neighbors' yards at age 12. At 15, the earnest young Northern Michigan entrepreneur launched his own business. He built a base of neighborhood customers that expanded throughout high school, when he used savings earned from mowing, lifeguarding and framing for a local builder to buy an equipment-haul truck. Shortly afterward, he moved down to Grand Rapids from Traverse City and began studies at Grand Valley State University. He tucked bartending hours in between making trips back north to continue framing new homes as well as service his lawn care clients.

"Tricia and her parents would help me mow on Fridays so I could join them for a couple days at their cottage," he says of his Traverse City High School sweetheart, Tricia, who started GVSU with him in 1999 and became his wife five years later. "That really meant a lot — I looked so forward to that time at the cottage."



First Family Home, Old Mission Peninsula

As Dean's ties to Tricia and her family deepened, so did his interest in residential construction at T.K. Builders in Traverse City. He progressed from framing as a laborer to crew oversight as foreman and overseeing varying aspects of project management. Over time, the inherently creative engineering major uncovered a latent ability and love for working with a spectrum of people — from first-time buyers and vacation home seekers to roofers and carpenters, plumbers and stonemasons.

"He told me, 'I think I want to be a general contractor,'" Tricia shares. "It would allow him to still make the most of those analytical, problem-solving engineering traits ingrained in him."

With Tricia's support — while fall semester of what would have been his senior year at GVSU began in 2002 — Dean remained in Traverse City to start working full-time for T.K. Builders' owner Ted Kunnath. Several months before the couple's September wedding two years later, Dean had garnered enough experience to oversee his first big custom home: Theirs, a 5,000-square-foot walk-out ranch on Old Mission Peninsula.

"We'd bought our lot in 2003, one of 32 in a brand-new development there," Dean says, noting that Tricia had grown up on Old Mission, where her parents had lived since 1978 and still resided. "Our house was the fifth to go up in Hidden Ridge."

Dean and Tricia gained valuable insight from building their own custom home, an education the diligent young builder furthered on the job as he evolved into



Adams' Home, Arbutus Lake

Family is at the heart of BAC's success, because family is at the heart of who we are." — Tricia Adams

project management and learned the industry's administrative side.

But a deep-seated entrepreneurial drive and unique proficiency for creating sense of place are also what led to Dean's launch of Bay Area Contracting (BAC) in 2007. An ensuing array of Parade of Homes awards followed, including People's Choice for BAC's first entry in 2008 (homes under \$350,000) and the Adams' family-inspired compound on Arbutus Lake (homes over \$750,000). In part and turn, both led to Dean's Grand Traverse Area peers naming him Distinguished Builder of the Year in 2009.

Along the way, the couple celebrated the arrivals of Owen and then Sophie, as well as Ella not long after, and the opportunity to share long-held ties

of lakeshore tradition, both personally and professionally.

"Family is at the heart of BAC's success," Tricia relates, "because family is at the heart of who we are."

Learn more about signature components of these award-winning homes and the collective team who brings them together at Bay Area Contracting (a Certified Green Builder since 2008) in Michigan BLUE Magazine's upcoming TRAVEL & ADVENTURE edition, on newsstands in August. Meanwhile, read more about Great Lake Story and this builder at mibluemag.com and BayAreaContracting.net.



The Adams Family (clockwise): Dean, Sophie, Tricia, Ella and Owen