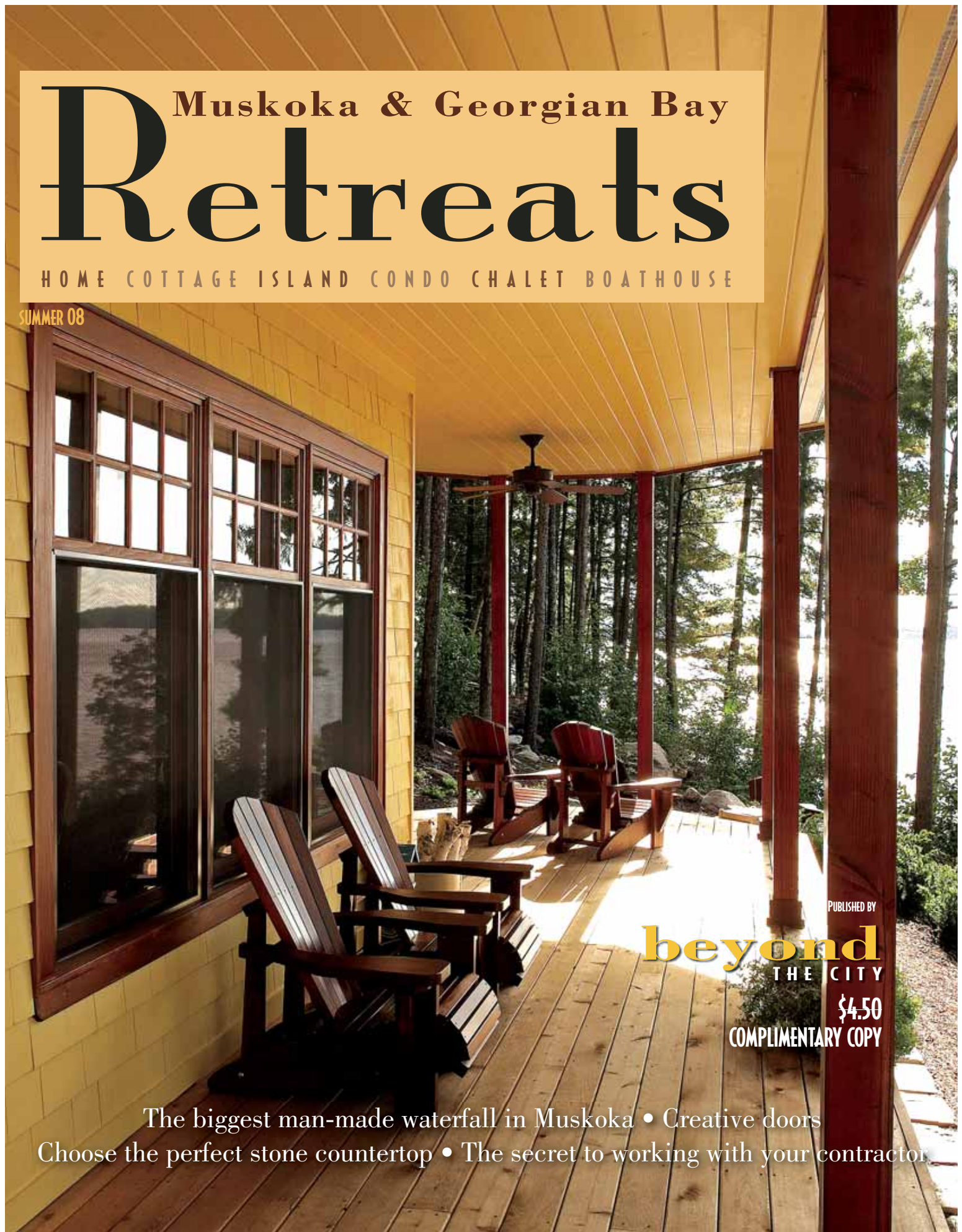




Muskoka & Georgian Bay Retreats

HOME COTTAGE ISLAND CONDO CHALET BOATHOUSE

SUMMER 08



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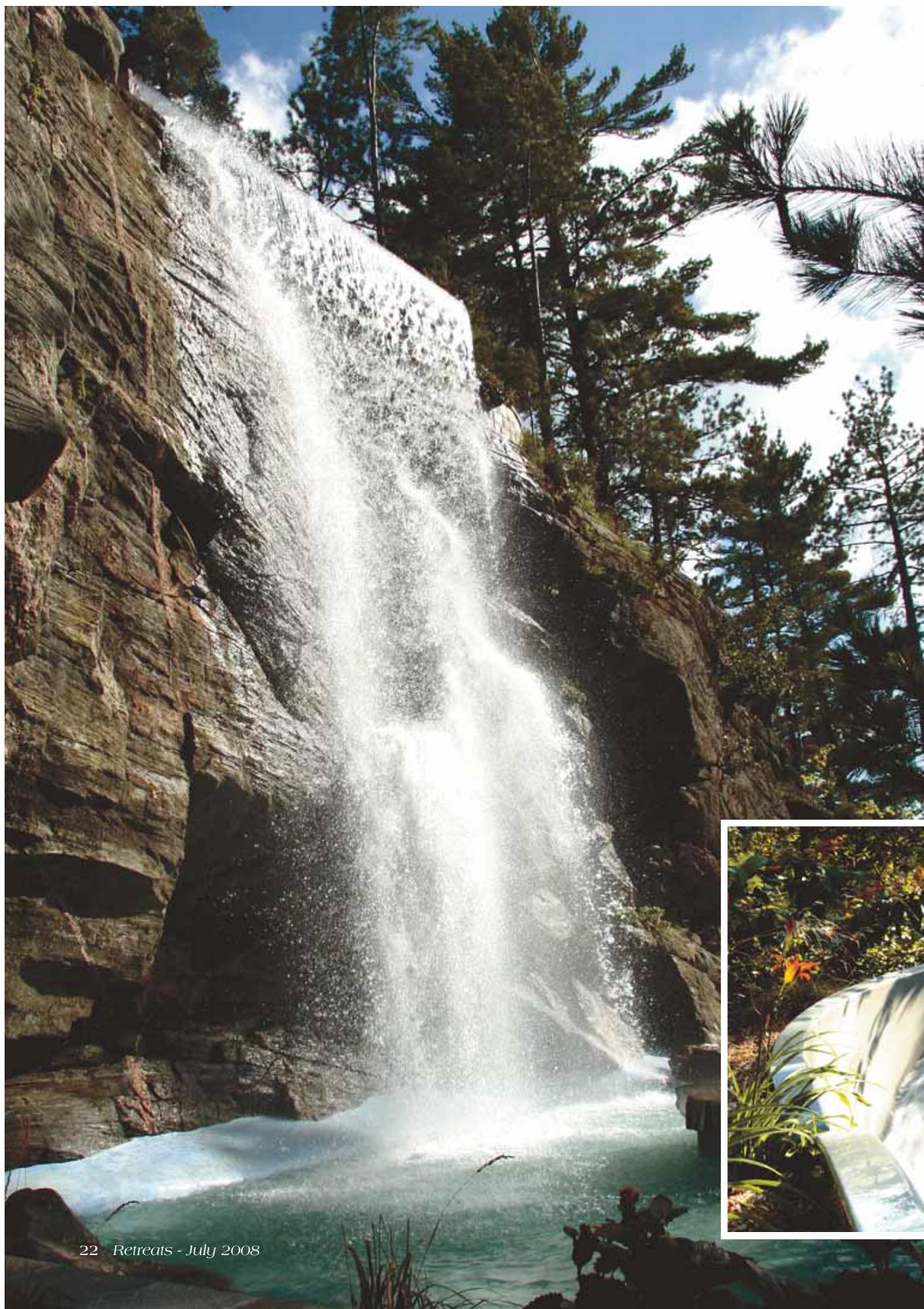
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Improving on NATURE'S DESIGN

BY ANDREW WAGNER-CHAZALON

When Bobby Genovese says it, it seems like such a reasonable idea. “You look at that big rock face and think ‘what are you going to do with that?’” he said. “And I thought ‘let’s do a waterfall.’”

And why not? After all, the big rock face is a 50-foot cliff that rises mere steps from the edge of Lake Rosseau. It’s exactly the sort of place where nature could have put a waterfall. Since nature failed to place a river, lake or spring at the top of the cliff to supply the water, Genovese decided to rectify the omission. All it would take is skill, permits, vision and lots of money.

How much money? Genovese grins

and sidesteps the question. “More than it should have,” he says, with a wink at Craig Rose and Chris Madden, the contractors who have spent years bringing his vision to life. “Let’s just say it cost enough.”

A simple water structure could have been done fairly quickly, but Genovese is not a man who does things by half measures. The flamboyant and engaging chairman of an investment firm with offices in Nassau, the U.S. and Canada, Genovese wanted to turn his Lake Rosseau property into a playground for his young children, their cousins who summer in adjacent cottages and his many guests. A gentle, trickling waterfall would have been a nice touch, but Genovese wanted a dra-

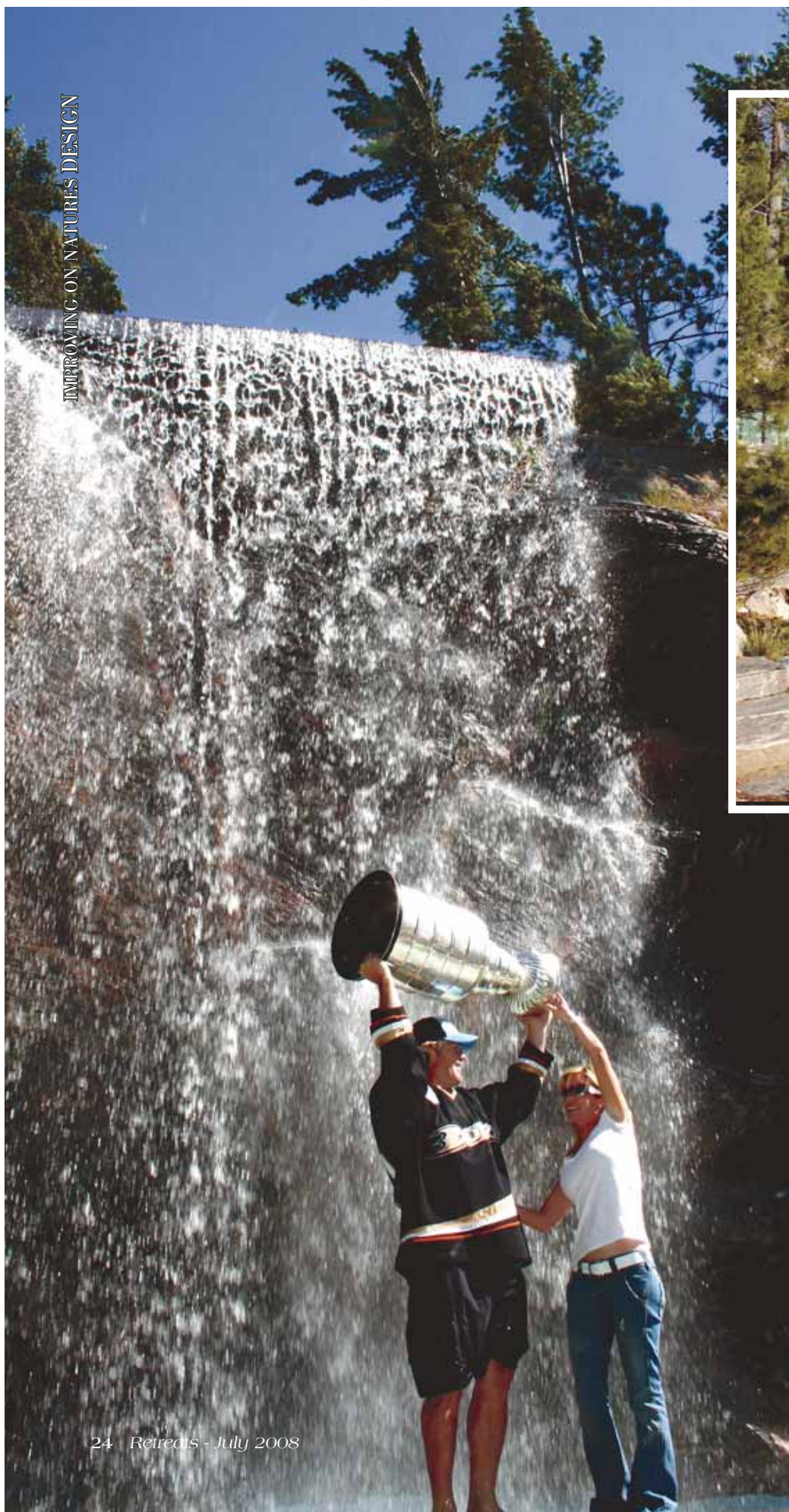


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IMPROVING ON NATURE'S DESIGN



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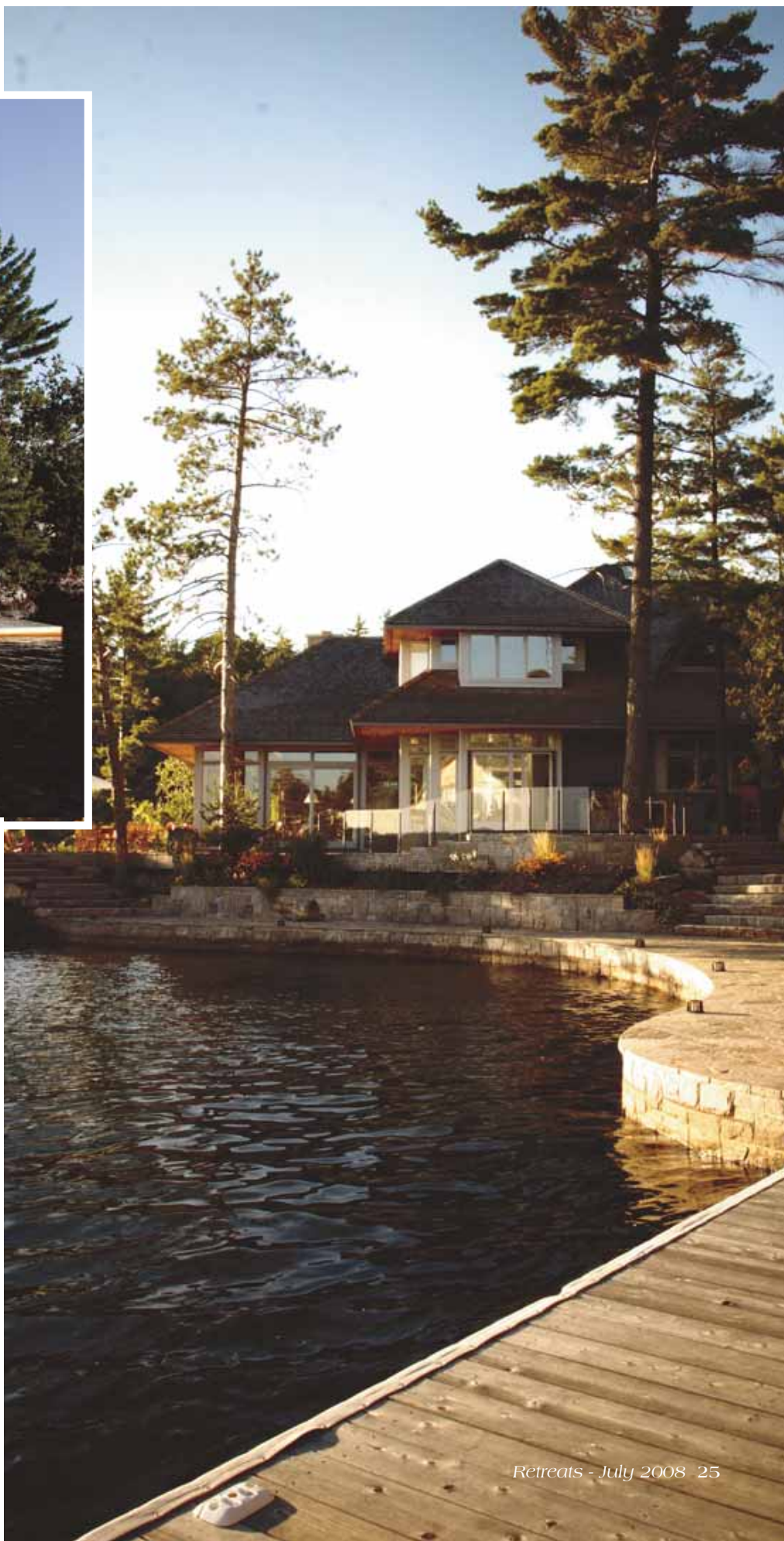


The dramatic waterfall on Lake Rosseau attracts all kinds of visitors, including Anaheim Ducks forward Brad May and his wife Brigette, who visited the cottage last summer while enjoying their two days of travelling with the Stanley Cup.

What looks like a typical floating dock (above) is actually the landing site for the waterslide, which deposits riders in the lake beside the cottage.

The stone walkway (opposite) may look like a solid retaining wall, but in fact is a dock mounted on steel piers. It was built of stone to avoid the look that can come with large expanses of wooden decking.





matic centerpiece, a cooling waterfall with a swimming pond at the bottom. “Bobby said he didn’t want it to look like a squirrel was taking a leak off the edge of the cliff,” said Madden, president of Tamarack North Ltd. What Bobby wanted was a 5,000 gallon per minute cascade.

There was no waterfall in the plans in 2001, when Genovese hired Tamarack to transform his recently acquired Lake Rosseau property, replacing an old cottage with something considerably more modern. That job revealed Genovese’s penchant for creative – and sometimes flamboyant – solutions to design challenges. In order to connect the cottage to the new boathouse, for example, Genovese needed a dock along the shoreline, but he hated to see vast expanses of wooden decking. The solution was to build a steel deck on pylons, then cover it with flagstone so that it looks like a

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stone walkway. "It was a huge expense, but it achieved the look we were after," Genovese said.

When Genovese needed a way to lift his prize wooden boats out of the water for winter storage, Madden designed and built an underwater hydraulic hoist, rather than have cables hanging down from the boathouse roof.

Faced with a cottage site that wouldn't accommodate a proper Muskoka room, Genovese instead had the front half of the cottage equipped with rollaway glass walls and roll-down screens that turn the entire room into a Muskoka room in good weather.

If Madden had ever doubted Genovese's willingness to try something new and then follow through on a project, by the time the waterfall was suggested his doubts had vanished.

Craig Rose, on the other hand, was just starting to get used to Genovese's individualistic approach. In 2004 Rose's landscaping company, Rockscape Design, was hired to construct some stone steps beside the boathouse. "We figured it would be about three weeks' work," Rose said with a laugh. "Two and a half years later, we were still there."

Genovese says there's a reason the two companies are still at work on his

Creative design and excellent workmanship are found throughout the cottage. The dining area enjoys a superb view of the lake, with glass panel walls that can be rolled back when the weather is fine.





cottage property: they are able to bring his visions to life. He was so impressed with the work, in fact, he invested in Tamarack. “I became Chris’s partner in Tamarack because what other company could have done this?” he asked.

Building a waterfall of this scale isn’t just a matter of engineering and construction; it’s a matter of paperwork and planning. The waterfall is a self-contained system – the water is drawn from the lake every spring, treated with chlorine and ultraviolet light to reach drinking water standards, then recirculated through the waterfall all summer before being returned to the lake in the fall. But getting permission to do it required considerably more than just a building permit. “Tamarack went to all the different agencies – fisheries, forestry, whatever ministry might object to it – before going to township council,” said Genovese. “It had never been done. You had nothing to compare it to.”

Once the permits were obtained, construction could begin. The logistics of the project were awe-inspiring. Hundreds of dump trucks travelled back and forth to the cottage, using a road that is poor even by cottage road standards. At the height of construction a grader was kept on-site full-time to grade both the cottage road and the public road every night. A good-sized building was constructed to house the enormous pump, the water treatment system and the wall-sized electrical panel that runs it.

The number of subtrades involved was staggering – one afternoon, Rose counted 74 men sitting down at lunchtime on the job site. There were so many people there, another piece of land had to be rented for parking and a shuttle vehicle was employed to ferry the workers to and from the site.

The project required constant changes and redesigning as challenges – both esthetic and practical – were encountered. The original plan was for the water to plunge directly from the cliff into a small swimming pool below... until Madden calculated the water pressure that would result at the bottom. “It would kill you,”

Genovese said. “Definitely not recommended for children.” So the plan was amended to ensure the water bounces off the cliff face on its way down.

More significant changes came about as Genovese expanded his vision. The pool at the base of the waterfall is 30 feet above the level of the lake. It’s a pleasant stroll from pool to lake, but why walk when you could slide? “I phoned my esteemed colleague Chris and said we should build a waterslide,” Genovese said. “He loved the idea, but thought the township and the rest of the lake might be against it.”

Rather than abandon the idea, Genovese and his team came up with a way to make it palatable to council and the neighbours. A 150-foot waterslide would have to be built by a commercial slide maker, an idea that immediately conjured up images of bright yellow and blue tubes like those seen at Canada’s Wonderland. “My promise to township council was that you wouldn’t be able to see it,” Genovese said. “I didn’t want the place to look like a theme park.”

The slide was built of granite-coloured plastic and shielded by stone and plants so that anyone boating by would only know a waterslide was there if there was someone on it, zipping through the landscaping at 11 feet per second.

The third major challenge arose once the waterfall was complete. Pumping the water to the top takes a large pipe, three feet in diameter. Genovese hated the look of it. “How the hell do you hide a three-foot pipe?” he asked. “I said ‘why don’t we build a rock wall in front of it?’”

The solution turned out to be elegant and practical. Now there are four rock-climbing routes located beside the waterfall, some on real rock and others on artificial rock. The effect is so well done that a casual glance at the wall fails to reveal that the rock is anything other than real.

Not surprisingly, the project has attracted a great deal of attention. “Now the cottage, for good or bad, has become a bit of a landmark on the lake,” Genovese said. “People come right up in their boats to see it. I feel a bit like Goldie Hawn and



Kurt Russell.” The gawkers bring their own entertainment value, though, as their voices carry across the water, allowing Genovese to hear them speculating about the source of the waterfall. “I can’t tell you how many people think we’ve got a lake up at the top of the cliff,” he said with a laugh.

With his waterfall, waterslide and rock wall in place, is Genovese finished? Not by half. He recently purchased a neighbouring cottage – Genovese and his two brothers now own almost every cottage along a mile of Lake Rosseau shoreline – so this spring he, Rose and Madden were busy studying the site to see what could be done with it. The latest idea is that it might become a sports pavilion with a common court area to be shared by the brothers and their families.

Whatever ends up being built there, it’s sure to be both innovative and superbly done. Working with Genovese, Rose acknowledges, is a bit like travelling with Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz: you don’t really know where you’re going to end up, but you can be pretty sure you’ll do stuff you’ve never done before.☞

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