



WRITER | MARY ANN HUMPHREY
PHOTOGRAPHER | STEVEN SIMPKINS

Nature's Bounty Beckons

Dr. Todd and Mary Holtz were looking for a place to build their dream home, and when they found the perfect 10 acre spot, Michael J. Rudy Builder helped them design and build a house that encompassed their love of animals, nature and gardening. Michael is an old-school craftsman who used his vast store of knowledge from 40 years of hands-on experience to create many of the home's custom features with lumber taken from the property. Wood from the trees which had to be cut down was used extensively in the construction and décor of this 3,200 square foot home, which was designed to reflect the couple's hobbies and interests.

They had a sewing room for Mary built off the master bedroom, and Todd designed an 8 X 10 room with a platform built at waist level all around it for his miniature model trains. The side of the house faces the chicken coop, where Mary's three hens—Trish, Autumn and Eloise – give her 21 eggs a week. “It's nicer than my first house,” Mary jokes. What she calls their “bird room” features glass walls with a view of the pine forest where they enjoy watching the wildlife. Adjacent to it is the veranda, with a natural knotty pine ceiling made from the Holtz' lumber and a black locust floor. The kitchen porch features cypress from the specialty lumberyard Michael operates, which carries dozens of wood species.

Most of the home's doors were custom made in Michael's wood shop from their pine trees; his company also crafted the 40 inch wide x 90 inch tall front door, which is made out of two and a quarter inch thick solid cherry. Michael and Mary worked together to find the beveled glass for it. “It was a fun process. Every

little thing was unique,” Michael says. Much of the interior trim was milled from the Holtz’s lumber – they used red and white pine, ash, birch, maple and poplar. The home’s paneling is red pine tongue and groove, and the beaded wainscoting is poplar. Wormy maple, which has a unique brown stripe, was used for the laundry room countertops and a special spice rack for the pantry. Using their own lumber saved Todd and Mary well over \$6,000.

The three bedroom home resembles a French country farmhouse, and the traditional red brick of the kitchen’s raised fireplace is consistent with its cozy, comfortable atmosphere. “This house is meant to be lived in, it’s not a show house,” Mary says, adding that she loves anything that comes from the earth. The kitchen countertops are Imperial Danby marble, and all the hardwood floors on the first level are made of ash from their trees. The home’s natural brown, red and gold colors reflect their love of fall, with birds and leaves prominently featured in many areas. In the back foyer, floor tiles were laser cut with custom prints from leaves they collected over the years. Leaf tiles crop up throughout the home: on the mud room floor, in the kitchen, and in the master bath shower’s recessed niche. Shumacher “A Twitter” wallpaper featuring backyard birds like robins, cardinals and chickadees decorates the rear hall bathroom, and Mary made a light fixture out of a birdcage.

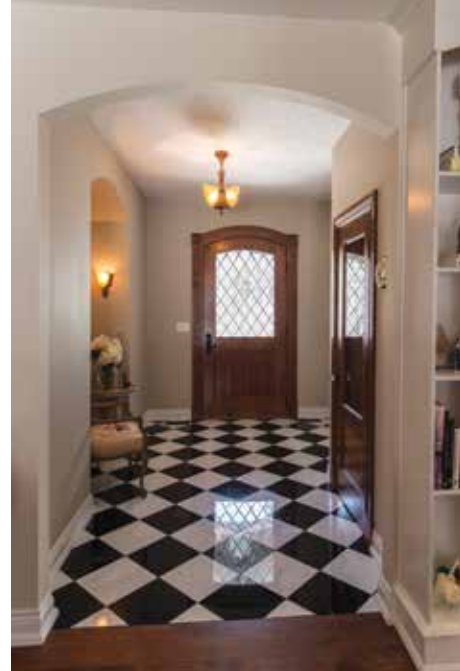
The front porch ceiling is painted “Haint” blue; the name comes from the old south, where the theory is that this color blue would keep out evil spirits. While it’s not certain to keep out “haunts,” what it does keep out is birds, bugs and spiders. “Creatures think it’s a continuum of the sky,” Mary says. The color complements the bluish-gray stacked stone on the home’s exterior. The dining room’s boxed picture window has a copper roof; the gray-green patina will blend over time with the blue-gray of the stone. The exterior redwood and cypress trim weathers naturally to a soft, earthy tone.

Vintage furniture Mary found in her travels adds to the home’s eclectic charm. She likes to decorate with pieces that have meaning, and she repurposed antiques for three of the home’s bathrooms. She painted an old Drexel chest of drawers a dark metallic brown, exposed all the original heritage gold trim, and put in a fluted sink and new hardware. In the back hall bath, she transformed an old wet bar with a copper bucket sink into the vanity. Refurbished Art Deco and Victorian light fixtures, originally from train stations or 1800’s mansions, are featured throughout the home.

Michael built a home for Todd’s parents when they moved to the area in the 1980’s, and Todd and Mary chose him to build this home because of his unique style and hard work ethic. They have nothing but praise for Mike as a builder and a person. “He took our vision and our dream and made it come true,” Mary says. “He’s not just a builder, he’ll always be in our life as a friend.” Michael enjoys working with the homeowners throughout the building process. “I’m a little old fashioned,” Michael says. “What I do takes a little longer, but you get better results.” He adds that his prices are competitive because he works with the homeowner’s designs, and helps them get more expensive elements for less. He builds about one home per year, and his philosophy is that you gain success by trying to be the best at what you’re doing. He adds that his family has been a great asset to his business, especially his wife Myrna’s discerning eye. His youngest brother Mark has designed most of the projects Michael has constructed.

“I want the homeowners to smile every time they drive in the driveway,” Michael says. He is member of the Home Builders Association of Midland County, and through them a member of the National Association of Home Builders and the Home Builders Association of Michigan. □

TOP: Black and white marble tiles in the front hallway contrast with the warm cherry wood door with its beveled glass. MIDDLE: Drawers were built under the stairwell to provide extra storage. BOTTOM: The mudroom was custom built using wood from the property.



TOP: Imperial Danby marble tops both the counters, the kitchen island and the butler’ pantry counters. The mosaic marble backsplash in the kitchen is also seen on the floor in the butler’ pantry. ABOVE LEFT: A raised fireplace lends rustic farmhouse charm to the kitchen. ABOVE RIGHT: Built in bookcases line the arched double entrance to the kitchen.



LEFT: Glass walls on three sides of the sitting room off the kitchen provide a perfect vantage point for birdwatching. CENTER : Marble countertops and mosaic marble in the butler’ pantry tie in with the kitchen. RIGHT: Leaves from the homeowner’s collection are laser cut into tiles scattered throughout the home.



ABOVE: An antique wet bar with a copper bucket sink is repurposed into a bathroom vanity. RIGHT: White pine from the property was whitewashed and fashioned into a built in chest of drawers and cupboard in granddaughter Eva's room.



Michael J. Rudy Builder

PRINCIPAL OWNERS: Michael Rudy and Myrna Rudy

YEARS IN BUSINESS: 41

ESTABLISHED IN: 1974 was when I built the first home. I became incorporated in the early 90's.

EDUCATION: Associate in Arts at Delta Community College

BUSINESS PHILOSOPHY:

To strive to be the best in our craft and always look to improve. We prize knowledge and quality to gain superior results and create unique finish products and lasting relationships with our customers.

WHAT SETS YOUR BUSINESS APART?

There are many qualified people in our craft. We distinguish ourselves by having broad product knowledge, an ability to create uniqueness in every project, and providing the many varied needs demanded in the building industry. We also have a specialty lumberyard with woodshop service where we have created a complimentary niche for the building and woodworking industry.

WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE READERS TO KNOW ABOUT YOU?

I grew up in Midland, Michigan, with nine brothers and sisters. I spent about half of my building career as a part-time builder, while working in retail lumber sales, moulding and millwork creations, custom carpentry, maintenance and repair services. My wife and I have two children, Stephen and Andrea, who helped with the business while they were youths through high school and college. I enjoy sports, coaching, tending my gardens and fruit trees, helping where I can, and especially time with my family and our seven grandchildren.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

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ABOVE: A knotty pine ceiling, black locust floors and cedar shakes give the veranda a rustic feel.



ABOVE: The chicken coop, where Mary plans to add three chicks to her family of hens this summer.

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