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Peace, quiet, tranquility, perfect!

Sylvia and Glenn Perdue turned what was once a 'shack' into one heck of a cottage

Article and photos by David Taylor

Ask any realtor in any country what the three most important things for a successful listing are and you'll likely receive the same response – albeit in different languages. Location. Location. Location.

The answer from Sylvia and Glenn Perdue would be exactly the same. And this couple has been in real estate for more years than they will often admit.

However, when they found their home-away-from home on the west bank of Chemong Lake about 20 years ago, there were other factors that drew them here.

To hear them both talk, their property was nothing much to look at back then. Sylvia refers to it as a shack. A little unkind, perhaps, but it's a statement made with affection for the place that has become so much more than a weekend getaway or summer retreat for the Perdues and their family. Yes, the location was indeed everything they would have wanted; off a quiet, unassumed road and under a two hour drive from their home in Mississauga. However, the peace, the quiet – the tranquility and especially the view across the lake was an enormous part of this location's appeal.

Glenn grew up in Peterborough. As a young boy living on Weller Street you made your own entertainment and fun – especially during hot summers when school was out. Glenn's family had friends, the Highlands who owned some property in the Kawarthas. Many a summer day Glenn and his friends would spend time at the Highland family cottage, fishing, swimming and playing endlessly in the forests that surrounded the cottage. It was a much simpler time.

Sylvia and Glenn also spent a great deal of time in the region as their own two children grew up. They would rent a cottage and spend as much time as they could during the summers at the lake. One day, while slowly cruising on Chemong, they came upon a rough shoreline.

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The cow grass was almost four feet high, but a realtor's FOR SALE sign was barely visible. It was obvious no one was home. Glenn stopped and tied their boat to a makeshift landing spot. The family got out and tentatively explored the brush, making their way to the cottage to see for themselves. Without warning, Glenn veered off toward a person he thought he recognized and vigorously shook the hand of a man he believed to be his childhood friend, Bob Highland. Turns out, it was Bob's brother, Rick. Small world. It was this very area, many years before that Glenn had played with his pals from Peterborough. It was as if he had come home.

Twenty years later and Sylvia and Glenn have turned their 'shack' into a very comfortable home. Their plan is to retire and live here. "I'm not sure when that will be," says Glenn, smiling broadly, "It could even be after this weekend!"

In everything they do, regardless of whether it's about their business or their family, this couple throw themselves into life with a passion that many would envy. They work hard and long hours. This cottage is their escape mechanism. So, naturally, they want to be as comfortable as possible whenever they are there. Consequently, the place has metamorphosized. With the assistance of local contractors like **Randy Smith of R & M Smith Contracting Limited** and Steve Buchanan of Buchanan Kitchen and Bath, the Perdues' Kawartha escape has become a comfortable lakeside home, perfect for getaways and entertaining family and close friends. The place has been designed to maximize space. Wide open areas, many different seating areas to enjoy meaningful conversations and windows, windows, and then more windows.

"Randy and Steve both have been great to work with. Randy, over the years has been tireless and has pushed us in some areas, we him in others," Sylvia explains. "You should have seen this

place when we raised it off its foundations to put in a basement!" Now there are 1,760 sq. ft. on the main floor and an additional 1,760 sq. ft. in the wide open, yet inviting areas of the walk out basement with eight foot ceilings.

Many people who are fortunate enough to have a vacation property tend to bring items from their principal residence that may have seen better days but will be just fine in a more relaxed country setting. Not so with Sylvia.

"If anything, we employ the 'that'll do' credo to our home in the city. Up here, we go first class all the way!" she says.

The Perdues spend much of their free time scouring auctions and yard sales. Sylvia loves to find hidden treasures and always seems to make them work within this country retreat. Glenn, too. On the mantle of their fireplace is a huge wooden propeller from some antique plane. A piece from an old aircraft is in their home. In a prominent area, no less. Yet, it works.

The focal point of the kitchen and eating area is an enormous ancient carpenter's table – the solid wood vices at either end are still quite functional. Sylvia found this piece at The Cottage Life Show in Toronto a couple of years back and had to own it. Glenn was not quite as certain as his wife, but nevertheless, the table was bought.

Sylvia spoke with Steve Buchanan who shared her enthusiasm and went to work on designing and remodeling the kitchen around this enormous workshop item.

After Randy and Steve had finished their respective tasks, the table was front and centre in the Perdues' kitchen. A definite conversation piece. Its position in the kitchen area is just so. Not parallel with anything; not even centred. Sitting at just the correct angle, it helps centre the area yet maximize the space to take full advantage. Just like the realtor's adage, it all came down to location.



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