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Clear sailing

A suburban manor house rises above its surroundings with presence and panache

Text by
Edward T. Krupka
Photography by
John Trigiani
Architecture by
Desini Homes

Like a massive galleon negotiating the swells and valleys surrounding it, this Tudor-inspired manor house was designed to roll with the terrain, in this case an eminent Toronto-area golf course. But because the house is built on a flood plain, the builders knew the project would demand careful planning.

"This was a great undertaking," says

Dean Paripoush of Toronto's Desini Homes. "We designed this house like a ship," he explains. In the event of flooding, a hydrostatic pressure system ensures that the building is completely watertight.

The flood risk was not the only challenge. Architect Peter Higgins was determined to take advantage of the breathtaking views. "The topography was tantamount to the situation of the house," he says.

It took three painstaking years to build, but today the house looks as though it has been there for a very long time. Instead of using a conventional grey stone for the exterior, Higgins chose warmer shades of pink and green that exude age and tradition. Backing onto a wooded area, the sprawling pool and patio, with its cascading waterfall

and water slide is an oasis of calm on a summer's day.

The same casual yet sumptuous elegance characterizes the home's palatial interior. Starting with the dramatic front foyer with its distinctive inlaid compass rose, interior designer Joan Forsythe knew it was essential to give this very large interior the intimacy of a home. Higgins feels the decorator has achieved an ideal balance. "The rooms," he says, "are subtly elegant while still retaining a warm old-world feeling that's comfortable, yet cozy."

The warmth of the cherry wood used in the great room's soaring 22-foot ceiling and generous mullioned windows contributes a reassuring masculinity, as does the subdued southwestern color palette used on the faux leather walls and furnishings. The