

Dream big

With 13,000 square feet of home to work with, this house is not your average find in these parts



From the 7-ft. by 8-ft. solid-wood, double-wide doors to the 17-foot-high by eight-foot-wide stone fireplace that rises from the great room floor, this home is accented with an abundance of warm wood and pastoral stone (Bonnie Bobryk Photography)

Photos



The home's downstairs has another guest suite, a custom-built bar that would rival most commercial bars (shown here) in size and stature, and a full-sized gym with nine-foot frosted-glass doors as its entry way. (Bonnie Bobryk Photography)

The house I am about to introduce to you is not like any you've probably seen before and it may not be like one you are likely to own. But, then again, you never know...

Interestingly, upon meeting the homeowners, Claude and Lana Hamilton, Claude and I quickly discovered we had a lot in common — similar backgrounds, similar acquaintances and more — even to the extent that he coached my old high school's hockey team. Like my husband (and my

father) Claude joined the navy at a young age and ended up in Halifax. And, as my mom (as well as Alexander Keith) likes to quote — “they come to Nova Scotia and they never go back.”

Claude met Lana (who was also in the Navy) and they began making a life together. The type of life that most of us here in town are familiar with. That is, until fate, courage and savvy stepped in. A series of smart business choices and opportunities wove their way through the Hamiltons’ lives in fairly short order. Some great business people are born. Some are made. I would argue that these two are both.

Flash forward about 15 years from the couple’s initially unremarkable, pay cheque-to-pay cheque life and here we have it — a stunning, jaw-droppingly beautiful home.

Long before such a home was on the outer, outer outskirts of the Hamiltons’ minds, Lana had begun collecting pictures from different magazines. For years she owned a box of tattered images and photos, waiting for the day she could incorporate her inspirations into a real live home.

Meeting the challenge

“I showed up one day at Keith Sawlor’s office on the Bedford Highway, clutching my ratty and torn collection — all marked up with black marker, highlighting the different features I liked in each picture,” explains Lana.

“I had only my humble little folder and a hand-drawn sketch of our dream home, so I was a bit nervous — I didn’t know where to start or what questions to ask. All I had was the vision of what could be and hoped that someone would be able to take these pictures off the paper and make them real.” Keith Sawlor was eager to meet the challenge. I wonder if he realized the extent of the project on that first day. I doubt it!

“From the very beginning, Keith Sawlor took his time to look at my pictures and answer my questions. He made me feel totally confident that this was a builder who would work very hard to build my home versus just another house for his portfolio.”

Sawlor remembers this first meeting well. He saw that this was a project perfectly suited for him and his team immediately.

“At Sawlor we offer a team not just of a group of construction professionals. I have been doing this for 29 years and have developed long-standing relationships with our subcontractors. They are a local phenomena when it comes to excellence in building.”

Sawlor homes are custom built. The company particularly enjoys building homes that are unique and “above average.” Well — the Hamiltons’ abode fits that bill for sure.

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“We entertain a lot of groups of various sizes, so we wanted a house that was big enough to accommodate everybody, but not so big that it felt like a museum,” says Lana. “Sawlor was able to engineer us a house that, although it can easily hold up to 150 people in our kitchen/great room area alone, it doesn’t feel so ominous that it is intimidating.”

So now you know what we’re dealing with here.

Rustic yet elegant atmosphere

The Hamilton’s wanted a home with a rustic yet elegant atmosphere. This was achieved through the incorporation of various natural elements inside the house to give it that ‘homey’ feel. From the seven-foot by eight-foot solid wood double-wide doors to the 17 feet-high by eight-feet wide stone fireplace that rises from the great room floor, the home is accented with an abundance of warm wood and pastoral stone.

To call the staircase in the foyer a focal point would be a pathetic deception. The wood and glass-railed floating curved staircase designed by Dominion Stairs is an artful demonstration of the world-class craftsmanship available in our own backyard. This local exemplification of quality is indicative of the entire house.

The Sawlor and Hamilton team made it a point to use craftspeople, designers and decorators (Amazing Spaces) from Nova Scotia, even though it is obvious that they could have afforded to source items from anywhere, or flown people in “from away” for that matter. That is not how Sawlor rolls. It is not what the Hamiltons wanted ether. And the results are spectacular.

The home has two entry points leading to the downstairs, so depending on what area of the house you are going to or coming from, it saves you from having to walk all the way around the base. The staircase banisters are continuous all the way to the lower level and, because of the glass railings, the stone wall is perfectly accented.

“The guys at Dominion Stairs really did a great job designing that for us,” says Lana. “It looks amazing to be able to stand at the base of the stairs and look up following the curve all the way to the very top level, or vice versa and look all the way down into the lowest level.

“Upstairs, across the bridge that spans the width of our great room, are two separate themed bedrooms, each with their own feel, and full baths, so that any guest who would stay over has full privacy in their own suite.”

The back of the house is basically all windows — which means the Hamiltons can enjoy all seasons. These days, with the show that fall is putting on, this is especially amazing. On snowy days one can imagine watching the flakes fall, or the buds popping come spring.

When I asked Claude what his favourite room in the house was, or more precisely, “where he likes to hang,” his replay was quick. His cigar room is his hide away, with its own wood-stove fireplace and custom touches.

Dream kitchen

The kitchen utilizes granite in hues of bronze and chocolate and gold. The cabinets, created by Decoste Kitchen's are rich and deep.

“There is a hidden custom pantry that can be sectioned away while entertaining by two nine-foot sliding frosted glass doors,” says Lana. “This is handy when we have a chef in to host parties, as he can be as messy as he wants and no one knows the difference!” she laughs.

The Hamiltons purchased an induction cook top which allows Lana to feel totally safe in terms of the little one (on the way) being tempted to reach up and touch the stove top. This appliance works using electromagnetism so only magnetic surfaces are affected, to the point that you can take cold water to boiling in 45 seconds and then sit an ice cube on the same element and it will not melt. Nothing sticks to the surface because the element is not hot — only the pot heats up from the ions in the metal moving due to the friction from the magnetic energy. Total Star Trek stuff here ladies and gents.

There is approximately 1,100 sq. ft. of deck space off the back of the home, including a built-in barbecue station with overhead lighting and an outdoor sound system which Uber Homes installed (this sound system actually carries throughout the entire home.)

The Hamilton's master suite is carpeted wall-to-wall in a cappuccino shag that is about 1.5 inches deep. This bedroom suite also features a reading nook with a couple of full-sized chaises and a morning kitchen with its own fridge. (The Hamiltons actually have nine fridges of different sizes throughout the house.)

There is another feature in the ensuite that space prohibits me from doing justice to. Suffice to say, it is a 22-inch Seura HDTV that is completely invisible when not in use. With a touch of the button, the Hamilton's can view the morning news while in their master suite from this television that appears in their vanity mirror.

The home's downstairs has another guest suite, a custom-built bar that would rival most commercial bars in size and stature, and a full-sized gym with nine foot frosted-glass doors as its entry way. There is also a spa and steam room off of that with iridescent tiling and dimmers so when the Hamilton's have a massage therapist come in, they can truly create their own oasis.

“I love our gym area and spend a lot of time there,” says Lana. “It holds full-sized equipment with Olympic bar lifting racks and the like. There are mirrors along all the walls and of course a great sound system so you can really get that same feel as you would in a fitness club — except you're the only customer!

“On our gym door we had a quote inscribed that reads “only the disciplined are free.” It's kind of our mantra because we believe if someone is disciplined enough in an area of their life and does what it takes to succeed in that area, and then it buys them freedom. If we are disciplined in our habits, then our habits make us free to live any way we want. Habits either serve as a great friend or terrible foe, but in the end, we all get to choose.

“The thing I love best about our house is that when people come over, although they are impressed and wowed by its features and size, they are most of all able to relax and feel like they are home. We are proud to have our home here and so happy to showcase the integrity of workmanship and talent that is here right in Nova Scotia — under our noses for all to enjoy. It’s a great place to raise a family because it’s the perfect blend of city and community and we look forward to many more years in this house of ours.”

So, there you have it folks. Regular peeps, makin’ it big. You just never know.....

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