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Panoramic Panache

Suzy Engle's Grand Ridge home has room, with a view

By Beth Anne Piehl
Photography by G. Randall Goss

Suzy Engle was just a youngster when she first set foot on the ridge atop her parents' 45-acre parcel east of Petoskey, climbing the rugged land with her dad to the highest spot where it opened into a sweeping, panoramic view of Little Traverse Bay.

Though her dad, George Payne, was born and raised in Petoskey, Engle grew up downstate. She looked forward to their frequent trips to Petoskey in the winters and summers and longed to live up North.

"I used to ask my dad all the time if we could move up here," said Engle, "and he'd say, 'Some day.'"

Her "some day" came, and her picturesque property and home in Grand Ridge, off Country Club Road, sit at the peak of the rolling terrain that has been in her family since 1882.

On a foyer wall, she's framed the original deed when the land was turned over from local Native Americans to her grandfather, a piece of history and artwork combined.

Engle's father and mother, Marye Kaye, have passed away and didn't get a chance to see how their daughter is continuing the legacy, how she took a favored family spot and blended a stunning home into the surrounding nature in effortless fashion.

"My main goal," Engle said, "was to create an environment that felt natural."

For many years, Engle has kept a picture of a little patch of bright blue Little Traverse Bay in her wallet. When



she moved to Northern Michigan from Washington, D.C., upon her home's completion in June 2007, she secured that view and set out with a new vision for the entire 45 acres.

Named Grand Ridge, Engle partnered with area builder Phil Duran to develop the large tract of family land into a subdivision with 20 lots amid plentiful forestland and 9.5 acres of natural trails winding through the landscape.



Hers is an extraordinary home in an extraordinary setting, near to town and yet still a sanctuary, frequented by wildlife like turkeys and deer. Even passing hawks on this day are impressive at eye-level, given the height of the property above the lake.

“I did not want to compromise the beauty of this property,” Engle reiterated. “This property is so naturally beautiful. It’s like being on top of the world.”

The inside of the home complements the outside, by taking into consideration the flow of the land and the natural colors that are the backdrop behind dozens of windows and doors. Wide-width boards of knotty alder wood grace the floors, and 8-foot-tall clear alder doors create dramatic light in the open and airy home. The kitchen was designed with a generous, bi-level black walnut island in the center, and a quaint sunroom offers a serene space for sipping coffee and taking in the views.

Using color swatches from Restoration Hardware, Engle has created custom rooms with coordinating bedding, furniture, towels and wall color. The master suite is a palette of pale, soft blue, cream and tan, and the guest rooms are subtle shades of green and creamy neutral. One guest rooms even has a charming, small balcony with a simple round table and chairs, tucked into the trees and providing another peek at the Bay.

“That’s part of thinking of your guests,” said William Santos, co-owner of Monarch, downtown Petoskey, a commercial florist and interior designer and friend of Engle’s. “It’s good to give your guests that personal space.”



It’s not hard for Suzy Engle to make friends, with an ambitious attitude and easy laugh. For the photo shoot of her home, she was the consummate hostess, ensuring everything was well-planned and creatively cohesive room to room.

It’s her personal style to create a warm and inviting home, whether for a magazine staff or a dinner party of close friends. Duran, her partner in working the land into comfortable home layouts, also noted Engle’s pervasive enthusiasm.

“She came to me and asked me to do something unconventional,” Duran said. “That’s what has made this project neat for me — it involves her family going back over 100 years. She has a really deep attachment to this property. It’s more than just your conventional building project.”

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Rain Chains

Rain chains replace gutters on the home's exterior.

Harvest gold

Homeowner: Suzy Engle

Location: Grand Ridge, off Country Club Road, Petoskey

Cornucopia of space: 4 bedrooms, 4 1/2 baths, three finished levels, 5,500 square feet approximately, 2.29-acre lot

Builder: Phil Duran Building and Development, also Engle's partner in developing Grand Ridge

Architect: Fred Ball, Harbor Springs

Interior design and décor: Monarch and Davenport Gallery, downtown Petoskey

Landscaping: Susan Letts Landscape Design, Harbor Springs

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