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A Modern Rustic Masterpiece

STORY Peter W. Rusland **PHOTOS** Andrew Leong



A Feeling of History

Gaylord and Helma Stewart live an indoor-outdoor lifestyle at their custom-built home off Lake Roads, a stone's throw from Quamichan Lake in North Cowichan.

When they're not tending their two-acre spread on Woodland Drive, the couple can likely be found on the comfortable lanai facing their landscaped yard boasting a gurgling pond and towering trees loaded with birds.

That takes nothing away from the Stewarts' spaciouly rustic 3,000-square-foot abode commissioned from Cowichan's noted David Coulson Design.

Anyone who knows Coulson will tell you he's a volcano of creative home ideas.

That's just fine with open-minded folks such as retired lawyer Gaylord,

and former Duncan summer festival organizer Helma.

They incorporated Coulson's cool innovations — subtle and obvious — built by local tradespeople into the place they first occupied in 2009.

From geothermal heating and cooling, lifetime metal roofing, surrounding verandas, and extra-wide roof overhangs to a built-in kitchen-compost trap and self-assisted drawers, the Stewarts are happy campers. They're content enough not to really care if their home — on the market for \$1.5 million — ever sells.

"It won't sell; it's too much," Helma said of their asking price.

She admitted they want to sell their place to like-minded people who appreciate its unique attention to detail.

That includes warmly impressive

support beams, floors, wall paneling and book shelving made of wood from fir trees felled on the property that was once farmed by Gaylord's grandfather, Gaylard Hadwen.

"It's amazing what you can do, but the wood has to be dried just right," Helma said of their knot-free flooring. That soothing wood lends their tall-ceiling, two-bedroom home an airy, organic ambience.

There's also a feeling of history seen in the Stewart family crest — carved from yew by the late master-artist Simon Charlie — plus many artworks dotting the walls.

Those include pieces that graced nearby Amblecote Estate, Gaylord's family's former holly farm fronting Quamichan Lake, where he was raised.

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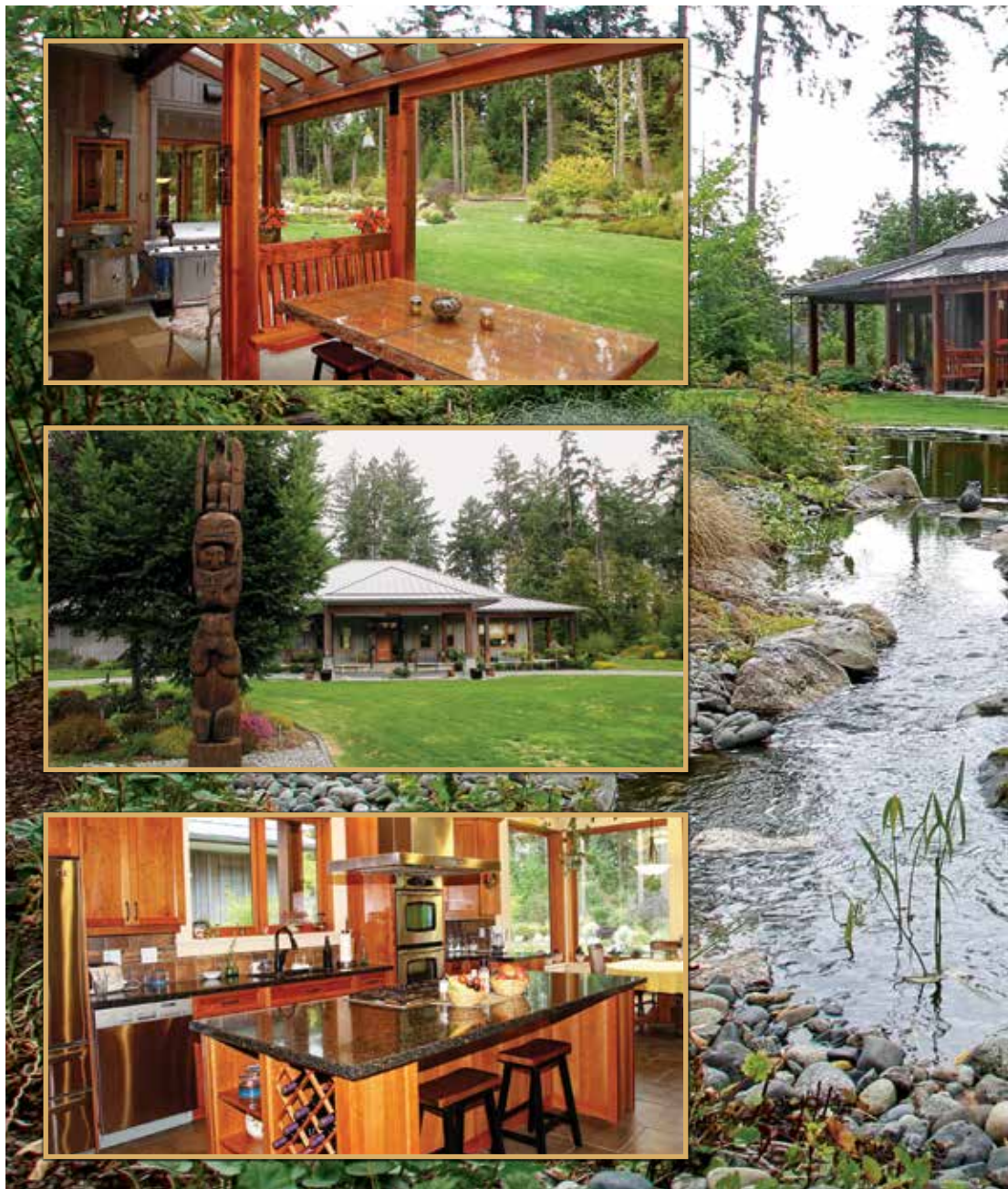
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The couple moved to North Cowichan from Campbell River in 1986, and built a home next to the site of their current abode on Woodland Drive.

By the early '90s, they shifted to Cottage Farm, that's part of Amblecote Estate, to run its holly farm. They occupied historic Amblecote in 2007.

But the sprawling, work-intensive property prompted the couple to sell Amblecote to Victoria lawyer Richard Taylor in 2009.

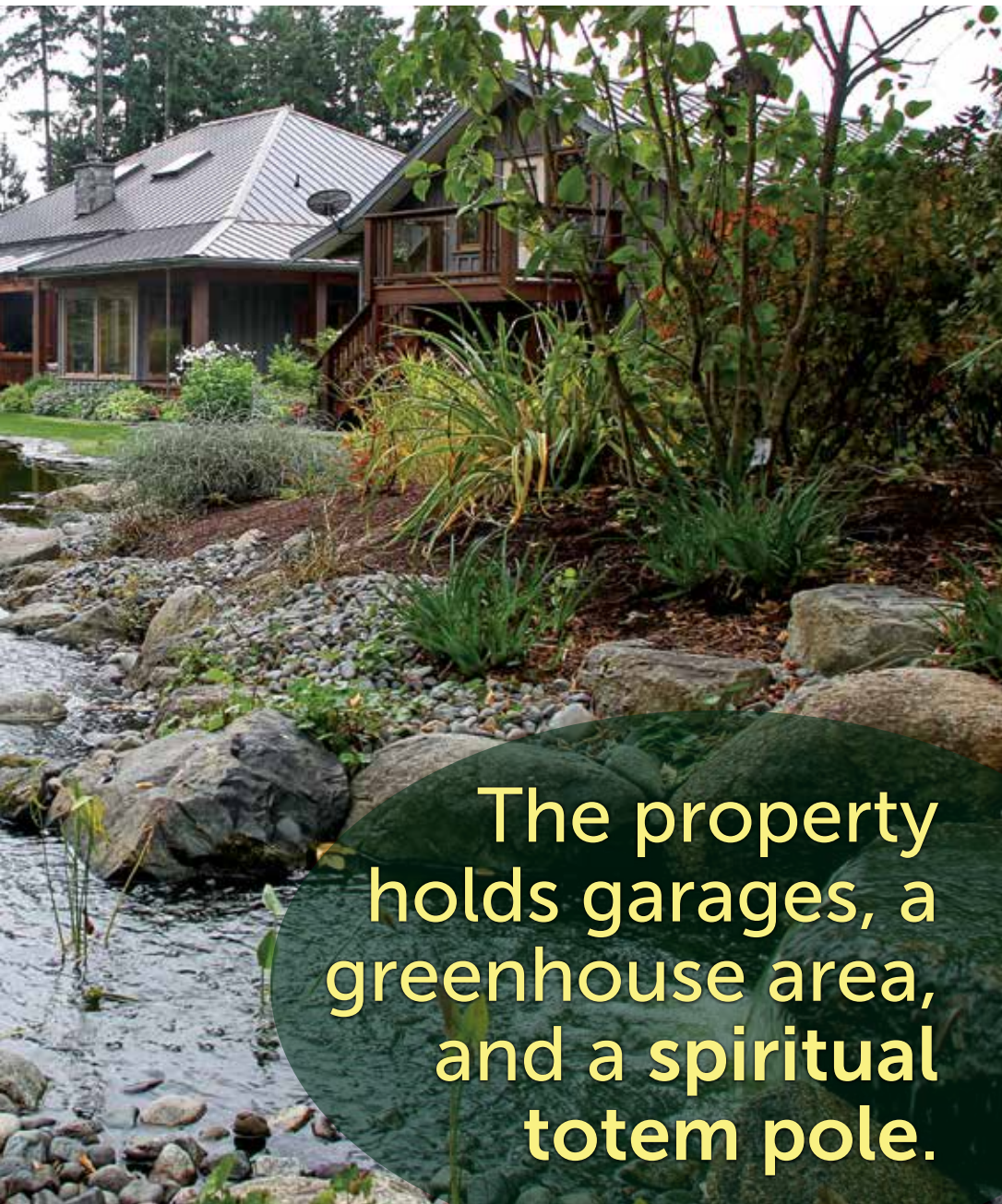
So they set their sights on retirement acreage contained in Gaylord's family estate across Lakes Road.

The Stewarts were familiar with Coulson's reputation for quality work and ergonomic designs. They weren't disappointed in the results.

"As soon as I saw what Dave built in Victoria, I knew he was the one to get," Gaylord said.

The pair spends much of the winter in Mexico, where they and fellow Rotarians help renovate schools, and provide other amenities for struggling folks in rural Nayarit State.

Once back home, the Stewarts' sheltered lanai — complete with a massive fir-plank dining table — reflects the laid-back,



The property holds garages, a greenhouse area, and a spiritual totem pole.

shady lifestyle enjoyed by Mexicans and Hawaiians alike.

“Everyone had a lanai in Hawaii,” Gaylord fondly remembered of visiting a former client living in the 50th American state.

“It was a pleasant place to sit. Duncan homes could make more use of lanais, but you have to site it right; it needs an architect.”

The Stewarts’ clever kitchen was designed and built by Keith Bercier of KWB Construction.

The cherry-wood, self-closing drawers “are quite amazing,” stated German-born

Helma, former owner of Duncan’s Cinderella clothing store.

Their kitchen also boasts bacteria-proof, quartz-based silestone counters.

The Stewarts’ property holds garages (one with an upstairs apartment), plus a greenhouse area amid deer-proofed landscaping — and a spiritual totem pole commanding the front lawn.

Surrounding woods give the couple a nearness to nature.

“We’ve never had a bear come around,” a relieved Gaylord said.



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