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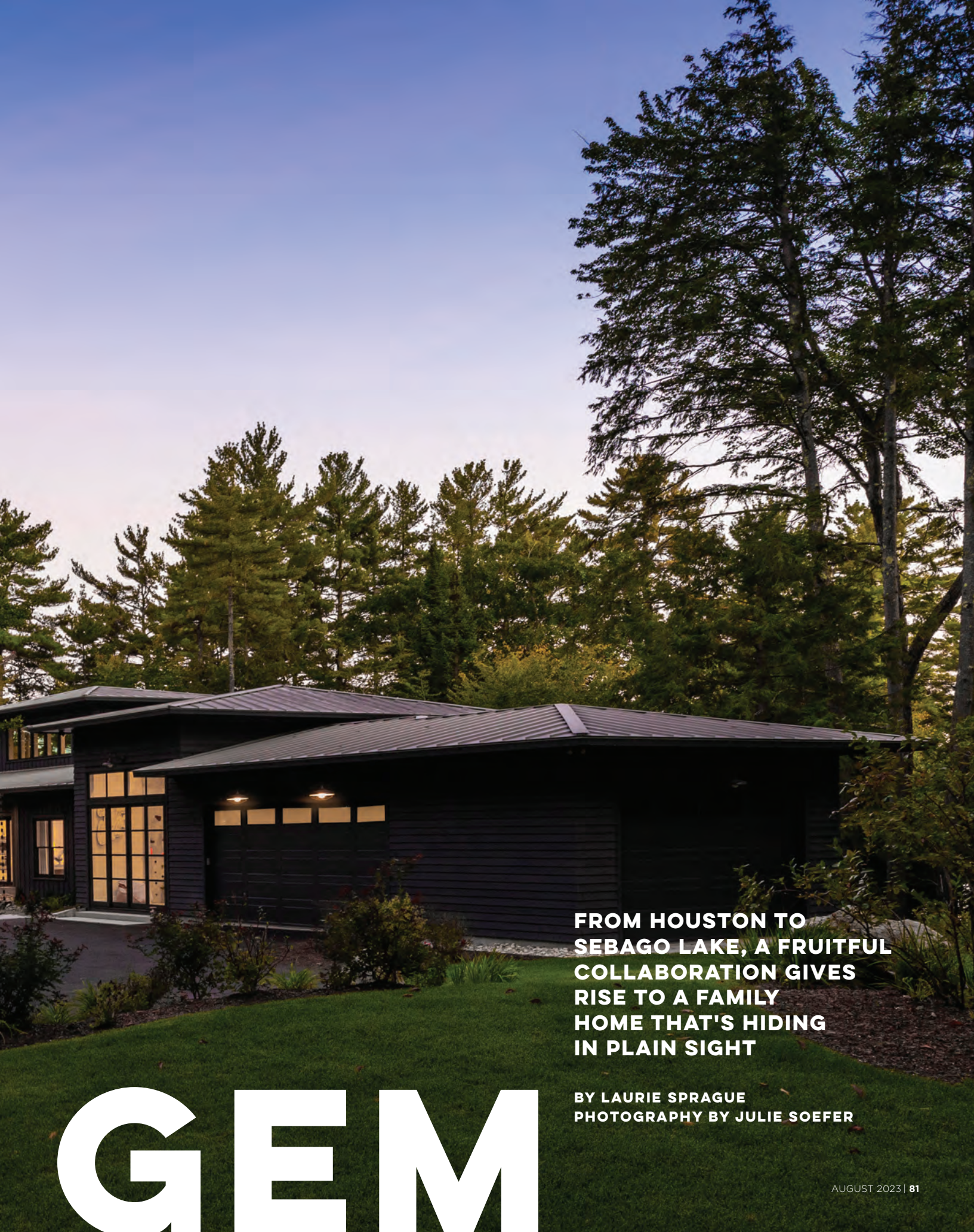
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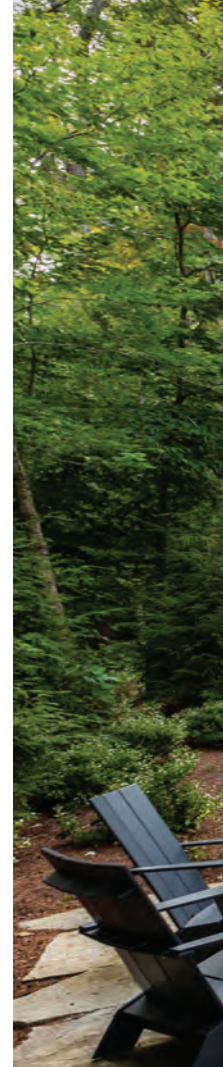
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**FROM HOUSTON TO
SEBAGO LAKE, A FRUITFUL
COLLABORATION GIVES
RISE TO A FAMILY
HOME THAT'S HIDING
IN PLAIN SIGHT**

**BY LAURIE SPRAGUE
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JULIE SOEFER**

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ever underestimate the power of a heartfelt letter. After renting in the Jordan Bay area of Sebago Lake for several years, the homeowners suddenly found the perfect home for their young family in early 2019. But there were three other bidders for the property, including a friend of the owners, so the wife—who was born and raised in Maine and has spent all of her summers around Sebago Lake—decided to write to the sellers, explaining why this home, with its great bones and the unique way it faces the water, would be the perfect spot for her family.

“I have memories of being a kid, going through the locks to get from Sebago Lake to Long Lake and stopping at little places for ice cream and sandwiches,” she says, adding that she still has a lot of extended family nearby. “Every year, when we rented a place, we would have

a big family reunion. We’d invite both sides of the family, cousins, and high school friends, and hire someone to play guitar. We’d just hang out and have a good old-fashioned lobster bake on the lake.” Her genuine love of the area, and the home, won over the sellers, who told her that her letter warmed their hearts and they wanted her family to have that same formative experience there. Their bid was accepted, and the purchase was completed in June 2019.

Initially, the couple, who were based in Houston, thought they might simply install a new kitchen and make a few relatively minor updates to the home. But once they began talking with Ken Newberry of Houston-based Newberry Architecture, whom they had worked with previously, the scope began to expand. The couple also hired Jared Prentiss of Knickerbocker Group to



oversee the build locally. Following a site visit and more conversations with Newberry, the project grew into a complete remodel plus a new garage.

The three principal parties—the homeowners, Newberry, and Prentiss—quickly got to work, with Prentiss acting as the on-site manager to help source local craftspeople and resources that could bring Newberry’s plans to life. “We’re here to provide architects with solutions,” he explains. The wife also worked very closely with Newberry to create a summerhouse that’s kid-friendly but elegant. “She gave us all the details of what they wanted, and we made it work in the design,” says Newberry.

The result is a 6,850-square-foot, six-bedroom, six-and-a-half bath Prairie-style home with low sloped roofs and large overhangs that features contemporary touches. The biggest

updates: opening up the main-floor living area and adding a new kitchen as well as a lakefront covered porch. They also converted what had been a large two-car garage and extra-tall RV garage, where a previous owner had worked on his boats, into bedrooms and a playroom for their daughters. But one of the biggest and most challenging feats involved transforming what was originally a two-story screened porch and raising the roof to create a lake-level guest bedroom, a dining room with water views, and a private office on the top floor.

Remarkably, all the cabinetry and millwork for the home was designed and built in Houston. “I love cabinetry. I love designing the interiors of the drawers,” says the wife. “In some respects, it was actually easier [doing it in Houston] because of course we were

Nestled into a discrete property on Jordan Bay, the home (opposite) was renovated to make the most of its lakeside location.

The family-friendly outdoor spaces (above) include a fire pit, made of native stone, that was designed by Jared Prentiss of Knickerbocker Group, Embers Stove Shop, and stonemason Isaac Labbe. The outdoor kitchen was designed by Newberry Architecture.



living there, and I could continually pop over to Felix Chavez Jr.'s wood working shop, Chavez Carpentry, go over the designs, and tweak things while they were in Houston. Then he, his father, and his brother trucked it all up to Maine and installed it."

Today, the wife is thrilled with what she refers to as her new home's "soft" midcentury sensibility, and she recognized this as a perfect opportunity to experiment with color and shapes. "Every room has its own vibe," she says, yet the major themes in the home's design included adding more glass (both as windows and as design elements) and bringing the outside in.

The room that most clearly embodies that ethos is the new dining room, which took over the former screened porch space and now looks out onto the lake and surrounding landscape. One wall of built-in cabinetry was lacquered in a shade of green that reflects the light, creating a feeling

of being immersed in the forest. The room also features a coffee bar, which is hidden behind a mirror that can be raised and lowered, a nod to the husband, who's a coffee aficionado. Above the dining room sits the husband's favorite space, an office with 360-degree views. The roof of the original "tower" needed to be raised by about three feet to accommodate the new third story.

One of the most surprising things about the original house was that it didn't take optimal advantage of its lakefront setting. A key remedy was the addition of a porch just off the main living area that features a glass balcony and retractable Lutron screens that can be deployed as needed to keep mosquitos away. "The porch is where I meet my husband or my parents or my sister every morning, depending on who's visiting, with a cup of coffee to hang out," says the wife. "I think [adding it] was one of the best things that could

The glass staircase surrounds (above) were designed by Prentiss to add to the open, airy atmosphere inside the home. Just below it, a Marcantonio Fillicudi Cactus Chair from 1stDibs and Janus et Cie side table sit in front of a painting by Dolan Geiman.

The ground-level bar's Prohibition-era vibe was inspired by a photo that the wife pinned to Pinterest many years ago. It features a figured, live-edge oak slab, with mitered waterfall legs and top (opposite, top).

One of the key changes Newberry Architecture made when remodeling the home was adding to and expanding the existing lakefront windows, enhancing the natural light in the interior spaces and creating a greater connection with the scenery just outside (opposite, bottom).







have happened to the house; it really balanced it."

On the other side of the house, in what had been the original garage spaces, they created two en suite bedrooms for their young daughters, as well as a playroom complete with a climbing wall and a pink neon sign that reads, "All you need is love." "There are always five or six kids lying all over that space, watching a movie in the afternoon if it's raining or if they've been out in the sun all day and they need to take a little break," says the wife.

The primary bedroom, which was updated with larger, floor-to-ceiling windows that offer clear sight lines to the lake and surrounding trees, is another favorite spot in the home for the wife. "It's just so airy and light, and every time I walk into that room it feels like there's fresh new air; it's so nice in there," she says.

Another way the couple took better advantage of their setting: they expanded and embellished the outdoor spaces to create an even more

(Opposite, clockwise from top left:) The new third-story office provides 360-degree views of the property. A wall of custom cabinets in the dining room—lacquered in a specific shade of green created by Prentiss and the wife—also features a coffee bar. The room is anchored by a custom table topped with American walnut that was designed by Prentiss and built by Dave Fields. Stonemason Isaac Labbe extended the living room fireplace (and a similar one just below it, on the ground level) by two-and-a-half feet, using granite sourced from the same quarry as the original ones.

A playroom with a custom climbing wall (above), designed and built by Cort Gariepy, was added in the space that used to serve as RV and boat storage. The dramatic main floor powder room (left) features an antique gray limestone Milano sink and Arteriors' Callan mirror, as well as custom cabinetry by Chavez Carpentry in Houston.





organic connection with the lake. They also added a gas-fueled firepit, an outdoor kitchen, and paths to the water. When it came to the home's exterior, the homeowners chose to paint it a dark, almost-black shade—Iron Ore by Sherwin-Williams—so it would disappear into the natural landscape. “When you're on the lake, you can see it if you're about 20 or 30 yards from the shoreline. As soon as you start pulling back, the house simply disappears,” says Newberry. “I'm pretty sure that at 50 yards you cannot see the house at all.”

After getting through the early COVID-related shutdowns and supply-chain issues, the home was finally ready for the family to move in by July 2021, just as they were also moving from Houston to Switzerland for the husband's work. Now, two years later, the family is returning to Houston, and

they're excited to be able to spend more time at their beautiful lakeside retreat. “We wanted it to be perfect,” says the wife, “because this home is really supposed to be our forever home, one that we hope our girls will share with their families one day.”

And, as she points out, the end result is a genuine collaboration—among her and her husband and Newberry and Knickerbocker, of course, but it goes well beyond that, too. “This house is just so special because in every corner of it I see a piece of Jared, a piece of Ken, a piece of my friend Mary, whose handwriting was used for the neon sign in the playroom, and of Cort, who built the entire rock-climbing wall by hand, and on and on,” she says. “Everyone put so much love and care into this house, and I feel like the house connects with all of them. I think that's why it always feels so good to walk into it.” **MH+D**

(Opposite, clockwise from top) The serene, light-filled primary bedroom clearly benefits from its new floor-to-ceiling windows. In the primary bath the matte-finish, volcanic limestone Vetralla tub by Victoria and Albert looks out on the lake. The custom cabinetry in the primary bath was designed and built by Feliz Chavez, Jr.

The home (above) is finished with rough-hewn red cedar board and batten siding, and painted in a dark, almost-black exterior shade that allows it to blend into the surrounding landscape. A new porch was added on the main level, boasting a western red hemlock ceiling and retractable mosquito screens.