

GREAT LAKE STORY

CHAPTER ONE: THE DREAM



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You have to know that the first time we saw The Property, it was pouring rain, then drizzling. I ruined new sandals walking the lot while splatters of wet ground and grass stained the backs of my slacks.

But looking over this windswept bluff's edge at open beach for miles – absorbed by the sound of freshwater surf against pebbled, packed sand; inhaling that clarifying Great Lake air, and still enthused by the recent news we could expect our first grandchild in February – it didn't matter.

As Jim and I stood for the first time on this land, Lot 2 at The Boardwalk in South Haven, we recognized it.

"Years ago," builder David C. Bos shared with us later, "I was struck by the meaning of 'home' in an article. It's different for each person, based on their own myriad of experiences. But it's that sense of belonging you just get in a certain place, that feeling you've arrived."

This was our home place.

And the next time I visited Our Property with two friends, on a glorious day, I couldn't help it. I cried.

BEGINNINGS

Jim and I both grew up in South Bend, Indiana, children of hard-working, blue-collar families with never enough resources for "real" vacations, so we'd each spent a lot of time playing in places like Warren Dunes State Park in Sawyer or Silver Beach in St. Joseph. As we began to date late in our senior year of high school, then college – we'd known each other since kindergarten – we camped along the coast with friends. And after we married, we continued the tradition of taking our own two daughters to Southwest Michigan's shore, where we'd rent

properties for a week or two.

One day, we routinely dreamed out loud to each other, over those years of loving water and dunes, let's build a home on Lake Michigan, and live there.

But dreams, like tides, follow paths of their own.

With fortitude, Jim's career as an attorney for Caterpillar took wing, carrying us through four home building excursions and residency, for a while, in England. We progressed through ownership of one condominium, then another, in New Buffalo – closer still to the water's edge – though neither really felt like home.

Our married daughters, however, moved and settled happily in Chicago. These tides of change – combined with Jim's increasingly hectic schedule, which left us precious little time together – rekindled our dream: We began to look with earnest for Our Place on the Great Lake.

THE BOARDWALK

What shapes our perspective of home and place?

"What is today P.J. Hoffmaster State Park used to just be a quiet local park," reflected our builder, David, who grew up in Spring Lake. "After I'd get done with work, as a college kid, I'd walk into the dunes overlooking Lake Michigan with a book and sit. There was absolutely nobody else around for hours."

Since then, David said, he has always carried with him that experience of being transported into complete relaxation. "It's something we want residents here to feel when they arrive," he noted, "when they turn up around either of Lantern Watch's two bends and find this land breaking open to the horizon, to this enormous vista of Lake Michigan."

It wasn't our initial goal to live in a community; we envisioned more seclusion. But the way we physically and mentally just changed gears at The Boardwalk's entrance – so inherently, yet so intentionally set apart, its great attention to every detail so apparent – urged us to view our search differently.

This high sweep of scenic coastal land, we were told by Bos Homes' engaging sales agent, Meghan, was the perfect place to build 50 homes. "That's why," she said, "there will only be 36."

We loved the architecture – vaguely reminiscent of the East Coast's shingle and stone seaside retreats, but uniquely updated with intriguing rooflines and multiple white columned porches. With ample space between, these lakeshore homes rose in a palette of cottage hues, each inspiring thoughts of shared lemonade, holiday celebrations and grandchildren's birthdays.

Originally the bluff from which this open development had been so smartly nurtured had steeped almost entirely straight up off Lake Michigan's shore. Developer as well as builder, David C. Bos Homes pushed the bluff back and sculpted it into three undulating waves, creating a seemingly endless stretch of serene beach for the community's signature boardwalk.

It also formed the first of three unobtrusively landscaped tiers, allowing each home on The Boardwalk's two streets – Water's Edge and Lantern Watch – unhindered sunset views.

Fringed by rustling dune grass and hardwoods we could already envision ignited come fall, and centered by an elegant path that flowed from a neighborhood pool down through an inviting fire pit and beyond to that magnetic stretch of sand and surf, The Boardwalk did more than cause us to take pause.

We wanted to stay.

Jim and Susan Buda's Great Lake Story continues in the next issue of Michigan BLUE. To learn more about those businesses making this dream home a reality, visit www.mibluemag.com.