



Second Act

An almost-retired engineer builds a Halton Hills dream home for his blended family

BY SIRI AGRELL

THROUGHOUT MICHAEL PEARSON'S globetrotting career engineering steam turbines for power plants, he battled with one inherent design conundrum. "Simplicity was always my goal," he says. "But that's hard to achieve in a complex system without creating weaknesses."

Striking that balance became a personal imperative in 2003, when Pearson, a 71-year-old British expat, broke ground on his dream home, a sprawling study in functional minimalism built into the Niagara Escarpment in Halton Hills. He has six grown children from previous marriages, and his wife, Angela, has three. One lives with them full-time, three are in university and use the house as home base, and there are five grandchildren (so far). "We needed to accommodate

our huge extended family—and their progeny," says Pearson.

Architect Chris Simmonds designed an open, casual space for family living: a 5,000-square-foot home with floor-to-ceiling windows, unimpeded views of the surrounding landscape, louvred porches and a pagoda-like gazebo—a nod to the 11 years Pearson spent working in Hong Kong. Pearson's main objective was that the house flow seamlessly from the topography. So Simmonds echoed the raw materials and natural lines of the area with bands of brick and stone to look like sedimentary rock strata. Cedar siding and copper cladding give the exterior an earthy tone. The result looks as though it sprang fully formed from the Escarpment.



1. The floor-to-ceiling **glass panes** have an invisible metallic oxide coating that absorbs or reflects light to regulate the house's temperature.

2. The **chairs** are by Mitchell Gold and Bob Williams.

3. One of Pearson's daughters, a music student at McMaster, plays the Yamaha grand **piano**. Pearson is also learning to play.

4. The limited edition **print**, *Affinity of Dawn*, is by the American artist Ford Smith. The canvas was hand-embellished by the artist to replicate some of the texture and colour of the original

painting. Pearson found it at a gallery in nearby Georgetown.

5. The charcoal ultra-suede **sofas** were sourced by interior designer Susan Polak. They're Colexion Perez, from Fluid Living at Bathurst and Niagara.

6. A layer of light-grey **granite** wraps around the fireplace from the living room into the dining room, creating the illusion that it is one huge block of stone. This particular piece was chosen because it reminds Pearson of Chinese water-colour paintings.

7. There is a tall, shallow **alcove** built into the chimney for displaying artwork. Simmonds also created alcoves on the opposite wall to display sculptural works, including a stainless steel steam turbine blade Pearson designed.

8. Pearson collects **blown glass sculptures** by the Toronto artist Jeff Goodman.

9. Another of Pearson's daughters gave him this set of three **vases**. The colours remind him of the landscape of the Lake District in northwest England, where she lives.

10. The custom-made cherry and walnut **cabinet** is filled with collectables that belong to Pearson's wife, Angela, whose late husband was an antiques dealer.

11. The subtle **curves** of the sunken living room were designed to correspond with the lines of the grand piano.

12. The dining room **rug** is a custom abstract floral design made in Nepal from New Zealand wool.

13. The mahogany and bronze Thai-style **sideboard** was also sourced by interior designer Susan Polak.

14. *On the Rocks*, a second **painting** by Smith, decorates the dining room.

15. Another Jeff Goodman **sculpture**.

