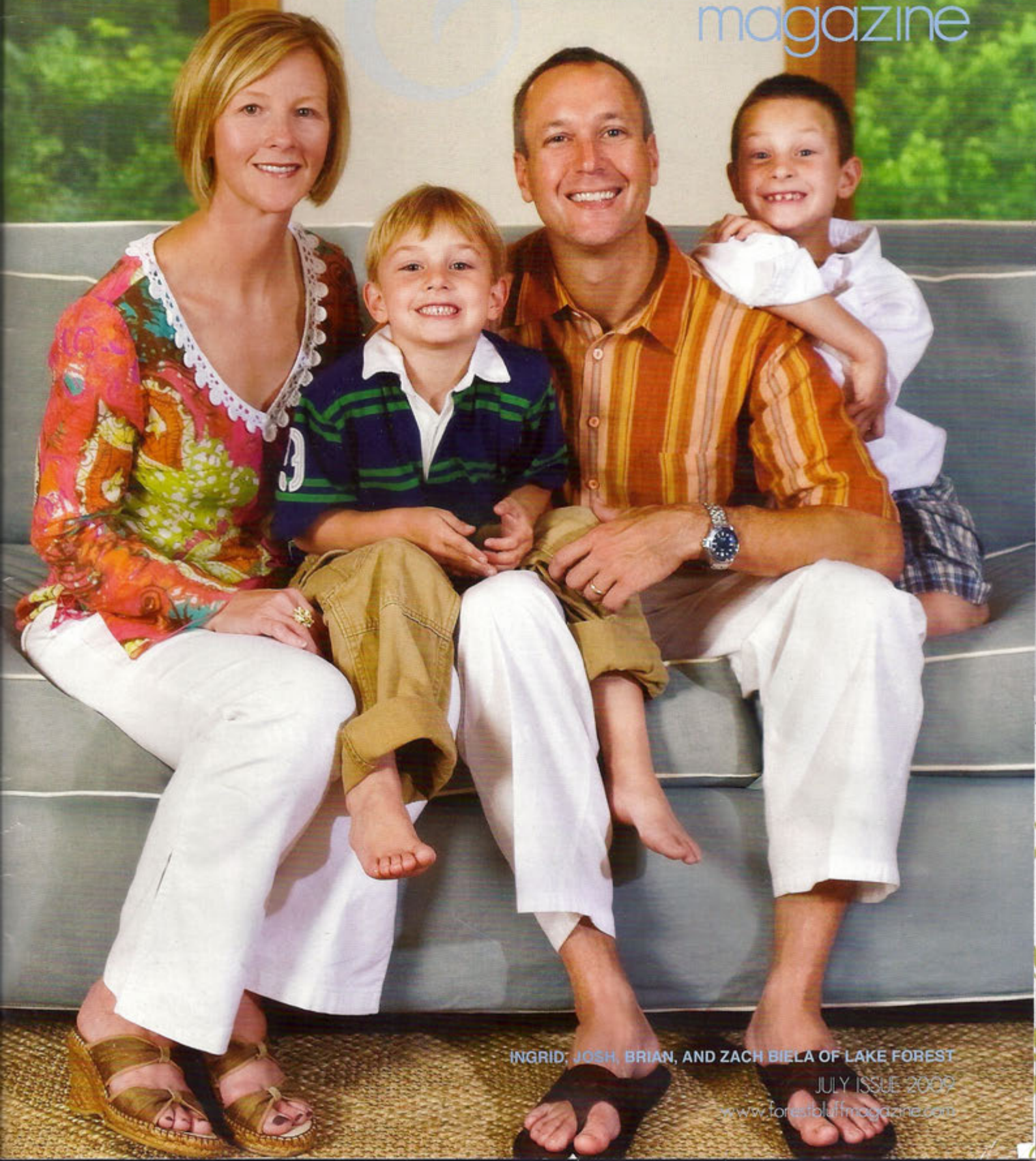


CELEBRATING OUR EIGHT YEAR ANNIVERSARY!

# Forest Bluff

magazine



INGRID, JOSH, BRIAN, AND ZACH BIELA OF LAKE FOREST

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# The Tree House

Driving down Green Bay Road in Lake Forest, just opposite the School of Saint Mary, you will find the source of much speculation and community interest. Visible through the hedges that line the street, stands a house unlike any other in the world. When driving past it, the immediate instinct is to slow down to try and get a better look.

Commonly referred to as "the tree house," the Glade House is an architectural phenomenon. The American Institute of Architects recognized it as such earlier this year when it was awarded a National Housing Award and was featured in *The Wall Street Journal*. It was named for the glade on which it stands, which was designed at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by the renowned landscaper Frederick Law Olmstead. The first floor consists exclusively of a garage and a foyer, which stand on either side of a driveway that wraps through the house underneath the second floor. This means you can move from the front of the house to the back of the house by essentially driving through the first floor. The second floor holds the majority of the living space: living

room, dining room, kitchen, master bedroom, and deck. The third floor runs perpendicular to the rest of the house and seems to float slightly above the rest of the structure, apparently standing on stilts. Seeing the Glade House for the first time inspires a practically childlike wonder within you, but that makes sense. How often in adulthood do you get to discover something completely new?

"People seem to have this impression that the inside must be stark. But when you're inside, it's so comfortable and warm. And this property is just phenomenal," says Brian Biela, who resides in the Glade House with his wife, Ingrid, and their two boys, Zach and Josh.

Every room of their home is flooded with cozy, natural light during the day from the gallery of windows cascading down the east and west walls, and supplemented by clerestory windows where the walls meet the ceiling. Everywhere you turn, you see the brilliant green foliage of the trees that surround the Glade House, lending the home a feeling of relaxing rural seclusion while being only steps from downtown Lake Forest. The way that Ingrid and

Brian have designed the furnishings and layout inside of their spacious contemporary home creates a cross between a stylish condo in the city and a comfortable family home. "The house is very lofty. It's the best of both worlds. It feels very much like a city house, yet we're in the comfort of the suburbs," says Ingrid. This dichotomy is an apt summation of a home that was built to marry the divergent schools of architecture: the classical and the modern.

The Glade House was originally designed by notable contemporary architect Rick Phillips to meet the needs of his senior mother, Kay Bennett. Her age championed the concept of the single floor living space, but her desire to enjoy the views of the beautiful property necessitated that it all reside on the second floor. The two bedrooms and bathrooms on the third floor were created to be the ideal guest rooms. The innovation of having the driveway curve underneath the house was created to allow her to move from the car to the front door in the span of three steps.

Kay is the daughter-in-law of Edward H. Bennett, who was the co-author of the 1909 *Plan of*



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN HUNNEMEDER

(ABOVE) RICK PHILLIPS IS THE DEVELOPER OF THE NEARBY DEERPATH FARM CONSERVATION COMMUNITY, AND EARLY PLANS FOR DEERPATH FARM WERE DONE IN CONJUNCTION WITH EDWARD BENNETT, JR.

(RIGHT) INTERIOR OF A DEERPATH FARM PHILLIPS-DESIGNED HOME, UTILIZING SIMILAR AESTHETICS APPLIED TO THE GLADE HOUSE.

*Chicago with Daniel Burnham.* The Glade House was built adjacent to the estate Bennett built for his own family. It was also on this property that his son, Edward Bennett, Jr., converted a barn into a manor home for himself and Kay. Rick was a teenager as he watched the barn transform into the stately home that his mother and stepfather would share, and it was in observing that transformation that Rick knew his future was in architecture. It makes perfect sense then, that the Glade House would be built there, next to the home that inspired Rick to realize his dream, on the property that Kay had grown to cherish.

The Glade House is also at the forefront of green living. "In a sense, [the house] is like a filter of light and air," says Rick. "Having the long side face both west and east, you open up one of those windows and then open a window upstairs and the breezes are just drawn through the house." By utilizing natural light, the energy consumption of the house is dramatically limited. The uncomplicated design made maximum use of minimal materials, and no trees were removed to make space for the residence. The Glade House also employs hydronic in-floor heating, the most energy efficient form of heating available.

"My mother was obviously very much a part of the modern mentality. Simple and elegant were her watchwords," says Rick. "We built [the Glade House] to make the most of its natural environment. Back when architects like Howard Van Doren Shaw were building summer homes in Lake Forest, their architectural value system promoted substance over style; quality of life was more important than appearance. We're harkening back to that value system by taking advantage of natural light, ventilation, and views."

It's that mentality that Rick is taking to new heights with his next project, Deerpath Farm. Located on Route 60, less than a mile west of I-94, rests a 200-acre conservation community on land originally acquired by Edward H. Bennett. Rick is now developing the site as an upscale residential community intended to exist in perfect harmony with the soothing, wooded environment that makes up the surrounding property. In order to infringe as little as possible on the natural environment, only 41 lots are available on which to build. Deerpath Farm presents the perfect opportunity to shift Lake Forest architecture back to the originality and substance that Rick has been longing for. **ENR**



PHOTOGRAPH BY KEN HUNNEMEDER



INTERIOR OF THE GLADE HOUSE. FEATURED IN *THE WALL STREET JOURNAL* AS A WINNER OF THE NATIONAL HOUSING AWARD, GIVEN BY THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS.