



The open and airy front porch is now a favourite gathering place for John and Jane Watson and their children Blythe, Hugh and Thomas (not pictured). **OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:** Inverhawk House, the Watsons' name for their renovated home, is etched in the transom above the front door.



A comfy oversize sofa has lots of room for the whole family to watch television. **LEFT:** Jane created a tiled space between the newel post and the front door after they repositioned the stairs. The landing used to go all the way to the wall.

Sister Act 2

STORY **MERRILYN PATTERSON** | PHOTOGRAPHY **JASON HARTOG**
FLOWERS **WR DESIGNS**

It's common in downtown Guelph to find homes that have been divided into apartments and multiple rooms to accommodate students from the university. When Jane and John Watson moved from Toronto with their young family, they took a chance and purchased one of those properties. *Continued on page 64*





Their neighbours not so lovingly referred to it as the “Animal House.” Stories are told about students jumping from second-floor windows into an above ground pool in the backyard, and the police were frequent visitors.

When the couple bought the house that was built in 1905, there were still three individual apartments remaining from the years that had seen the house once divided into five apartments with a total of 10

individual bedrooms between them. There was an addition to the back of the house that was sagging.

As the Watsons investigated, they found that the addition was built without permits, along with the secondary front porch that had been built in front of the original porch, which was also sagging.

They plucked up their courage, moved the family in and promptly tore down the back

of the house in what was going to be a slow 10-year restoration that would touch on every floor. The sagging addition was taken down and rebuilt and now serves as a “dreaming space,” with a window seat overlooking the backyard. It also functions as a mudroom, which cleverly incorporates a planning desk and home office space as well.

It was important to Jane and John as they started work on the house that they design a

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ABOVE: Jane Watson and Dr. Mary Peirson of ArtMed – sisters, home renovators par excellence, and business partners. **TOP RIGHT:** The built-in display case and cabinetry in the living room shows off Jane’s talent for design. **RIGHT:** Jane’s favourite chair has prime positioning in the dining room. A treasured gift from John on her birthday. **OPPOSITE:** Sliding doors between the living room and kitchen/dining area provide an easy flow for this family that loves to cook and hang out together.





comfortable place where creativity and music would be encouraged.

Jane insisted that the house need not be perfect, but perfectly comfortable for the family to interact and be together.

Jane has a couple of years of drafting and design experience in her background. She drew the plans for the built-in bookcases in the living room and designed and drew up specs for the front porch, master bedroom, rear addition and reading nook in the basement. She and John had the good fortune to establish a great relationship with **Jeff Geard of JCG Carpentry**, their general contractor, who made their paper dreams a reality. From the first bookcase to the completed kitchen, Jeff has been involved in almost every project the family has undertaken.

In June of 2015, a pipe in the kitchen wall and ceiling burst and the ceiling actually caved in, so the scene was set for the final dramatic stages of the restoration of the kitchen and second floor. The entire family moved into the last and only remaining apartment over the garage and ended their journey by naming the newly restored home *Inverhawk House*, devised from the combination of street names of Jane and John's childhood homes. The new name is proudly located in the transom above the front door of the house. *Continued on page 70*



ABOVE: Ample room around the island allows the family to cook together. **LEFT:** The addition to the kitchen includes a window seat with a backyard view. **OPPOSITE, TOP LEFT:** Cabinetry in a deep blue hue grounds the open kitchen/dining space. **BOTTOM LEFT:** The dining table is set for a fall family get together. **BOTTOM RIGHT:** A pretty blue powder room off the kitchen is easily accessible from the front porch and the backyard.

Family harmony is clearly a focus in this artfully designed main-floor living space. A picture gallery of precious family moments adorns the dining room wall.



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Jane explains that this is a house full of artists. Both John and Jane do voiceover work, television and theatre, and they also act in local theatre. Blythe, the youngest, is interested in fine arts, singing, and plays clarinet. Hugh plays the flute, is a vocalist, and is a budding philosopher. The eldest sibling, Thomas, plays trumpet and spent the better part of his summer in Stratford studying acting in the theatre intensive program. He's off to Ryerson to continue his studies in acting in the fall.

The rooms on the main floor offer an easy flow between the open concept kitchen/dining room and the living room. A huge island is the focal point of the kitchen, with ample space for all to participate in meal planning and preparation, which is something the family regularly enjoys.

The blue patterned chair in the dining room is from G.H. Johnson's Trading Company, a design shop in Toronto, and is Jane's favourite piece of furniture. She fell in love with it but didn't buy it because it seemed extravagant, but then John had it delivered to the house as a surprise birthday gift. In keeping with her mantra of comfort above all else, Jane and John ordered a huge sectional sofa for the living room from **Frederick's Furniture Gallery**. They knew that it had large proportions for the room, but they wanted a piece where the whole family could watch movies and television together comfortably.

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TOP: The master bedroom is a result of Jane's clever design work and practical use of space. **ABOVE LEFT:** The open-concept en suite is soothing yet funky with a mixture of modern cabinetry and vintage black-and-white floor tiles. **ABOVE RIGHT:** The master bedroom had no closets, so Jane designed a partial wall that doubles as a headboard and the entry to a "walk behind" closet.

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Upstairs, there are four bedrooms. Jane's vision for the master bathroom included a partial wall behind the bed to disguise a much-needed closet and an open three-piece bath with glass shower. Plumbing in the house was done by **Clear Choice Plumbing**.

The basement is reflective of Jane's ability to design space that is multifunctional and family friendly. The sitting room again has comfy seating to fit all family members and the board games are always at the ready. There's a small nook carved out from under the stairs that was originally used by Blythe to curl up and read. A keyboard waits for the musicians to gather, and a built-in desk for doing homework or checking business email completes the charming family room.

A large and organized laundry room that also stores costumes from plays gone by finishes the downstairs space.

The family uses the front porch, open and welcoming now, to eat al fresco breakfast, read, play games and to just kick back and be together. For a busy, artistic family, the time it took to transform Animal House to *Inverhawk House* is all but forgotten.

Jane and her sister, Mary, have strong values rooted in family; share a love of music and the arts, co-own a thriving business, and live in creatively beautiful homes. **OH**



TOP: The lower level echoes the comfy, family-friendly theme for the renovations with ample seating for family and friends. **LEFT:** There's a place to play music, and even a hideaway nook where kids can read and dream. **ABOVE:** Kids can hang out while parents catch up on emails and plan projects in this organized home office space.

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