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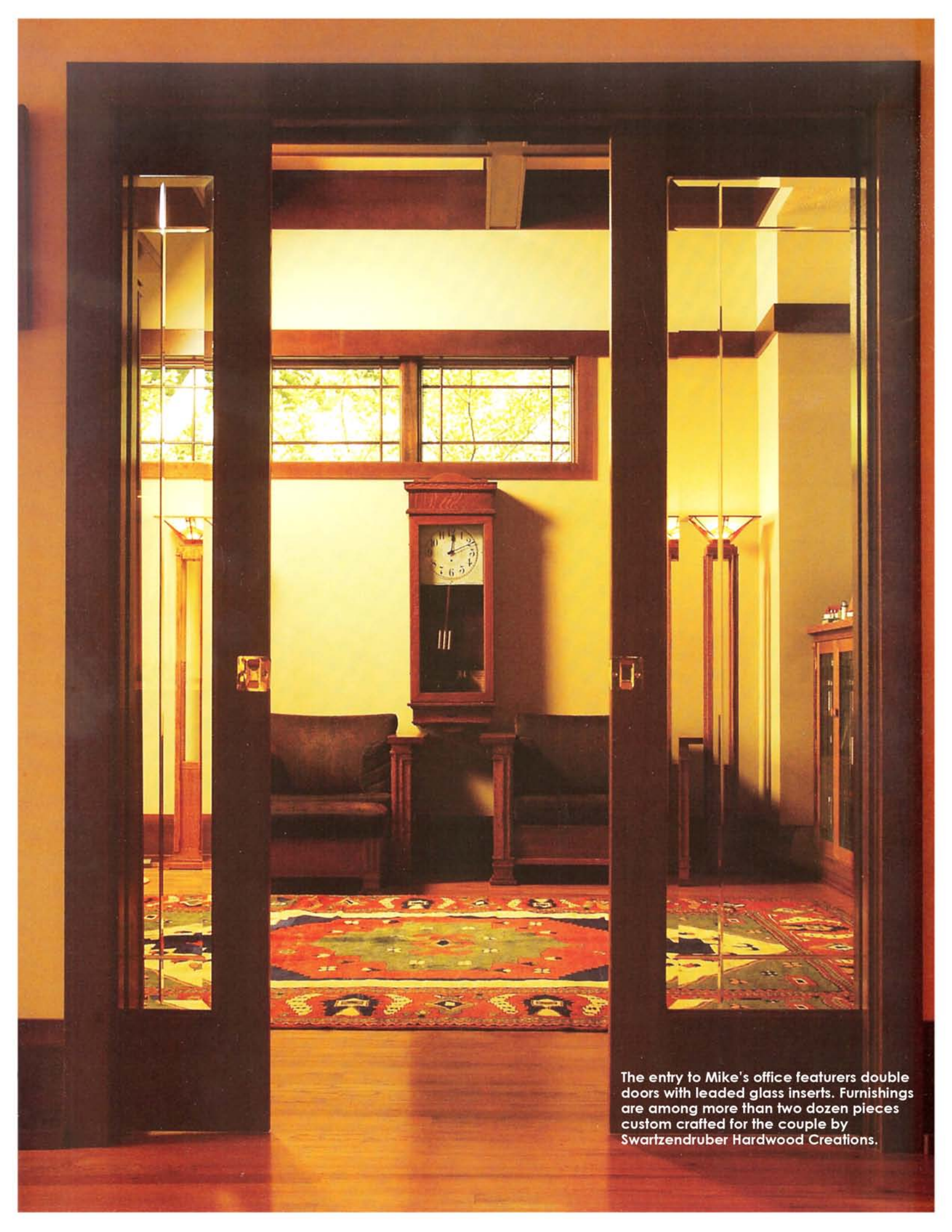
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VERA BRADLEY'S
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The entry to Mike's office features double doors with leaded glass inserts. Furnishings are among more than two dozen pieces custom crafted for the couple by Swartzendruber Hardwood Creations.

This article, "Wright at Home in Lake Setting," pages 66-69 plus mag. cover is from the Sept./ Oct. 2006 issue of Northern Indiana Lakes Magazine, 1415 W Coliseum Blvd, Fort Wayne, IN 46808, 260-484-0546, www.niLakes.com, article by Bruce Lehman, Shannon Brewer and CJ Woodring contributors. Photo updates by Mark Wyatt.

"Organic buildings are the strength and lightness of the spiders' spinning, buildings qualified by light, bred by native character to environment, married to the ground." ----Frank Lloyd Wright

WRIGHT AT HOME IN LAKE SETTING

BY BRUCE LEHMAN



MICHAEL AND REBECCA KUBACKI LONG ADMIRER THE ÜBER ARCHITECT'S WORKS. Thus, when planning their lakefront home, the couple worked with Warsaw architect Mark Wyatt in adhering to Wright's tenet.

And in 1999 the Kubacki's vision of a Prairie Style home "at the lake" became reality.

"We grew up in northern Indiana," Michael says. "One of my summer jobs was putting up piers in the lakes here, so I knew how nice the homes were. As adults living in the Chicago and Los Angeles areas, we got exposed to the Prairie style – as it is called in Chicago – and the "Craftsman" version of it on the Pasadena side of LA. It was fun to try to put that architecture into a lakefront context."

The Prairie Style flourished from 1900 to 1920. Originating in Chicago, it is one of the few styles indigenous to America. Although found in other regions, Prairie homes are especially exemplified in the Midwest.

By incorporating hallmarks – including wide, overhanging eaves, tall windows and masonry piers – architect Wyatt faithfully interpreted the style, designing not just a home for the couple, but a lifestyle space that integrates interiors and exteriors by de-emphasizing individual rooms.

The Kubackis' brick and stucco multilevel home overlooks an expansive view of Syracuse Lake and, true to its style, appears as a natural element in its environment. From the main floor, you can look up – three stories up – to an eight-foot-square stained glass skylight. Exterior elements include statues that are reproductions of Wright creations.



(Above) The open flow, leaded windows and dark wood are among many hallmarks of the Prairie style, which originated in Chicago. (Near) The family kitchen features a mural painted by a Wawasee High School student. The artwork is based on vintage posters of the south shore that were used to draw tourists to the lake area. (Right) The grounds boast several reproductions of Wright statues. This one, entitled "Sprite," is one of two that overlook Lake Syracuse at the rear of the home. The original "Sprite" was one of a series created by Wright for Midway Gardens in Chicago in 1913 and executed by Alfonso lanelli.



But the couple wanted more than their home design to reflect Wright's creativity: They next paid homage to the famous architect's spirit by working with Larion Swartzendruber of Swartzendruber Hardwood Creations to customize their furniture. Within each sleek line and shadowed crevice lies a nostalgic tribute to the famed architect's enduring creativity and unique style.

The couple discovered the artisan and his company when visiting The Old Bag Factory in Goshen. "We had heard of him and his good reputation," Michael says. "The idea of quality and custom design was what we wanted for the home. Plus, it's a local company and we wanted to do business that way."

Swartzendruber team members applied hands and hearts to the furniture, which is hewn from quarter-sawn oak and boasts hand-rubbed finishes.

Furnishings are intentionally showcased, their clean, symmetrical lines transforming each piece into a functional work of art. "The head designer was Gene Short, but all of our craftsmen worked on the Kubacki furniture," says Carol Simmons, Swartzendruber's sales and marketing coordinator. "In all, we created approximately 25 pieces for them."



A stunning view of Lake Syracuse greets guests at Mike and Rebecca Kubacki's Prairie Style home.

Each custom-crafted item features a small plaque with the Kubackis' name on it, a tribute to the one-of-a-kind status Swartzendruber bestows upon clients – and on the first-class creations.

The pieces – including sofas, tables, chairs and benches – emphasize geometric shapes and styling that complement architectural elements such as leaded windows, wainscoting, beamed ceilings, a tiled fireplace and Art Deco lighting. (Lighting fixtures are reproductions from Wright's Robie House in Chicago). Stained glass doors in bookcases and china cabinets echo the same design as featured in the skylight.

Displayed against a backdrop of gleaming hardwood floors and neutral walls, furnishings are punctuated by upholstery and accessories selected from a warm palette of yellows and reds. Oriental rugs throughout the house add a final punch.

Rebecca says the dining room table is especially unique, as are the high-backed dining room chairs. Living room benches were purposely designed low, she says, so as not to interfere with the lake view.

Custom heirlooms were important to the Kubackis, who have two children and are doting grandparents to little Bella. "It really

is solid heirloom quality," Rebecca says. "It's the kind of furniture that will be around a long time, so our children and grandchildren can enjoy it, too. And the craftsmen made every piece to fit the room it was going into, as well as the overall home."

Staying true to their affection for Wright was a must in every aspect of home detailing. "We worked to incorporate those things that complement the recreation of the Prairie school of design: doorknobs, lighting fixtures, sculptures that replicate Wright originals," Rebecca says. "All were details that mattered to us."

It also was a matter of quality for Michael, who is president of Lake City Bank and whose home den and office display unique pieces of Swartzendruber craftsmanship. "Wright's architectural style was so distinctive it is easy to forget that the houses were meant to flow naturally with their surrounding," he says. "I hope we accomplished that same theme with our home."

Self-expression and personal style go hand-in-hand with life in LAKES Country. Still frames of architectural history displayed against the backdrop of beautiful Lake Syracuse? For the Kubackis, it was clearly a matter of making the Wright choice.

Shannon Brewer and CJ Woodring contributed to this article.