

Hard To Beat + Blessed, Indeed



story + photos by Sue Pais

Many homes display wall décor reading words like, ‘Love. Family. Faith. Blessed.’

No such décor is needed at the lake home of Barney and Deb Niezer. Why? You *feel* these traits of goodness when welcomed through the front door.

It’s who they are individually, and as a couple.

Married for 47 years, with two daughters (Laura, Katie) and five grandchildren (Luke, Jude, Grace, Bernie, Rose), Barney and Deb genuinely *share life together*. They’ve supported one another’s professional journeys. They’re pals. And now? It’s about family time, and “being together,” Barney said. “And at the end of a day, enjoying a beautiful sunset and counting our blessings.”



The Niezer Lake Home Lake Wawasee



And blessings are plentiful, indeed. There is a partnership and bond that appears seamless, easy-flowing, and topped with some good-natured teasing and laughter.

Their motto? 'Work hard. Play hard.'

And work hard they have. Barney dedicated himself to a 44-year career in healthcare administration, and currently works part-time with Parkview Health. Deb began with various banks as a trust officer prior to joining her



- Near and dear to Deb's heart is this beautiful artwork above the fireplace, painted by a relative and artist in Idaho.
- The main living area reflects an open concept, with exceptional lake views.
- The Niezer's kitchen/living room/dining area are all beautifully designed to encourage comfortable gatherings in an exquisite space.
- This dining room furniture, and all furniture in the home, was purchased from Fairfield Galleries.



family business, where she served as COO for 27 years at AALCO Distributing. Today, she's happily enjoying her retirement.

She and Barney relish time with their immediate and extended families and friends—and when winter arrives, they enjoy Florida and additional travels. When not traveling or hosting family and friends, they're likely outdoors, or helping others. "We like to be active by walking, riding bikes, exercise, and golf," Barney said. "Our faith life is very important to us, as well, and we are active in the Catholic Church and several other charitable organizations." And when it



- *The kitchen is a chef's dream...and this family's favorite gathering spot. "We wanted the home to be conducive to having our entire family there...people always like to gather in the kitchen area so having something large enough for lots of people was important," Deb said.*

comes to time apart, "Deb very much enjoys shopping and improving our homes, and I have a passion for yard work," Barney said with a smile.

So it's no wonder that this couple finds harmony and fulfillment at the lake. It's a place to host those they love, a space to unwind, capture lake views, and count those blessings. But the waters of Wawasee hold bonds of even greater depths, with a longstanding history within Deb's side of the family. And all on the very same shores. It seems the pathway to Deb and Barney's permanent lake home has perhaps been paved all along.

But the first steps began many years ago...



Family History

It was Deb's grandfather, the founder of Fort Wayne-based AALCO Distributing, who had the foresight to purchase property on Lake Wawasee, creating the original family lake home. The property is situated on the northeast elevated shore with views of the sunset and sunrise over Johnson's Bay. This area of the lake is steeped in history, situated between Noll Hall (formerly Church of the Little Flower) to the south and Wawasee Spink Condos (formerly the Spink Hotel and Our Lady of the Lake Seminary and Wawasee Preparatory) to the north.



The master suite is a retreat all its own with seating area, gorgeous views of the lake, huge walk-in, floor-to-high-ceiling shower, vanity areas, and walk-in closet.





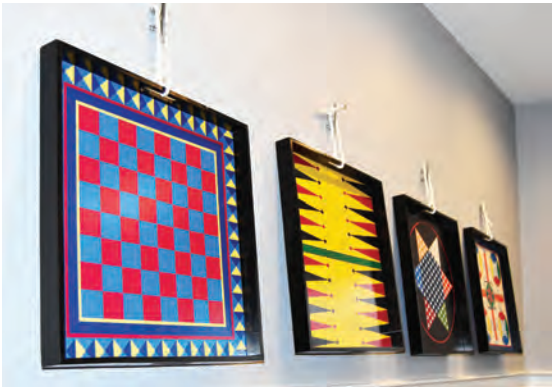
- The fun + colorful grandchildren's bedroom has individual lighting for each bunk, plus an additional full-size bed.
- Both daughters have bedrooms upstairs, with full baths.

As time progressed and the family grew, so too did the original lake home—which was frequented by Deb and Barney, Deb's siblings and all their kiddos. Then in 2007, opportunity arose to purchase the lot next door, and Barney and Deb jumped at the chance, considering it more of an investment than a place to build a new dream lake home of their own. But as happens with most things that are meant to be, one step advanced to the next.

It Started With A Beach House

The first to emerge on the new Niezer property was the 'beach house'—a fun, lakeside structure built into the hill. Equipped with refrigerator, a bar, shade, and plenty of seating, it's a fun party zone where the family can hang out all day—and it's mere steps to the sandy bottom of Wawasee's north shore; an ideal location for grandchildren to play.

The hill leading to the beach house was landscaped in the fall of 2015 with boulders, plants, and flowers—a hobby that Barney truly enjoys. Barney's hill is a stunning sight from the water, and one of the more uniquely landscaped plots along the lakeshore.



- The grandchildren have their own special playroom—complete with computers, toys, and every game imaginable—some of which are hung on the wall.





Barney said. “And, Deb’s brother and sister are able to enjoy their home much more than before. Before, we would take turns...now we can be here at the same time.”

Steps away from the original family home, and with the same water views and sunsets Deb was raised with, it’s a lake home close to the heart. And, within the new home, large windows and lake views are plentiful; it’s a peaceful sight regardless of the direction you’re looking. “We definitely wanted to take advantage of our location and be able to enjoy the views of the lake,” Deb said.

The home’s traditional and contemporary interior exudes class and style, and the layout encourages togetherness—it was designed with family in mind. To encourage family gatherings, good times, peaceful sunsets, excellent grilling, and flowing beverages.

In fact the best day at the Niezer lake home? It’d look like this: “Our favorite

day at the lake includes going for a walk, heading down to the lake for some fun in the sun, sitting on the pier, getting in the lake and going for a boat ride,” Barney said. “In the evening, we’d have cocktails and grill out at our new outdoor kitchen area for dinner, followed by sunset and relaxing on the front patio under the stars. It’s hard to beat a day like that, whether it’s just the two of us, or with family and friends.”

Hard to beat, indeed. And truly blessed.

The Lake Home Emerges

Then in May of 2016, Buhrt Builders broke ground to begin construction on the 4,000-square-foot lake home. Completed in April of 2017, this 5 bedroom, 5.5 bathroom home offers enough room to stretch out for some solace, and plenty of areas for gathering and fun.

“We have gone from sharing the original home with Deb’s brother and sister to being able to come to the lake year-round,”

Shout-out

from the homeowners:

“...we have had a relationship with Buhrt Builders for many years,” said Deb. “They have always been great to work with. They provide high-quality work and if there is ever a problem, they address it in a timely manner and stand behind their work. We feel like we started with a really good plan from our architect, but Matt,

Jennifer, and their team provided a lot of good suggestions and changes to make it even better. Homes on Lake Wawasee face different issues than other homes and they understand these issues very well—they have a lot of experience building and maintaining quality homes on Lake Wawasee.” 🌊