



# Home of **Jon + Rita Gage** Little Chapman Lake

Buhrt Builders

story and photos by Sue Pais

*Some talk about the American dream. Some visualize it. Some chase. For Jon and Rita Gage, they've caught the dream tightly in their collective grasp. And they'll never let go.*

*Yes, each day, they live their sought-after-and-earned American dream.*

*And truly, it's a story of lifelong hard work, family helping family, sticking together and building from a foundation that bonds. And while the foundation of the family proved sound, the foundation of their 600-square-foot cottage needed some help. Thus ensued a renovation that inspires, tugs heartstrings and offers the sweetest of American family stories.*

**LakeLife Magazine, meet Jon and Rita Gage.**





Sometimes actions of another will redirect our journeys in life-altering ways. So it was, when one of the Gage's daughters purchased a home on Little Chapman Lake. "Previously, we were living in what we thought would be our forever country home in Wabash," Rita said. "But then after (our daughter) bought a home on Chapman Lake, it didn't take long to see how relaxing lake life could be... we thought to ourselves, how does anyone ever go to work, as it seems like a permanent vacation place?"

Then, just like that, Jon and Rita's idea of a 'forever home' began to change view.

So the lake home search began. After a rather exhausting (and unfulfilling) search, and while regularly visiting their daughter and family, Jon and Rita noticed a small cottage pop up for sale. The cottage? It was just two doors from their daughter, son-in-law and grandchildren. And as they say, the rest is history.

But the history was not fulfilled overnight.

Jon retired, after dedicating his 40-year professional life as a lineman for Duke Energy. Rita continued working, as she does today, as a buyer for Kendall Electric. And then? They bought the little cottage, two doors down.

### Getting Started

"We started with just a 600-square-foot cute little cottage that was full of knotty pine and personality," Rita said. "The first summer we owned it we just wanted to chill and enjoy the lake before starting any reno(vations). But it didn't take long to know we had to add on everywhere and anywhere we could

if this was to be our 'next' forever home."

What ensued was a complete renovation of the home's bones plus the exterior add-on, beautifully mastered by Burht Builders. "We hired Buhrt Builders to do all the construction on the outside... the additions, roof, siding, concrete, porches," Rita said.

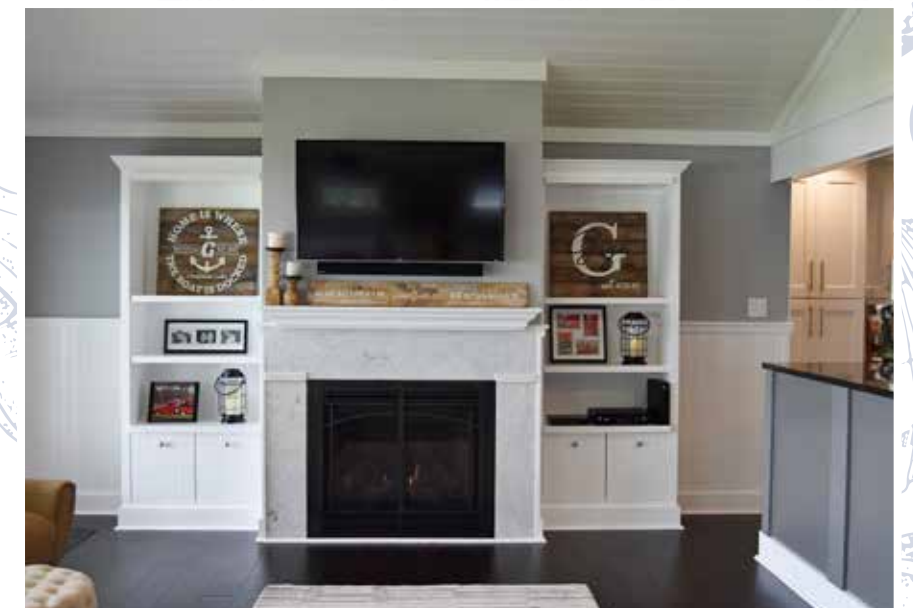
### Renovations Run

To know additional square footage is needed is easy. But determining exactly *what goals* should be accomplished for the Gage's new forever home? That took a little more thought.

"We knew we wanted an open concept living area with a great view of the lake. Jon's request was a large, well-lit garage. He knew he was going to miss his pole barn (from the country home) and wanted room for all his vehicles," Rita said.

And Jon made sure his wife's wish list was addressed as well. "The kitchen is my area! When we were doing the reno," Rita said, "I stated that my only request was that my sink *had* to be in an island facing the lake! I absolutely love seeing the beautiful view while I'm in the kitchen. Also, with it being open to the living room, it's great to be included with whatever is going on in the living area."

Wish-lists were made and the building began. From garage to kitchen, all wishes were granted. And then-some. Its expansion grew to three full bedrooms and three full baths, offering plenty of comfortable space for the whole family. Buhrt Builders made it happen, asking the right questions and offering expert direction and craftsmanship. "Buhrt Builders were just *awesome* to work with!" Rita said.







### The Inside Job: A Family Project

Then... the entire family chose to dedicate their free time to work on the *interior* of the cottage—as in, for a year and a half the family worked cooperatively, renovating everything on the interior “from studs to the finished product,” Rita said. To say it’s a family cottage built with love is accurate as can be. “It was a long journey, but well worth it... we could not be happier with the finished product,” she said.

And a finished project, beautifully executed, it is. The garage expansion didn’t stop with vehicle storage. A stairway in the back of the garage, walls adorned with black-and-white family lake photos, leads to Jon’s *other* playground. A huge room above the garage plays home to Jon’s man cave. Complete with stereo equipment, pool table and relics from his career, the bonus area is, indeed, a great game room. To complete the above-the-garage addition, there’s a cozy guest bedroom that looks over the lake, as well as a full bath in tasteful nautical colors and décor.

The kitchen with its granite counters and huge island that does, indeed, overlook the lake and living area, are superbly designed to answer all of Rita’s requests.

Just off the kitchen is another full bath, complete with full-sized, stacked laundry facilities and décor celebrating Rita’s affection for the 1939 hit ‘The Wizard of Oz.’ This, and colorful wall décor are superbly displayed throughout the Gage Family Cottage.

And a family cottage it is, full of family photos and history. Along hallways are frames from the original home structure, which the Gage’s transformed into huge photo frames to house more black-and-white family photos. Painted white, they hang above the cottage-style beadboard. “When renovating... we pretty much

went with a cottage theme... lots of white and grey, beadboard, along with some primitive and lake décor,” Rita said.

No details of function or aesthetics were spared in creating the ultimate cozy cottage. In fact, the Gage cottage is beautiful proof that it needn’t take mansion-worthy windows to provide a rich view. In fact, lake views are front-and-center from almost every room. “Our favorite room has to be the living room that leads out to the lake-side porch,” Rita said.

### The Outdoors

Details continue beyond the doorway, too, with multiple gathering areas for the family outdoors. From the cushioned porch swing to the colorful Adirondack chairs on the porch to manicured, green grass, bonfire pit, and the Gage dock (with more Adirondack chairs), comfortable, festive seating is both plentiful and welcoming. “Sitting out on the open porch, enjoying nature and watching the boaters never gets old,” Rita said.

### The Lifestyle

From the comforts and easy style of the indoors to the restful relaxation outside, the Gage Cottage is all the family had hoped for. And with four children and two grandchildren to share it with, the cottage is a treasured home to them all. “It has given us a place to entertain and spend some quality time with all our family and friends,” Rita said. “We’ve only lived here four years, but have already made so many great memories and looking forward to making many more... time goes way too fast, and any time you have a chance to make cherished memories with family and friends, do it!”

And really, isn’t that what we’re all after? We’d say it’s the American Dream.