

‘Should I Keep Going?’ After His Wife’s Death, He Continued Building Their Dream Home

By Laura Hine

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Isobel and Geoff Martin were halfway through building their dream home on a quiet lake in the Berkshires when tragedy struck: Ms. Martin, 58, received a diagnosis of terminal breast cancer. A year later she died, with the house only partially completed.

Their eldest daughter, Laura Teicher, stepped up to help her father finish the roughly 14,000-square-foot house. Now, they view the completed home as a place to honor her memory. “We decided to bury my mother’s ashes down by the lake,” says Ms. Teicher, 35. “So now the house has even more of a special feeling to it.”

The home, which was completed in 2021, ended up costing about \$17 million to build and furnish. “We said, ‘Let’s do it once and do it right,’” Mr. Martin says. “It went far beyond what we expected to spend, but it turned out fantastic.”





Clockwise from top left: Isobel Martin and Laura Teicher in March 2018; Geo Martin during the house's construction; Dan and Laura Teicher with the Martins; Ms. Martin in January 2018.

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: DAN TEICHER, LAURA TEICHER, JANET CREWE, LAURA TEICHER

The Martins originally hailed from England. Mr. Martin, 68, is CEO of the packaging and label manufacturing company CCL Industries. The couple had been living for 17 years in Dover, Mass., near Mr. Martin's office in Framingham, when they decided to build a vacation home in the Berkshires. They wanted a location equidistant from their six children—three biological and three siblings they adopted out of the foster care system—who are mostly in New York City and Boston. They also wanted a spacious place where family and friends from the U.K. could stay for extended visits.

The project started in the fall of 2014, when the Martins paid about \$900,000 for undeveloped land on Windemere Lake Reservoir near Great Barrington. They contracted with Stephanie Pavlides, principal at Pavlides Studio, to design the house. They soon started dreaming bigger, and the scope of the project expanded.

“We said, ‘Let's make it our principal residence in Massachusetts,’” says Mr. Martin. They bought a waterfront condo on Boston Harbor, and planned to give up their home in Dover. As they thought about what they needed from a vacation house, they decided to build a guest wing on the Berkshires house for their children and extended family.



The kitchen, which Ms. Martin was instrumental in designing. PHOTO: NAT REA

Ms. Martin was instrumental in the design of kitchen at the Berkshires house, according to Ms. Pavlides. “She didn’t want to see the mess of cooking, so we created different zones,” Ms. Pavlides says. “We talked about how people would function in the kitchen and where everything would go.” There are two pantries behind the kitchen, one for dishes and one for food.

In 2015, with schematic drawings well under way, Ms. Martin was diagnosed with early-stage breast cancer. “Isobel got sick in 2015 and the initial diagnosis was that she would be cured,” Mr. Martin says. “Unfortunately, in 2017, the cancer came back and then she got a terminal diagnosis, but by then the house was pretty advanced.”

Ms. Martin died in the summer of 2018.



A Moooi chandelier hangs above a custom marble table that can seat 24 people. PHOTO: NAT REA

“My dad reached out to me and my brother James and asked, ‘Should I keep going with this?’” Ms. Teicher recounts. “He wanted to know if we’d still use it, even though Mum wasn’t going to be here.” The siblings felt that the house would help honor Ms. Martin’s memory, so they encouraged him to finish the project.

From the exterior, the house nestles into the hill above the lake and follows the contour of the land. “The curve holds the house to the land,” Ms. Pavlides says. “It also provides all the rooms with privacy and different views of the lake, since they’re not in a line.” The garage has a green roof that continues the natural look of the landscape.

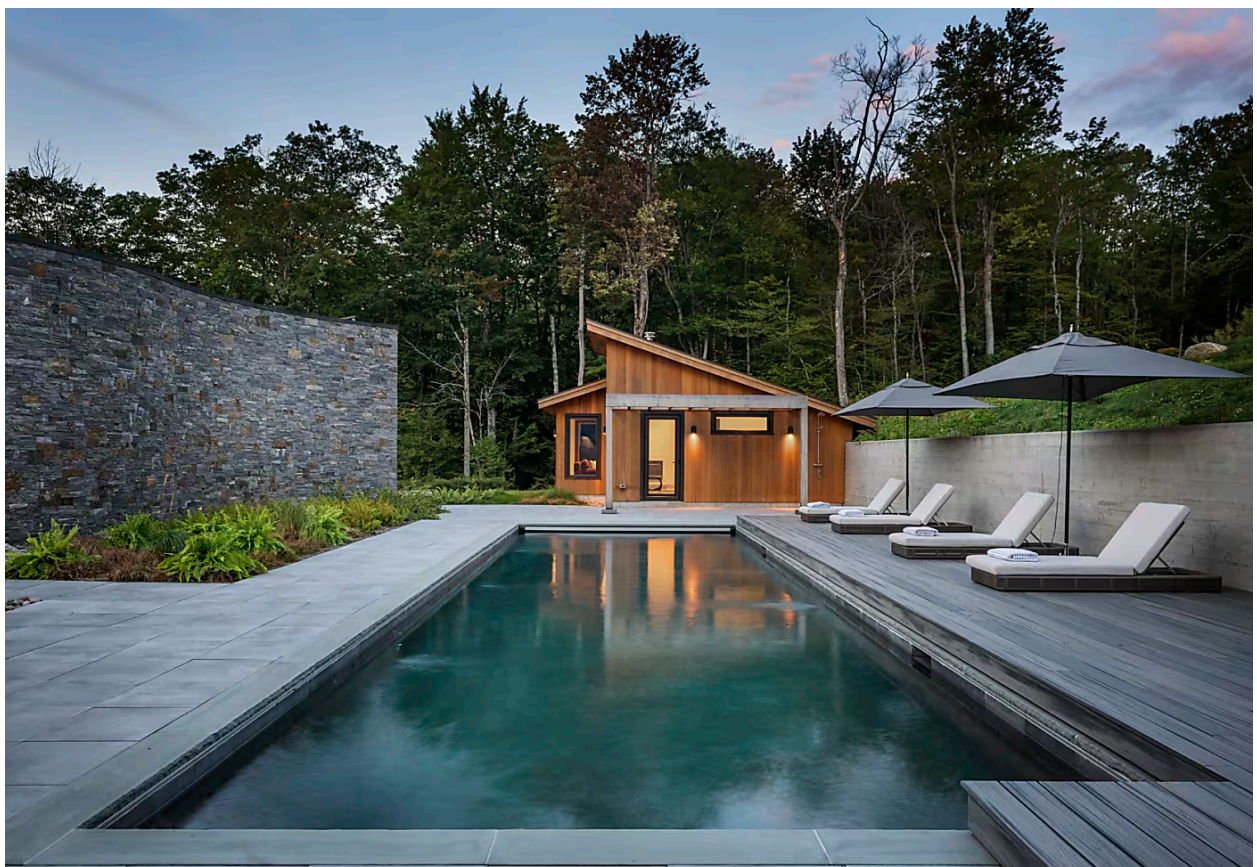
The home’s primary living space has three bedrooms, an open kitchen with eat-in dining, a living room and a connected room that will eventually hold Mr. Martin’s grand piano. There is also an exercise room, laundry, two offices, a media room and a recording studio for son-in-law Dan Teicher, who is a professional musician. The Teichers live in New York City, where space is at a premium, so Mr. Martin dedicated space in the Berkshires house for an isolation booth, full-size keyboard, and equipment for TV and film scoring.

Through a large pocket door is the guest wing, which has an additional five bedrooms and a “rumpus room” with a full kitchen and play area for visiting grandchildren, including Ms. Teicher’s 11-month-old daughter, Violet. In 2021, Mr. Martin added a pool house with an additional guest bedroom.

The home is heated with a geothermal system, which requires 15 wells under the driveway and a mechanical room that Ms. Pavlides says looks like a ship’s control room. “The contractor would say that everything we designed was to the nth degree of difficulty,” she notes.

For furnishings, Ms. Pavlides worked closely with Ms. Teicher and Mr. Martin to outfit the home. “It’s a cavernous space, so it was a challenge to make sure the furniture was properly sized,” Ms. Teicher says. “It was really important to think about scale.”

One standout piece designed by Ms. Pavlides is the 14-by-7-foot dining room table, which easily seats 24 guests. With its locally sourced, book-matched granite top, it fills the space with a sculptural element that harks back to the natural world. “We wanted what was inside the house to feel like a reflection of what was going on outside,” Ms. Teicher says. Just above the table is a Moooi light fixture that mimics a branch with leaves. “It looks like the light twinkling through the trees.”



In 2021, Mr. Martin added a pool house with an additional guest bedroom. PHOTO: NAT REA

Now that the house is finally complete, the family doesn't use it in exactly the way they planned. Mr. Martin sold the Boston condo and kept the Dover house as his primary residence. He uses the Berkshires house as a shared vacation home with his children.

But true to Ms. Martin's vision, the house is frequently filled to capacity for holidays and vacations. "Labor Day weekend, we had five couples and 11 children. The bunk beds were filled, and every bedroom was used," says Ms. Teicher. "When I woke up, the kids were in the pool, there was music playing, and it made my heart swell. The house is exactly what my parents wanted it to be."

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