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# Bainbridge

## Island

### Taking Flight



**Good Sport / Mint in Box / Garden Variety**

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# Meant to Be

## FINDING THEIR PLACE IN ROLLING BAY // By Alli Schuchman



From their Rolling Bay home, Andrea and Thomas Chymiy (and dog Westly) enjoy the view overlooking Murden Cove. Photos by David Cohen and Kelvin Hughes.

The Chymiys' forever home on Bainbridge Island is many miles—and many years—from Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee, where Andrea and Thomas met in 1992, just days into their freshman year.

The friendship that started at a dormitory mixer soon turned into more and by the second semester they were dating. The pair were married in 1996 and after graduating, moved to New Orleans, where Andrea attended medical school at Tulane. "Our son Jacob was born during our last year there," said Thomas.

The Chymiys' next move was to Seattle, Andrea's childhood hometown. Thomas went to work for Amazon (where he still works today, currently as a principal in advertising) and Andrea, a family practice physician, started first with Swedish before later accepting a position at The Doctor's Clinic in Poulsbo. It was that job change that prompted the couple to check out Bainbridge.



The Chymiys made the jump to the island in 2003, first to a home they built in Northtown Woods, then later on to one in Hidden Cove Estates off Phelps.

Like it does for many of us, exploring the island became a favorite pastime for Andrea and Thomas. During a Sunday drive in 2014, they came upon a slice of bucolic pastureland on Falk Road in the Rolling Bay neighborhood.

"This is probably one of our favorite areas," said Andrea. "I just love Manitou. It's so sunny. We used to come here a lot when we lived nearby—this was our running loop."

They liked Rolling Bay's mix of old homes and new, cottages, small farms. The craggy coastline, unhurried streets and undulating hills. The views of Seattle and Rainier and the smell of salt water. It's a good fit for the couple and their two children—Jacob, who is temporarily back from the University of Washington, and Noelle, a junior at BHS—as well as a pair of pleasantly scruffy, predictably exuberant dogs, Westly, a Wheaten Terrier, and Obi, a cockapoo.

Soon after discovering the picturesque land above Murden Cove, the Chymiys made an offer. "We were lucky to get it," Thomas reflected. "At the time it was just a pasture," said Andrea. "Cows had lived here, and we found horseshoes."

On the property stood a tiny old cottage from years past. "We put in some sweat equity and fixed up its interior and turned it into an Airbnb rental that fall," explained Thomas. The Chymiys said the cottage was beloved by the neighborhood so they knew they had to keep it.

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"At the same time, we started to talk to Jeb and Belinda Thornburg at Indigo [Architecture & Interiors] about the type of house we wanted for ourselves," said Andrea. Their vision coalesced into an industrial farmhouse of sorts. "So sometime in late 2015 we said, 'All right, we want to do it, we're ready.'"

"That's when Jeb and Belinda introduced us to Clark Construction," Thomas said. "From the start, Indigo and Clark were aligned on the kind of the style and aesthetic that we were looking for. They were great in terms of collaborating and figuring things out together."

The home's construction ran like clockwork. It took 13 months from the time they broke ground in late July of 2016 until the house was ready for move-in the first week of September the following year.

For years the Chymiys had worked with realtor Dennis Paige of Realogics Sotheby's, whom they credit with listing their home with near-perfect timing for a sale that would coincide with their new home's completion. While the house was being built, they also relocated the cabin slightly to the southwest and poured a foundation for it to sit upon, extending its useful life by decades.



Although their new home is only a couple of years old, the Chymiys credit the collective efforts of Indigo, Clark Construction and landscape architect Catherine (Kia) Micaud with helping it to fit into the neighborhood. “We wanted a modern home but you don’t want it to look weird,” said Thomas. “We didn’t want it to look like this shiny brand-new thing, so we tried to make it look like it’s been here a long time.” Elements such as the metal roof that was designed to rust, and the board and batten cedar siding that was finished to appear naturally faded, a bit silver, helped the home look settled. Micaud coordinated the landscaping installation so that when the Chymiys moved in, the house already felt established.

The house sits on the west side of Falk, and its horseshoe driveway skirts past the side-entry garage. The garage has an upper level studio and a deck that expands the home’s livable space when needed. The garage also provides a smart buffer between the road and the house which was set fairly close to Falk to preserve the bulk of the open pasture.

From the garage, offset concrete slabs lead the way to a bright red front door. Just inside is an office with a hefty barn door that can be pulled shut for privacy—though Westly voluntarily demonstrated how easily it slides open with a gentle nudge of the muzzle, should he want to visit whoever is working inside.

A little beyond the entry is the body of the home. The abundant south-facing windows look onto the wraparound deck and out to the water and beyond. Along the backside of the great room is a substantial stone and blackened steel fireplace with a reclaimed wood beam for a mantle. The floors are wide-plank white oak with a custom stain and finish from Salisbury Woodworks. The ceiling is exposed wood and beams, which lends an industrial, loft-like feel.

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All of the furnishings in the home come across as genuine. Nothing feels forced. A perfect example is a coffee table that was hurriedly fashioned (moments before a cocktail party) from an old red door, salvaged from a decrepit shed on the property, laid atop two wooden vegetable crates. The speed at which it was conceived and built didn't lessen its enduring appeal or utility...so it has remained. A bone-colored linen couch looks equally appropriate for an elegant get-together or an afternoon nap. The fixtures and lighting selections are lovely, but they don't shout.

Adjacent to the great room at the home's westernmost end is the kitchen. A massive hand-hewn wooden island with barstools serves as the perfect perch from which to keep the chef company. Matte gray cabinetry designed by Dave Poole from the Cabinet Factory in Eugene, Oregon, and Caesarstone countertops are muted counterpoints to the eye-catching commercial-grade Wolf cooktop, hood and refrigerator. A restaurant-style swinging door to the pantry, complete with a cheery round window, adds a playful wink to the space.

Near the kitchen and along the home's backside rises a striking, spine-like floating steel and concrete staircase, made by Rory's Custom Fabrication. One of the home's most notable architectural features, the staircase is framed by eight windows, stacked four-over-four and spanning the height of the home, and leads to the bedrooms. From the opposite direction, leading to the walk-out lower level—and visible through the floating stairs above—is a wooden staircase with an industrial steel handrail, also made by Rory's.

Downstairs is where the real fun begins. A home theater with both a flat screen TV and a pull-down screen and projector provides the perfect setting for movie nights. Standing watch from the corner, a life-size stormtrooper and Kylo Ren reveal one of Thomas' serious passions: Star Wars. Ever since he watched the original trilogy as a child ("The Empire Strikes Back" is his favorite), the sci-fi movie series has caught and held his imagination.

Just beyond the theater is a shrine to another of Thomas' passions: toys. A room of backlit custom-made glass cabinets holds a collection of thousands of figurines (many from Star Wars), mind-bogglingly intricate Lego sculptures, and precious memorabilia like a Star Wars thermos from his childhood lunchbox. Thomas said he regularly changes out what gets displayed; each rotation amounts to only about a third of his total collection. Watching the toy room come to life was not only a treat for Thomas, but also for Clark Construction superintendent Casey French, who Thomas said painstakingly configured the complex arrangement of shelving and cabinetry.

Clark president Jeff Krueger said that the way the room (as well as the entire home) came together—and the fact that everyone involved would describe it as having worked exceptionally well—is a credit to both the Chiymiys and the project team. "They were the ideal client," said Krueger. "They understood the value of the team. They brought us in very early on and we spent a bit of time making some design adjustments, value engineering, and through that whole process, they stayed very engaged, very positive. And very realistic. What really stands out was just their pragmatism."

Krueger said an example of the Chiymiys' engagement came at the 11th hour when they decided to spend a little more money to add the deck to the studio space above the garage. "Andrea realized, hey, somebody is going to want to sit out on this deck and the views are spectacular. It was one of those times where the designer, the builder and client have a great level of mutual trust."

The way the Chymiys chose to work with Clark—taking advantage of its guaranteed maximum price contract—gave them a level of certainty because they knew costs would not unexpectedly rise. Often used in the commercial side of construction (where Clark founder and CEO Rachele Turnbull has substantial experience), the model appeals to Krueger because "you have to hit the sweet spot and then work hard to bring it in at or under budget. It provides a target that the team is really working not just to meet, but to beat. That changes your mindset. It brings a pretty powerful dynamic to the process."



Krueger said that one benefit of controlling costs was that it enabled Thomas to have a little extra money to splurge on his toy room. "It was really fun seeing him display these things that are special to him and do it in a way that that didn't kill the project or go overboard. It is one of those high watermark projects where you say this was just about as close to a perfect job as you can get."

Thomas agrees. "Based on what I can tell, we hit it about as perfectly as you could."

As much as the Chymiys love their home (and never plan on leaving), their appreciation for the neighborhood and finding their lasting place within it also runs deep. Like with the tiny old cottage that Andrea and Thomas kept and restored because it was beloved by neighbors, another feature of the property ties the Chymiys' land to the greater community. Beyond the garden and chicken coop, across the grassy pasture to the east, is a gate in the split rail fence that runs between their land and the hillside above. They said that for generations, kids have cut through the land on their way down to the beach.

Though the farmhouse on Falk is a long ways away from Vanderbilt, this place, and the road that's brought the Chymiys here, feels meant to be.

