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Add Character
To Your Home*





Big Sky

TECHNOLOGY ENABLES AN ARKANSAS COUPLE TO BUILD A FLAWLESS LOG HOME 1,500 MILES AWAY IN THE MOUNTAINS OF MONTANA.

Beauty

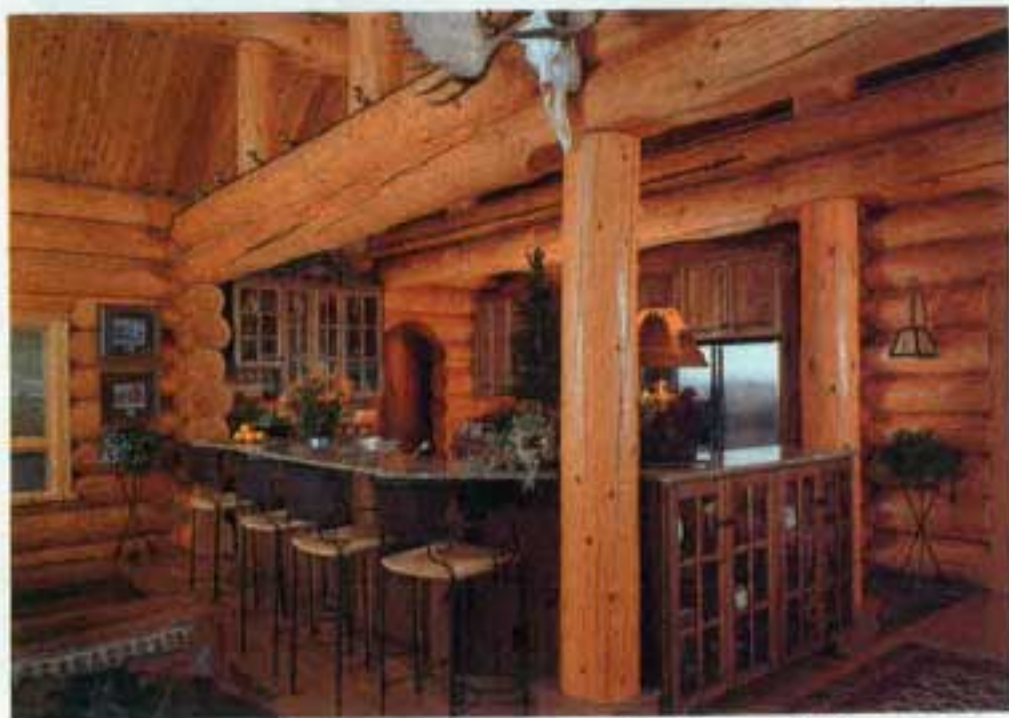
STORY BY Margaret A. Haapoja
PHOTOGRAPHY BY J.K. Lawrence

When David and Rita Bintliff built their log ski lodge in Big Sky, Montana, it was more than a beautiful home to them; it was the culmination of a lifelong dream. "Maybe it's the pioneer aspect, but I don't think there's anything more comfortable, more homey or more rustic than a log home," David says.

Wood has always fascinated him. As the son of a housing contractor, David had been around it all his life. He remembers helping pick up scrap on one of his father's job sites when he was in junior high. "I couldn't stand to burn all those nice boards," he says, "so I took them home and built a gun cabinet using just hand tools. I've always liked working with wood. I like the colors and the grain, so it's only natural I'd love a log home."



OPPOSITE: Varying shades of river rock encase the wood-burning fireplace. The hearth was strategically angled so it wouldn't compete with the mountainous view. **ABOVE:** Situated in the heart of ski country, this log retreat sits halfway up Lone Mountain in Big Sky, Montana. The 16- to 18-inch diameter Douglas fir handcrafted logs are a perfect fit for its elevated site.



TOP: The non-log walls are swathed in "gold rush" yellow—a muted tone that pulls out the wood's ocher hues. ABOVE: With its cocoa brown alder cabinetry and cool granite countertops, this highly efficient and attractive kitchen won a regional design award.

A Chance Encounter

The couple, who own a pharmacy in Clinton, Arkansas, embarked on their log home journey by chance. They had taken their two sons on a Christmas ski vacation, and as they came down the slope one day, David noticed "for sale" signs for a new subdivision. "There was no development there at the time," he says. "When we learned it was a ski-in, ski-out single-family development, we made the deal and bought the lot before we came home."

Immediately, they began buying log home magazines to search for ideas. "We had stacks and stacks of every log home magazine and every log home book you can imagine," says David. "Since I grew up in the housing industry, I was pretty familiar with all the processes that go into a standard-construction home, but a log house is a completely different

RIGHT: A large farmhouse-style table is the centerpiece of this home's informal dining area. Stacked rows of uninterrupted windows let these avid skiers keep a watchful eye on weather conditions.

thing. It was a real learning process."

Once they had a fairly good idea of the floorplan they wanted, David and Rita started searching for a log producer. Through an acquaintance, the Bintliffs learned about Brian Campbell's North American Log Crafters, a small log home company located in Chase, British Columbia, that specializes in handcrafted log packages. "The size of their logs is one of the things that sold me on their product," says David of the 16- to 18-inch diameter Douglas fir timbers. "The cut is Swedish cope with saddle notch corners. I love the way these things nest on top of one another."

To build their home, the Bintliffs hired Blue Ribbon Builders, a construction company that has been building homes in the Big Sky area for nearly 30 years. It turned out to be a good match, because owners JoDean and Doug Bing are very experienced in dealing with customers who live out of the area. "We're very comfortable working with long-distance clients," says Doug. "In fact, that's our normal type of working relationship. Fax machines, digital photography and e-mail make it so easy to communicate today."

Since they live 1,500 miles away and both work in their drugstore, David and Rita only visited the project twice during construction. "We did this totally on the fly by long distance phone calls and faxing floorplans back and forth," says David.

Constant communication was especially important with David and Rita's home because the plans were modified many times throughout the building process. Originally planned as a 3,500-square-foot home, the finished product came in closer to 7,000 square feet. The changes started on day one. "When we got the plans, they were drawn for a level lot," says Doug, "and this lot had about



THE BRIGHT SIDE

Home owners David and Rita Bintliff have high praise for Carl Pearson of Fire Mountain Forge in Livingston, Montana, who designed their home's lighting scheme and handcrafted most of the light fixtures. "He's a true artist and a perfectionist," says Rita. She particularly likes the dining room fixture that employs an arrow and leepee motif (above) and a swing-out bedside lamp in a moose design.

"David and Rita gave me free rein," Carl says. "Their light fixtures are mostly hand-forged, and I use wrought iron and rawhide predominantly for our Native American style of lighting."

David enjoys the more technical side of the home's lighting design. The Lutron Graphic Eye system allows them to program all the lights in the house to create different moods. "You've heard about people being so quick they can turn the light out and be in bed before it gets dark," he says. "Well, I can really do that because all the lights gradually fade before they go out."

When you're trying to set a tone in your log home, good lighting is often the most important ingredient. And though hiring a professional to plan your lighting scheme can be expensive, it's also money well spent.



TOP LEFT: The master bedroom captures its Native American spirit from its hand-painted deer hide wall hanging, a teepee-patterned rug and crossed-arrow bedside lamps. **TOP RIGHT:** After a day of hitting the slopes, pinecone-green walls and mottled marble tile create a soothing environment to soak in the whirlpool tub. **ABOVE:** Spotlighting cast down from the home's gables skims the surface of the logs and creates a dramatic effect.

6 to 8 feet of slope to it. That meant part of the home would have to be built on top of a crawlspace. I asked David if he really wanted a crawl space, which he didn't, so we added an entire lower level to the home that wasn't shown on the plans."

David refers to this plan-altering conversation as the first time the couple's "might as well" factor came into play. "We decided it would be crazy to let that space go to waste," he says, "and then we decided it would be cheaper in the long run to finish it off right away."

At least two more major changes came about on the spur of the moment:

David and Rita decided to add a bunkroom above the garage and a hot tub room off the laundry area. The area that became the bunkroom was originally planned as attic space and was inaccessible except through the garage ceiling. "We incorporated access off the interior balcony," says Doug, "Now they have a complete living space."

David says the bunkroom, which sleeps six, is one of his favorite spaces. "It's the coziest little spot, and it's perfect for kids," he says.

Snow Business

Because David and Rita's home is situated at 8,300 feet, the couple incorporated several important features to accommodate the brisk climate. A cold roof system helps prevent ice dams and the roof has a snow load rating of 200 pounds per square foot.

"At that elevation you definitely have to be very organized and prepared for winter," says Doug. "It probably snows a solid nine months of the year up there." In fact, just after David and Rita moved in on June 23, it snowed 26 inches.

To help keep the home warm, they chose propane-fired radiant heat, a feature David especially appreciates. "It's so nice to get up and not worry about putting on slippers," he says. "And unlike a forced-air system, there's no sound, no fan running in the background."

David and Rita have been pleasantly surprised by the efficiency of their new

home. "We were pretty concerned about utilities and how expensive it was going to be to heat a house with so much glass," says David. "The quality of the windows helps, and the logs absorb all the radiant heat during the day and retain it for such a long time. The mass of the building itself helps to buffer the highs and lows of the extreme temperatures you can have up here."

Internal Affairs

To help decorate the home's interior, Rita hired a magician. At least that's how she refers to Michael Bolding, owner of Saddle Ridge Interiors in Paragould, Arkansas. Michael spent a week with the Bintliffs when they first moved in, helping them to create a sense of style and continuity to their home. Michael and Rita scoured the local furniture stores and antique shops, concentrating on one room at a time. "David and Rita wanted a mountain retreat," says Michael, "but they didn't want traditional Montana-style decor. We used wall colors that aren't normally used in that area, such as 'pinecone green' in the master bedroom suite and 'gold rush' in the living room and game room.

"I also tried to incorporate a lot of different textures from leathers to woods to slate and granite," Michael continues. Some of the furniture, including the leather couches in the great room, came from Michael's store in Arkansas. The European antiques were purchased at Antique Warehouse in Botkinburg, Arkansas. Blended with those pieces are local accents, as well as David's collection of Native American pottery and his mounted animal trophies.

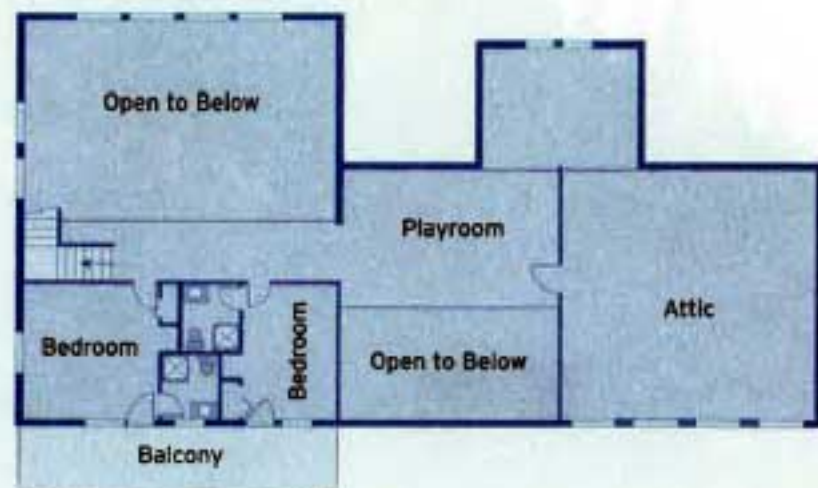
Now that David and Rita have the perfect getaway home they've always dreamed of, all they need is more time to get away. The good news is that since their sons have joined the family business, the couple expects to spend more time skiing the slopes, relaxing in the hot tub and admiring the view of the Spanish Peaks all from the comfort of their own log home. ■

HOME DETAILS

- Square footage: 7,796
- Package price: \$120,000
- Builders: Blue Ribbon Builders

- Log producer: North American Log Crafters

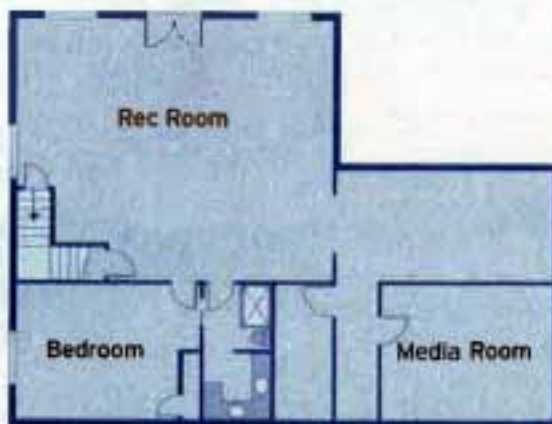
For more information, see Resources on page 109.



Upper Level



Main Level



Lower Level