

THE DRAWING BOARD



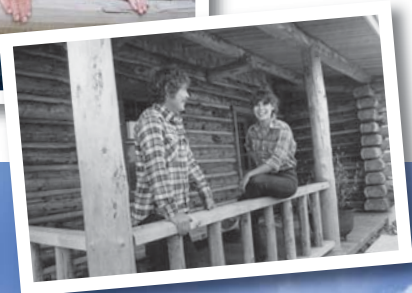
BY KATHY JANCZAK
CO-FOUNDER AND OWNER, WISCONSIN LOG HOMES INC.
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Hybrids, half-logs, and new tastes *Thirty years of changes*



Above: An early house by Wisconsin Log Homes, built in the 1980s, features the Thermal-Log system.

Left and Below: Dave and Kathy Janczak, owners of Wisconsin Log Homes, now and in the 1970s when the company was founded.

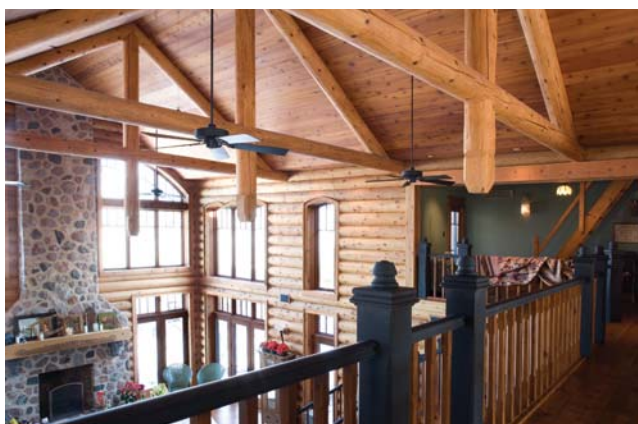


It's been 32 years, hundreds of homes and a lot of history ago since my husband Dave and I founded Wisconsin Log Homes. That's when we began testing new technologies and developed the very first super-insulated, non-settling half-log home with pre-cut full log cross corners, which we named the Thermal-Log Building System. It wasn't long before we realized that we could accent the logs with a variety of building materials, setting the groundwork for exciting new hybrid designs.

THE BIRTH OF THE HYBRID MOVEMENT

Three decades ago, energy shortages, the Vietnam War, and political upheavals loomed over the economy. People wanted to escape the cookie-cutter world of brick houses and had fallen in love with the natural wood home lifestyle.

As a builder, Dave's frustration with the inherent issues of true solid log construction set the



Above and Above Right: Flexible designs and changing tastes have resulted in efforts such as this hybrid home, which features a modified two-story Lodge-style entry, structural log trusses, and energy-efficient construction that cuts back on heating and cooling costs.



direction and shaped our company's identity. We loved the look of wood homes, but were concerned with settling problems.

Because of the natural characteristics of wood, solid log walls inevitably settle, shift, and shrink in height, some up to four inches during the first three years. Proper allowances must be made around fireplaces, windows, doors, stairs, and plumbing dur-



A Green Bay hybrid features elements of stone, timber, and Sheetrock. Break-throughs in engineering and material design in the past two decades allow opportunities for homeowners to merge a variety of architectural styles.





Above: *The Wisconsin Log Homes Boulder Ridge plan was customized by the homeowners to incorporate architectural stone, shingles, and logs.*

ing construction or homeowners will experience a host of problems down the road. In addition, vertical support posts must be adjusted as the log walls settle through the years, or they can raise havoc with the second floor and roof.

To address these concerns, Dave and I pioneered the Thermal-Log Building System to overcome the inadequacies of log on log construction and provide exciting architectural attributes.

Our building system incorporates an insulated core wall capped with an energy-efficient roof system and allows our homeowners to choose the amount of R-value in their home by selecting insulation materials such as fiberglass, open cell foam, closed cell foam, or a combination of closed cell foam and blown-in fiberglass bib type. Homeowners have also achieved excellent results by using reflective foil insulated barriers.

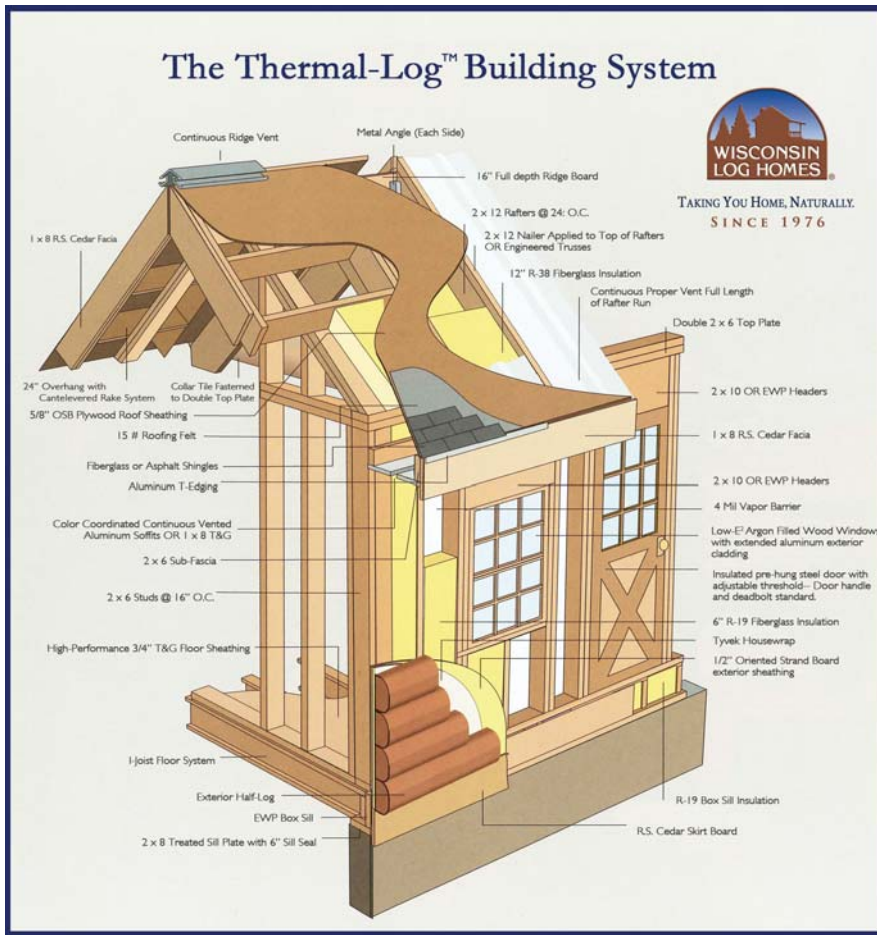
The very first log home we built using the new energy-saving system used a third of the amount of energy to heat twice the amount of living space. (Tested within the same 10-month

Wisconsin's best

With hundreds of homes of all shapes and sizes under our collective belt, we've worked on several notable projects. They include:

- The homeowner who wanted a 17-foot waterfall in the foyer.
- A custom staircase wrapped behind a round-faced adobe-style fireplace in a two-story master bedroom.
- A couple wanted their loft bedroom to look over the great room and beyond to the lakefront — but with sound barriers. They incorporated glass walls on both sides of the room to take advantage of the views.
- Building a home on their private island, a client wanted to design a three-sided prow to capture the views and full effect of the site's privacy and proximity to the water.
- Trophy rooms have always been a popular request. An avid big game hunter wanted to incorporate a soaring tower into the home to showcase his full-size giraffe mount.
- A young-at-heart couple wanted a dancing pole incorporated into their master suite.
- An ultimate romantic spa bathroom was accomplished with a fireplace and numerous built-in shelves for candles.
- A family wanted to have a small master suite for their dog off their laundry room. The "doggie suite" included a bed, shower, and eating/lounging area.
- A slender staircase was designed to enter a rooftop widow's peak overlooking the water.
- A homeowner wanted an "envelope" home: two parallel exterior walls on the north and south side of the home with an eight-inch airspace between them to allow air conditioning to circulate from the basement to the roof.
- An East Coast family wanted to have a lounge area with a TV, couch, and small kitchen accessible from the garage — after returning from camping trips, they could drive their mobile home into this area and could enjoy unloading and unpacking in style.
- A couple with land on a golf course wanted to have a small attached garage specifically for their golf cart.

Kathy Janczak



Left: A cutaway of the Wisconsin Log Homes Thermal-Log building system.

period, the 3,200-square-foot Thermal-Log home was located within 30 miles from a 1,600-square-foot solid log home.) We realized we were onto something, and in 1979 we stopped selling solid log homes and directed our focus toward “smart” hybrid designs.

The hybrid wall design has proved itself to many of our homeowners over the years. For example, a prow home with a panoramic glass window wall facing the north shore of Lake Superior was awarded the second most energy efficient home in its district by Minnesota Power & Light — quite an honor, considering the extreme weather conditions and the amount of glass in the home.

The structural integrity of the Thermal-Log system allowed us to design any home our customers could visualize. It also allowed us to develop an exciting variety of authentic and unique log and timber profiles that we could incorporate with stone and other building materials to create any architectural style — Northwoods/Lodge, Western, Mountain, Country French and even bold contemporary designs.

CHANGING TIMES, CHANGING MINDS

There were no building or log home magazines in the 1970s, so we took on the

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Above: Another view of the Boulder Ridge plan. A metal roof and additional insulation help reduce energy costs for this Northwoods hybrid.

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task of educating consumers, architects, builders, and even utility companies. The few companies that were in business then just showed floor plans in their log home plan books, but we added pages explaining and illustrating the why's and how-to's of energy-smart hybrid design and building techniques.

We quickly realized that the more product choices and services we offered, the more pleased clients were with the process. And that's why we've always offered a full-service experience, from custom design and product selection to construction and even interior design and décor, with a highly experienced and respected team that guides each client throughout the journey.



With homeowners located on every coast and even internationally, we've implemented site visits and consultations along with modern technologies to make this an easy, stress-free relationship. Today our clients log on to their computer at home (or where ever they may be) and actually watch and help our designers create their plans at the Wisconsin Log Homes headquarters. Clients conference with designers and monitor changes as important details are incorporated into their floor plan and 3D renderings — they may want to be certain that they are taking advantage of the views while still having privacy in their master suite, or that the kitchen counter space and cabinet layout suits the cook's needs. It's a far cry from the days of pencil sketches, dozens of revisions, and painstaking measurements.

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IF A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST, MAKE A CHURCH OUT OF IT.

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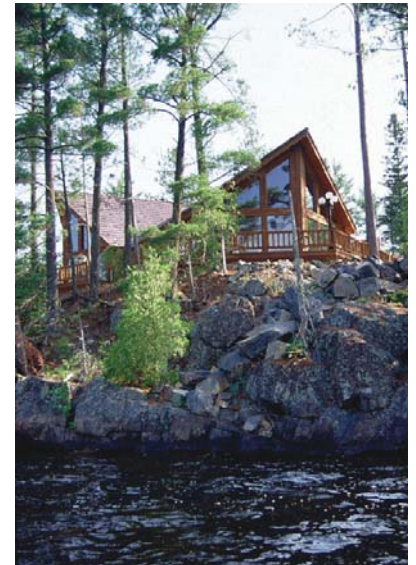
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Over the past 32 years, we've introduced a variety of fresh architectural designs that have been adopted across the industry: angled floor plans, panoramic floor-to-ceiling window walls, curved wall bump-outs with numerous gables, staggered roof heights, and dramatic multi-prow homes.

Current designs are ultimately expanding to outdoor living spaces that are functional and serve as a natural appendage to the home. Interiors are designed to live easily today and for years beyond: first-floor master suites and baths (some prefer more than one suite), back door foyers, and offices and guest quarters topping both attached and unattached garages. We've also had baby boomers building their final home who wanted a residential elevator for when they become less mobile, and just to make life easier.

Looking back, it's amazing to see the changes over the past 30 years. The next great idea is — may be literally — just around the corner. *CWH*

Kathy and Dave Janczak founded Wisconsin Log Homes in 1976 and have owned the company for 32 years. Headquartered in Green Bay, Wisconsin Log Homes has won numerous architectural and design awards and offers complete national design and build services. To find out more, call Wisconsin Log Homes at 800-844-7974, visit www.wisconsinloghomes.com, or circle 224 on the Reader Service Card to receive free information.