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Passionate About New Lifestyles

(ARA) - Log homes are like books. They hold a multitude of stories waiting to be revealed. And the people who build these homes are as passionate about their past as they are about their future.

As their nest emptied in Chicago, Karl and Pat Doren sought a new lifestyle in a small-town atmosphere. There was no question it would be in a log home. They love the look. "We were looking for something enduring, something permanent," says Karl. We wanted it to remain in our family long after we were gone."

After a lot of research, the couple selected Wisconsin Log Homes, who pioneered energy-efficient log building methods in the 1970s, to design and manufacture the home for them.

"Just about everyone we've know who built a solid log house has had problems," says Karl. "The problem is the way cold air finds its way through the chinking and between the logs." He recalls seeing the tinsel moving on a friend's Christmas tree on a blustery winter day.

One selling point was the fact that Wisconsin Log Homes originated the Thermal-Log building system. Constructed with a super insulated two-by-six framed wall sandwiched between thick exterior and interior half-logs, the building system dramatically reduced heat loss, minimized settling and eliminated a host of the couple's concerns. These days, the insulated building system has become a phenomenally popular method of log home construction.

Other benefits Karl and Pat discovered: lower labor costs, no need for "stand-by" labor, electrical and plumbing is all conventional and any qualified subcontractor can do the work. The insulated core wall allowed for a wide variety of interior wall finishes.

Mr. Doren was comfortable enough with his log home company and builder to handle construction questions by telephone, 240 miles away. Builder Tom Walla agrees the construction of the three-bedroom, two-bath home went smoothly and "turned out

exceptionally well.”

The 2,000-square-foot ranch house, dubbed High Cliff Lodge, is perched atop a 125-foot bluff overlooking a striking shoreline view. Karl and Pat jokingly refer to High Cliff as a baby boomer log home. They wanted the charm and ambiance of log, but not the “little house on the prairie” rustic look.

Also helpful was the 144-page planning guide put together by the company. The combination of floor plans, building information and photos of existing Wisconsin Log Homes was just what they needed to get started. With the property selected and the home style defined, they were now ready to design their dream home. “I can’t emphasize enough how important this part of the process was for us,” says Pat. “Having a team of experienced people guide us through the planning stage resulted in a home which functions just exactly the way we want it to.”

From the beginning, the couple knew they wanted an open floor plan. “Finding the path to the right floor plan takes time,” says Pat. The people at Wisconsin Log Homes suggested that they look at their day-to-day living preferences now that they are both retired.

Once the Dorens had a better understanding of what their new lifestyle requirements really were, the company’s design department began making progress on their custom floor plan. Window shapes were another key design consideration in Karl and Pat’s attempt to bring the outdoors in.

Early in the planning stage the couple determined that the house would have an abundance of natural materials: log covered walls, hickory floors, birch cabinetry, and pine-lined cathedral ceilings. Drywall was used in the bath and bedrooms. “Obviously drywall isn’t so natural,” says Pat, but the effect is reminiscent of exterior stucco. Jokingly Karl asks Pat to tell us which is her favorite room. “I don’t have just one; I love the great room, the screen porch and the master bedroom. Actually I love everything about this house,” Pat says with a smile.

Creating an interior look that was warm and inviting was a more enjoyable experience than they had anticipated. Karl and Pat said they wanted a comfortable lodge-style home -- a casual look but with nice things. “I thought we’d be running all over the countryside trying to find the right sofa and tables for the great room,” recalls Pat.

The Dorens were thrilled to discover that Wisconsin Log Homes added a design center full of custom furniture, lighting, cabinetry and unique log home accents.

The concept is new to the log home industry and was generated by customers’ requests for help. “We knew furniture and fixtures like this existed,” Pat said. They had seen photos in magazines, but just didn’t know where to begin.

Lines range from log furniture to feather and down upholstered pieces, lighting to accessories, custom cabinets to handmade baskets and quilts, and hand-knotted carpets from Nepal.

Companies like Wisconsin Log Homes see more and more people like the Dorens, who are passionate about building their dream home. Retirement is not the end for these folks, but a wonderful new beginning. For more information about designing and building log homes, call (800) 678-9107 or visit www.wisconsinloghomes.com.

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