

Worth the Wait

It may have taken 10 years, but this Georgia couple discovered that a little planning can make a dream come true.

THE HOMEOWNERS WANTED TO MAKE A STATEMENT WITH THE GREAT ROOM'S MASSIVE FIREPLACE: "IT MAKES OUR HOME," SAYS SUE OKRAY. "TO ME, IT SAYS EVERYTHING. IT'S STRONG, BUT IT'S ALSO BEAUTIFUL AND RELAXED. I THINK THAT'S HOW PEOPLE FEEL WHEN THEY COME IN TO OUR HOME." THE MASSIVE ARCHED WINDOWS PROVIDE A VIEW OF THE LAKE BORDERING THE PROPERTY, WHILE LETTING IN PLENTY OF NATURAL LIGHT. THE STUNNING FLOORS ARE MADE OF HAND-SCRAPED ASIAN WALNUT.

BY KAREN DOSS BOWMAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY WISCONSIN LOG HOMES

As a little girl growing up in Merrill, Wisconsin, Sue Okray recalls frequent overnight visits with her great aunt who lived in a small log cottage. Those fond memories—and later taking her husband Tom along for visits—inspired the OKrays' dream of living in their own log home.

"I always felt really safe and comfortable at my aunt's cottage," Sue says. "When I started taking my husband there, we both just had a great feeling—we loved the log home."

As for Tom, "I like the wood, and I love to come home from a trip, walk in the door, and take in the wonderful smell of the logs," he says. "I like the masculinity in the logs and how strong they look."



DESIGN*tip*

DESIGN YOUR HOME TO FIT NATURALLY INTO THE LAYOUT OF THE PROPERTY. THIS WILL SAVE MONEY WHILE MAKING THE HOME MORE FUNCTIONAL.



ABOVE: THE CERAMIC TILE FLOORING—WITH A LARGE MEDALLION IN THE CENTER—AND THE STONE ACCENTS UNDER THE STAIRCASE CREATE A STUNNING ENTRYWAY.

LEFT: THE MASSIVE WINDOWS IN THE GREAT ROOM, EXPANSIVE DECK, AND EXQUISITELY LANDSCAPED YARD CREATE A LOVELY SCENE VISIBLE FROM THE LAKE. THE HOMEOWNERS INCORPORATED OUTDOOR LIVING SPACES, INCLUDING THIS BUILT-IN FIREPIT, AND PRESERVED MANY OF THE PROPERTY'S MATURE TREES.

Though the dream of living in a log home seemed out of reach financially during the early years of their marriage, their wish came true after more than a decade of dreaming and planning.

"Years ago, we started researching and touring different log home companies," Sue says. "We just kept saving and saving our money until, one day, we finally made our dream come true."

In 2007 the couple selected Wisconsin Log Homes of Green Bay, Wisconsin. Tom especially liked the company's Thermal Log Building System—a hybrid technology that blends fully insulated, conventionally built walls with handcrafted logs on both the interior and exterior. The system results in greater insulation than full logs, and air infiltration is completely eliminated. He also liked that the company offers national turnkey services. Before they made their decision, the couple visited the Wisconsin Log Homes headquarters to tour the mill, design center, and a few completed homes in the area. They were very impressed with what they saw and the services that were offered. They also felt at ease knowing that their home consultant would be visiting their site during the design phase.

Like most custom home owners, Tom and Sue had very definite ideas of what they wanted, and their dreams took off and grew into a beautiful 5,384-square-foot home. With preliminary drawings underway, Ehren Graf, Wisconsin Log Homes' national design consultant, and builder Dave Lipovsky of Lipovsky Building Co., Harrison, Michigan, walked the Georgia property with the couple, providing a clear sense of direction and confidence.

Located in Pine Mountain, Georgia, the OKray home—named "Hidden Oak"



in honor of the enormous old oak tree that stands behind the house—sits on a 6.5-acre lot along a private lake in the Hidden Lake Estates subdivision. The picturesque setting at the foothills of the Appalachian Mountains features plenty of large, mature trees that offer privacy for the homeowners. The town also is home to Callaway Gardens, a 13,000-acre destination featuring the world's largest azalea exhibition and one of North America's largest butterfly conservatories.

Dave Lipovsky constructed the OKray design with Wisconsin Log Homes' hand-scribed 8-inch saddle-notch white pine logs.

The OKrays, whose son is physically disabled and confined to a wheelchair, designed the home with wide hallways and doorways, as well as an elevator to allow him to access any space within the home. These features also are helpful to Sue, who has difficulty getting around because of muscle weakness. Additionally, all of the full bathrooms are large enough to accommodate the wide turn radius of a wheelchair. Though their son doesn't live with the couple,

DESIGNtip

INCORPORATING STONE ACCENTS AND CUSTOM BUILT-INS THROUGHOUT THE HOME ADDS A WARM, PERSONALIZED TOUCH.

these features allow him to have independence in the home when he visits.

The open concept floorplan features numerous spots for relaxing, including a sunroom, a canopy porch with a hot tub outside of the master suite, and a screened-in porch with a fireplace. The main living areas, including a great room with a massive fireplace, are spacious and ideal for entertaining large groups of friends and family.

"You can have a huge number of people over, and they can be spread out, but you still feel like you're close together," Sue says. "You don't feel crowded or packed in."

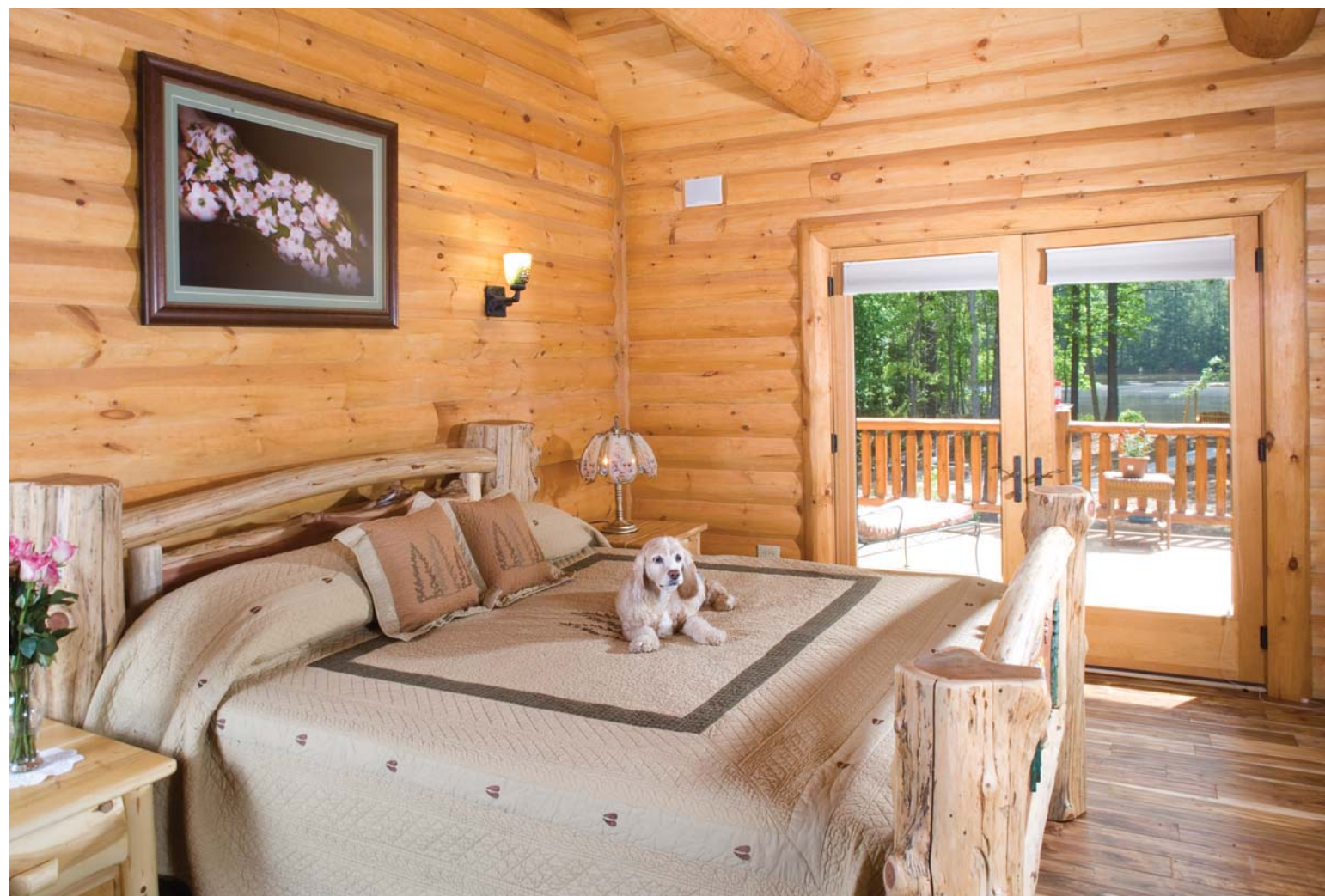
Sue describes the home's style as "rustic elegance," with plenty of stone accents applied throughout to create a striking contrast to the wood. In the dining room and entryway, for example, an accent wall is covered with architectural stone.

"When we designed the home, we wanted it to look like you were still one with nature," Sue explains. "The colors, the stone, the wood—we

ABOVE: THE KITCHEN, WITH KRAFTMAID CABINETS AND ISLAND MADE OF RUTHERFORD MAPLE, OFFERS PLENTY OF RECESSED AND TASK LIGHTING FOR FUNCTIONALITY. THE GRANITE COUNTERTOPS ARE NOT ONLY BEAUTIFUL, BUT ALSO ARE VIRTUALLY MAINTENANCE FREE AND LONG LASTING.



A STONE ACCENT WALL IN THE DINING ROOM CONTRASTS BEAUTIFULLY WITH THE WOOD TONES THROUGHOUT THE REST OF THE HOME. THE "MINI-MANTELS," DESIGNED BY THE BUILDER, MATCH THE LARGER MANTEL OVER THE FIREPLACE AND PROVIDE THE PERFECT DISPLAY AREA FOR A COLLECTION OF SOUTHWEST POTS.



ABOVE: THE MASTER BEDROOM HAS ACCESS TO THE DECK THAT OVERLOOKS THE SUBDIVISION'S LAKE, AS WELL AS TO A SMALL SCREENED-IN PORCH WITH A FIREPLACE AND A PRIVATE CANOPY PORCH. THE OKRAYS' TALENTED BUILDERS MADE THE BED FROM A DEAD CEDAR TREE FOUND ON THE PROPERTY. **LEFT:** THE MASTER BATHROOM, WITH CLASSIC FINISHES SUCH AS THE VICTORIA & ALBERT CLAW FOOT BATHTUB, FEATURES MATCHING VANITIES CRAFTED OUT OF MICHIGAN WHITE CEDAR BY THE OKRAYS' BUILDERS. THE TRAVERTINE BASIN SINKS AND MIRRORS ADD A TOUCH OF ELEGANCE.



hoped when you went from the inside to the outside, there wouldn't be a big transition and that you would be comfortable."

DESIGN tip

DESIGN YOUR DREAM HOME TO BE FUNCTIONAL AS YOU AGE, INCORPORATING ELEMENTS SUCH AS ONE-FLOOR LIVING, WIDE DOORWAYS AND HALLWAYS, AND SPACIOUS BATHROOMS THAT CAN ACCOMMODATE A WHEELCHAIR.

Other personalized touches within the home include a dining table hand-crafted for the couple by Wisconsin Log Homes' founder, Dave Janczak. Unique furniture, vanity tops, custom interior doors, built-in shelves, and decorative concrete at the entrance and on the porches were designed and built by Lipovsky Building Co.

Sue says she and Tom are grateful that they were able to build a log home. "This is our dream home, and no one can take that from us," she says. "Many people dream of owning a log home and are never able to achieve that. We are so thankful God gave us this wonderful opportunity to live here." ❁

Built to Suit

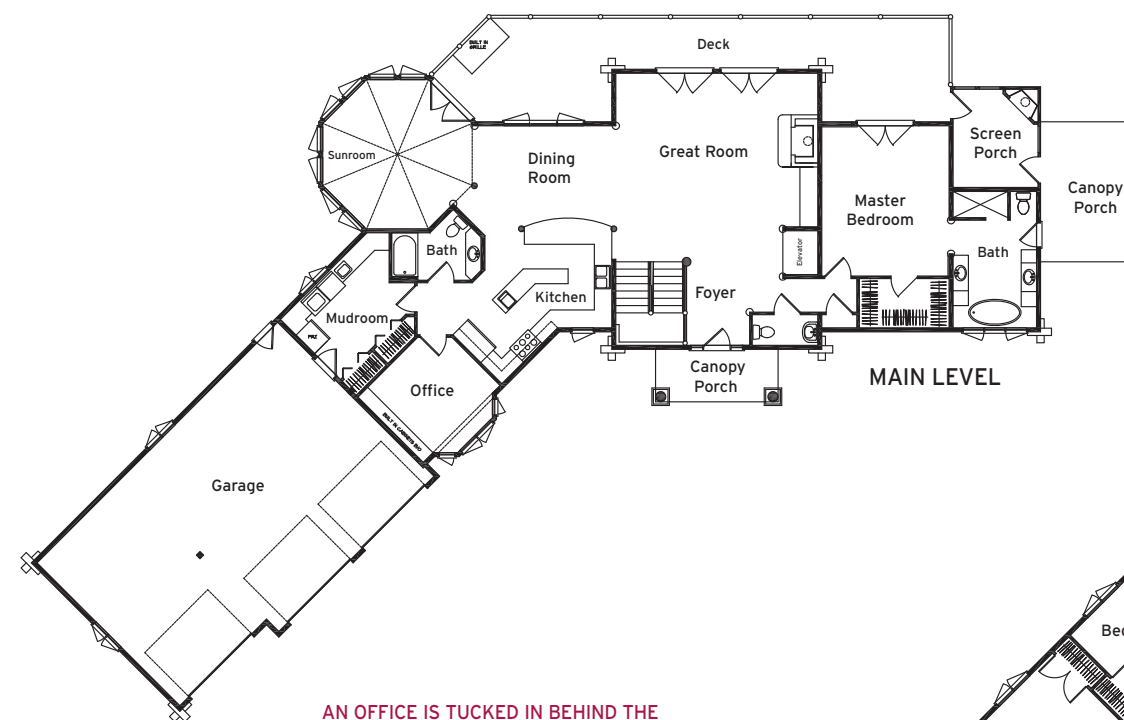
The OKrays' home was built in a subdivision of Pine Mountain, Georgia. Wisconsin Log Homes' design consultant and builder Dave Lipovsky traveled across the country to walk the property with the owners. They were able to site the house on the property to maximize the view of the lake and woods and to make sure the floorplan worked on the lot. After 10 years of research and saving, the OKrays ended up with a beautiful, accessible home that will suit them and their family for years to come.

AN OCTAGON-SHAPED SUNROOM SERVES AS A QUIET SPACE WHERE THE HOMEOWNERS CAN RELAX, OR AS AN OVERFLOW SPACE FROM THE OPEN GREAT ROOM AND DINING ROOM AREAS TO ACCOMMODATE A LARGE GROUP OF GUESTS.



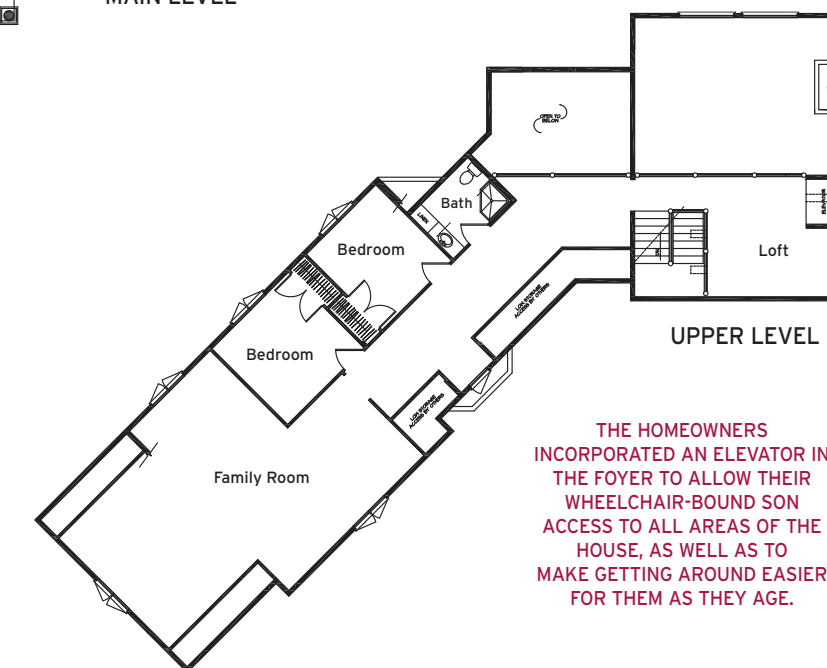
Log Producer & Designers:
Wisconsin Log Homes,
Green Bay, Wisconsin
Builder: Lipovsky Building Co.,
Harrison, Michigan

Two-story home
Square Footage: 5,384
Bedrooms: 3 Baths: 4 full, 1 half



AN OFFICE IS TUCKED IN BEHIND THE KITCHEN, PROVIDING A QUIET SPACE WHERE THE HOMEOWNERS CAN CONDUCT PERSONAL BUSINESS WITHOUT DISTRACTIONS.

A MUDROOM SITUATED BETWEEN THE GARAGE AND THE KITCHEN HELPS TO PREVENT THE HOMEOWNERS FROM TRACKING DIRT INTO THE HOME, AS WELL AS PROVIDING EXTRA STORAGE SPACE.



THE HOMEOWNERS INCORPORATED AN ELEVATOR IN THE FOYER TO ALLOW THEIR WHEELCHAIR-BOUND SON ACCESS TO ALL AREAS OF THE HOUSE, AS WELL AS TO MAKE GETTING AROUND EASIER FOR THEM AS THEY AGE.