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(ARA) - This is a story of passion and passionate differences, experienced by couples facing the strategic and often wrenching shifts taking place on the home front. One aspires to live in a home filled with the warmth, beauty and romance of a log home, while the other agonizes over the concept.

Why are people drawn to log homes? According to surveys, nine out of 10 people who choose a log home say they made their decision because they liked its distinctive look. Given the weight of the aesthetics, why do so many couples agonize over the details?

For some, a little research can give pause. That's how it was for John and Katherine Overbee, who had long dreamed about building a log cabin as a retirement home. "We backed off a little," he said. "Unless you have a lot of time and money, the intricacies of solid log construction can be worrisome."

Even with all their uniqueness, there are basically two different types of solid log home construction: handcrafted, the most extreme log home, which may take years and millions to complete; and the milled D-log, in which the top, bottom and one side of the log are milled flat. With both methods, one log is stacked on top of another to form a wall, and then the roof is built off the walls. Proper allowances must be made around windows, doors, stairs, and cabinetry to allow the log walls to settle through the years.

"I love the look," says Katherine. "But it seemed like everyone we spoke with has had problems." The problem is the way cold air finds its way through the solid log wall. "During the first three years the log walls can actually shrink and settle," John says, as he shows how he held a piece of paper by a log wall and watched it move from the air infiltration. "If a guy likes to caulk there's less of a problem," he adds with a smile.

So . . . should you go out on the limb? For many, like the Overbees, building a solid log home was not a logical decision. The solution came when the couple discovered a hybrid form of log home construction.

It was more than two decades ago when David Janczak, founder of Wisconsin Log Homes, began testing new-energy-efficient designs and introduced the Thermal-Log building system. To eliminate heat loss and stop the settling problems, Janczak designed a super-insulated, 6-inch thick-framed wall. Just as important, he also originated the precut half-logs with full log corners. In essence, he created an entirely new category of log home construction.

The insulated log home construction not only satisfied John but also gave him the peace of mind to build the home they dreamed about. "I absolutely love it," says Katherine. "We're at home -- it's a place of peace."

Just under 2,000 square feet, it's a home of pleasures for Katherine and John. "We were surprised at how well this space accommodates our daily activities," Katherine says. The people at Wisconsin Log Homes suggested they look carefully at their lifestyle and how they really live.

"We cannot emphasize enough how important it is to work with a team of people who want to help you build your dream home," says John. "They guided us through every step of the process." He credits Wisconsin Log Homes for making their home a better place to live.

Katherine admits that she did get ahead of the process when she selected a 3,666-square-foot floor plan within 10 minutes of paging through Wisconsin Log Homes planning guide. The 144-page catalog is filled with color photos and over 100 floorplans but most importantly, helpful building information to guide people in a logical sequence.

Upstairs, two bedrooms flank the bathroom. The loft doubles as an office. The open downstairs contains a kitchen, living and dining room, plus the master bedroom. Just off the dining area is a cozy room that Katherine uses as her art studio.

The Overbees were also delighted when they discovered that Wisconsin Log Homes had a Design Center and an in-house interior designer for creative support. Working with an open floor plan, it was important to integrate the kitchen. Wood flooring connects the kitchen with the living and dining space. Lighting, cabinets and unique furnishings complement the elegant yet rustic log interior.

"It all came together so nicely and it's so beautiful. The end result is a home that emphasizes who we are," Katherine says. "Friendly, relaxed, nothing fancy, nothing extravagant. It fits us like a glove."

Oh, one other thing: It wasn't the large floor plan that Katherine loved, it was the large custom-tailored window wall -- it makes a striking statement and frames a special view from the great room.

If you would love living in a log home but have concluded that the intricacies of solid log construction are depriving you of your dreams, then perhaps you should contact the people at Wisconsin Log Homes. And if your choice is this hybrid form of half-log construction it will not only satisfy, but also delight you. For more information about designing and building log homes, call (800) 678-9107 or visit www.wisconsinloghomes.com.

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