

SILVER LINING

A WASHINGTON COUPLE BUILDS THEIR
IDEAL RETIREMENT HOME

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Scribed, large-diameter Douglas fir logs, a high-profile roof with dormers and a built-up entry combine to create distinctive lines for this handcrafted home on the Washington side of the Columbia River Gorge.

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ABOVE: CertainTeed architectural windows fill the gable end of the great room and enhance the panoramic view of the Washougal Valley and Silver Star Mountain.

OPPOSITE: Henry and Dale selected the gray and tan manufactured fieldstone for the fireplace in the great room for contrast against the fir log posts and beams. A braided rug and red, white and blue furnishings and accent pillows help complete the Americana décor. The Early American dark pine Ethan Allen coffee and end tables have been with the couple through most of their marriage.

As Henry and Dale Breaker considered various retirement options, they looked for a drier climate. Henry had spent most of his working life outdoors, loading ships in the rainy Pacific Northwest. After exploring eastern Washington, however, they knew they were destined to live on the rainy side of the mountains.

The Breakers turned their search for land close enough to Portland, Oregon, to enjoy the city but far enough away to have privacy and a view. They looked more than a year without success. "One day," Dale recalls, "we were driving and saw a for-sale sign. Henry walked through the trees to check it out. He returned with the news that there were panoramic vistas of the Cascade Mountains and Washougal Valley."

The couple couldn't believe this scenic Washington property had been on the market for more than five years. "It was as if it had just been waiting for us to discover it," Dale says.

Even before finding their 7 acres, Dale and Henry knew a log home was in their future. Twenty years prior, they stayed in a log cabin in Bend, Oregon, and still carried with them memories of its coziness. "We attended a log-home show and toured the exhibit by Treehouse Log Homes," Henry recalls. "Most of the companies only had log walls for their exhibits, but Treehouse actually had a roof to give us the total feel of their product. Throughout the day, we kept coming back to Treehouse and asking questions. They provided us with answers that impressed us."

The company also supplied a list of qualified builders, but Henry and Dale already had one. Henry had worked on the waterfront with Joe Bielas, now the owner of Joe's Contracting Inc. in Vancouver, Washington. Henry and Dale had toured several of the hundreds of homes that Joe built, and



although Joe had never built a log home before, they knew he was the right person for the job. “Joe does excellent work. If it isn’t right, he will tear it down and start over. He is a qualified craftsman who stands behind his work,” Henry says. “Since this was to be Joe’s first log home, Treehouse Log Homes assured him he could call with any questions.”

Joe’s biggest challenge turned out to be the site, which is located high atop the Columbia River Gorge and experiences high winds. Even though the logs have a concave cut that allows them to sit fairly tightly on top of one another, they still needed to be chinked to keep out the wind. “As a general rule, it takes the logs up to two years to completely settle,” Joe explains. “The best situation is to wait for that period of time before the chinking is applied. However, because we were experiencing so much wind seepage between the logs, it was necessary to chink right away.”

For the next six months, Dale collaborated with Treehouse to design the home. The couple toured a home built from one of the company’s plans that



they liked, but realized it was too small for their full-time residence. Because this home would be where the Breakers spent their retirement years, they decided all of the living areas, including the utility room, should be on the main level. Thus, the 2,230-square-foot main level includes the great room, kitchen, dining room, guest bath, media-family room, master bedroom suite and laundry room.

The daylight basement has the same square footage as the main floor but is completely open, except for two huge storage rooms and a bath with a shower. The large finished playroom contains a pool table, a seating area next to the fireplace and exercise equipment.

Two bedrooms and a full bath are located in the 1,140-square-foot

BELOW: The galley-style kitchen includes hickory cabinets with hard-surface countertops, Italian floor tiles and stainless-steel appliances.

OPPOSITE: Two graceful arches provide access to the dining room, one from the great room and the second on the kitchen side. A Tiffany-style chandelier is suspended above the Early American oak dining room set. Hickory flooring blends beautifully with the large-diameter Douglas fir logs.





RIGHT: A cedar deck wraps around three sides of the home, providing both a covered patio for the daylight basement and expanded outdoor living space.
BELOW: Evergreen trim and a matching vinyl-clad Therma-Tru door accent the front entry. Petco 30-year asphalt shingles are a colorful and practical roofing choice for the rainy climate.



second story, which includes a sitting area overlooking the great room. "We wanted the sitting area to feel very open, where we could work at the computer, watch television or just relax," Dale says. "I have my sewing machine there in case I need to mend something."

Henry and Dale visited the construction site most days. Each evening, they would clean up after the crews and inspect the progress. They found being present a tremendous plus as they could spot anything that wasn't exactly right and have the workers fix it immediately.

Decorating the home fell to Dale, who opted for an Americana theme. She started with their



existing furniture, including their Ethan Allen collection, which they had accumulated during their 25-plus years of marriage. Over time, they have replaced some of the furnishings to meld with the red, white and blue color scheme. She designed several items that Vancouver Woodworks custom-made to fit specific spaces in the home. “We are endeavoring to create a Hawaiian look in the daylight basement,” she notes. “We had an old sofa that has been reupholstered with an island fabric, and we plan to add more furnishings and accessories to embellish our tropical theme.”

Dale says her culinary style is just good old American home cooking, everything made from



The view from the loft showcases the support posts that add character to the purlin roof system.



scratch. She selected a Frigidaire oven and KitchenAid refrigerator and dishwasher, which she finds are tremendous assets when their two daughters and Henry's five grandchildren pay them a visit. "I specifically designed the kitchen in the galley style because I didn't want to have to constantly be walking around a kitchen island," Dale explains. "I find this layout is much more efficient."

The home has two wood-burning fireplaces—one in the great room, the other almost directly below in the playroom. They share a flue and augment the home's heat pump, which provides forced-air heating and cooling.

Henry, who enjoys gardening, performed all of the landscaping, which he considers a work in progress. He positioned granite rocks to create retaining walls and planted sod. He added trees that turn vibrant colors in the fall.

Despite the rainy days common to the Pacific Northwest, the Breakers say their log home has brightened their golden years. "For us, retirement is a time just to relax," Henry points out. "We love to play golf and have done some traveling, but, overall, it's about just being away from the city and enjoying the quiet and our log home." **LHI**

The Americana decorating motif is evident in the patriotic bedding Dale selected for their master bedroom. The custom bedroom set from Vancouver Woodworks is fashioned of cherry and maple with maple spokes.

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