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On the main floor, alternating 3-inch- and 6-inch-wide yellow pine floorboards add visual interest. The visible heads of antique-style nails give the home a "cabin-y, primitive look," Dick Shaffer says. The large island bar provides ample seating for out-of-town guests.

Homespun Creation

With a little patience and know-how, a retired couple creates a getaway cabin designed to soak in its beautiful surroundings.

by Suzanna Logan

Some decorations in Dick and Gwen Shaffer's log cabin are purely for aesthetic purposes; others are for sentimental value. But the most prominent—and most fitting—is a 90-year-old wall hanging embroidered by Gwen's mother. It reads, "Sit deep, and come often; you're one of the folks."

The Shaffers' home in the Smoky Mountains of North Carolina makes it easy to feel welcome. "We knew we wanted it to be warm, inviting, cozy and relaxing—all the things you associate with a log cabin," says Gwen. To achieve an intimate-yet-roomy appeal for visiting friends and family, the couple chose a three-level, 2,000-square-foot plan comprising a main floor, basement and loft.

But the living space isn't limited to the interior. The Shaffers also spend a lot of time relaxing in wooden rockers on the home's

covered porches. "We always have big plans, but then we'll say, 'Well, maybe we'll just sit on the porch today and do that tomorrow instead,'" laughs Gwen.

These same porches determined the ultimate design of the Shaffers' cabin. Just before the couple was about to purchase a package from another log home company, they met with Wayne Davies of Appalachian Log Structures in Ripley, West Virginia. "He understood what we wanted and how to make that happen," says Dick.

At the top of the couple's wish list was to capitalize on the site's unbelievable views with plenty of windows and a covered porch. "When I looked at their original plan, I noticed that every porch post was directly in front of a window," says Wayne. With that revelation, the couple soon broke ground with Wayne's new plans.

Although the porch-post discovery won them over, Dick says it was Appalachian Log Structures' thru-bolt fastening system that impressed him most. With this system, holes are drilled into the logs so that a 12-foot-long steel rod can be dropped through to the foundation. Then, over time, as the logs shrink, the rods, which are loaded with compression springs, force the wood together to prevent air gaps and warping. "It makes for a tight house," Dick says.

In addition, the couple liked Appalachian Log Structures' use of borate pressure treatment, which offers excellent protection for the home's 6-by-12-inch eastern white pine logs against insects, mold and rot. In the 10 years since the home's completion, the logs only have had to be re-stained once.

Dick and Gwen also put a lot of sweat equity into their home before moving in. Once the home's shell was complete, Dick

acted as his own contractor. Even before the electricity and plumbing were installed, he stayed in the home on weekends. He framed, stained and sealed walls; installed the doors, stairway and pine flooring; and wired the house and mounted the light fixtures and appliances. Gwen's job was to cover each of the nail holes in the walls. "I thought we would never run out of nail holes to putty," she laughs.

For three years, the couple added to the home bit by bit, checking with the county inspector to ensure everything met code requirements. "They were never turned down at an inspection, so there is no question that Dick did his homework and had his ducks in a row," says Wayne.

It was a lot of work, but the Shaffers don't regret a moment of it. "It was an adventure," says Dick. "And it probably was the most fun we've ever had." 🏠



Dick and Gwen (above) sited their home to ensure the best views. They oriented the back porch toward the northwest so they could watch storms come in across the mountains and the sun set over the horizon.

To keep the main floor from feeling cramped, the couple added an extra row of logs to the walls (far left) so that the beams could be placed higher—a trick builder Wayne Davies says visually expands any space. An antique trunk passed down from Dick's mother serves as the coffee table.

There were no loft windows in the home's original plan, but builder Wayne Davies planned a custom trapezoid window (left) to open up the space and ensure a clear view of the valley below. A futon in the corner invites the owners and guests for a restful respite.



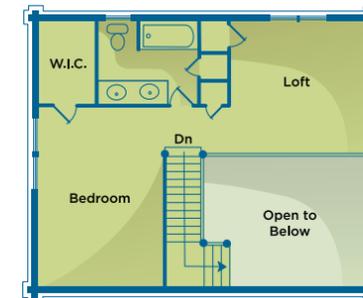
After purchasing their mountainous, 2-acre plot, owners Dick and Gwen Shaffer opted for a three-story design (left) that capitalized on their site's natural slope and picture-perfect views.

Determined not to use a fiberglass tub in the master bathroom (below), Dick refinished a century-old cast-iron tub from an antique store. He removed the rust and restored the tub by sandblasting, applying several coats of primer and gilding on the claw-foot legs. But he left the plaque dated 1909 on the tub's base intact.

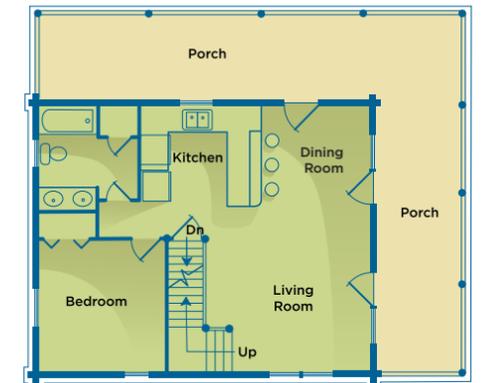


Dick used the southern yellow pine beams (above) to display the Lionel trains of his childhood, while Gwen added her own flair with handmade window treatments. A wooden raccoon purchased from a local woodworker rounds out the homey look.

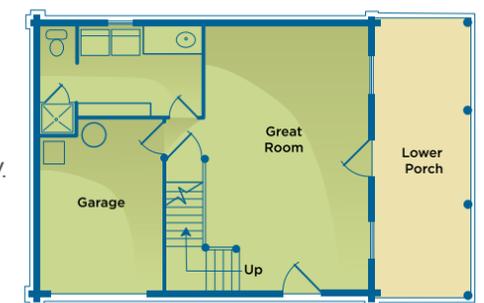
Relaxing on the covered porch (right), sweet tea in hand, is one of the Shaffers' preferred activities at the cabin, but Dick says he has a hard time choosing a favorite spot. "I enjoy being anywhere in the cabin."



Second Floor



First Floor



Basement

RESOURCES

- Square footage: 2,000
- # Bedrooms: 2
- # Bathrooms: 3
- Producer: Appalachian Log Structures, Ripley WV.
- Log species: Eastern white pine

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