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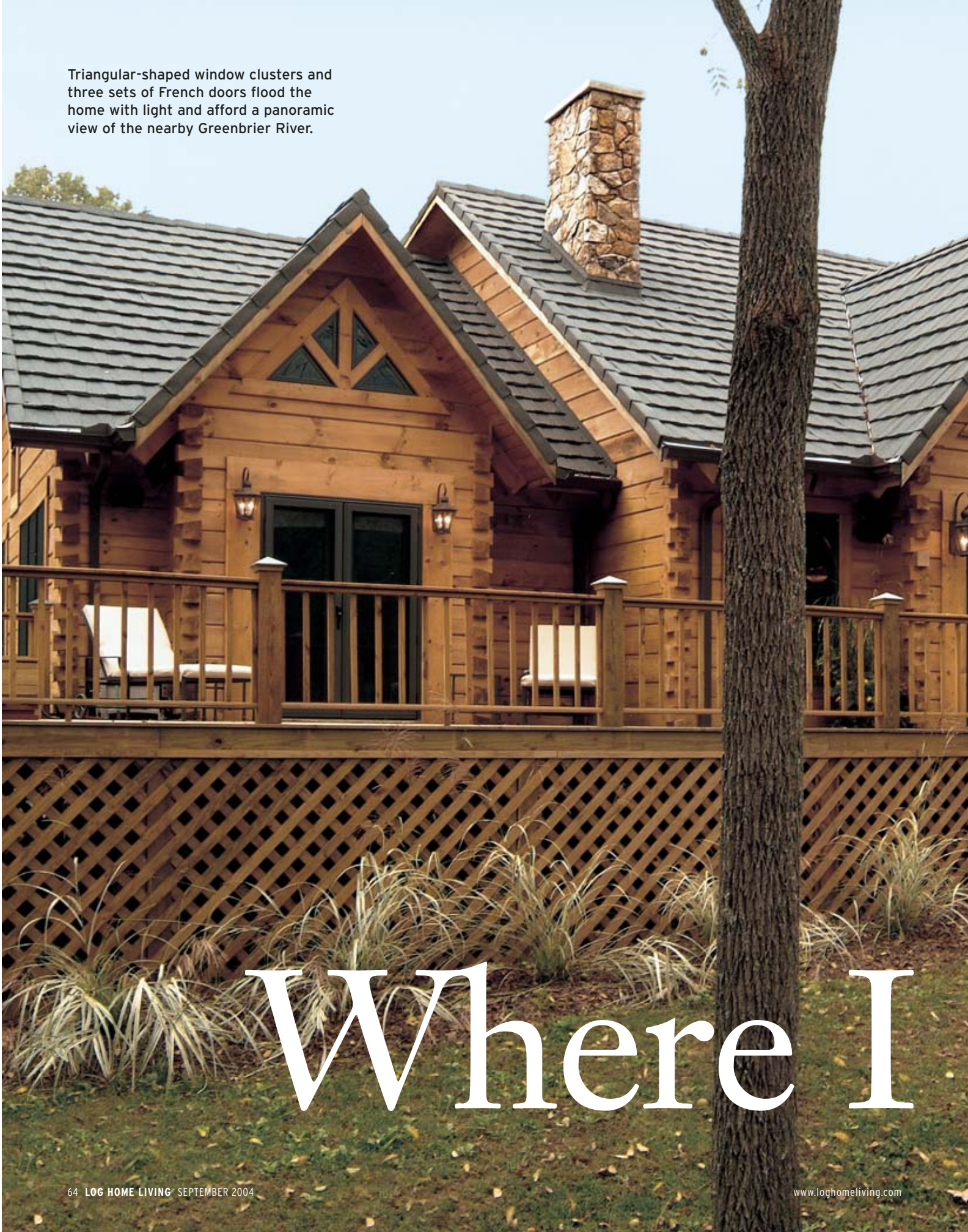
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Triangular-shaped window clusters and three sets of French doors flood the home with light and afford a panoramic view of the nearby Greenbrier River.



Where I



AS NEWLYWEDS, JOE AND SANDI LEWIS LIVED IN A LOG HOUSE. TWENTY-SIX YEARS LATER, THEY'VE RETURNED TO THEIR ROOTS TO A PLACE THEY CAN TRULY CALL HOME—WEST VIRGINIA.

Log homes have come a long way from the one Sandi and Joe Lewis lived in when they were first married 26 years ago. When the couple was preparing for retirement in 2001, they decided to build a new log house on the banks of the West Virginia's Greenbrier River. "Our previous log house had constant chinking problems, and the logs weren't uniform. It was pretty rustic. They've improved them so much since we built our first one," says Joe. "This one is much more air-tight than our first home," adds Sandi, "and the manufacturers have much better designs now."

A pair of Chinese pugs enjoys their log home as much as their owners do—especially the manufactured sandstone fireplace that soars 25 feet to the peak of the great room's cathedral ceiling.





After two decades of marriage and two former homes, Sandi and Joe had a pretty good idea what features they wanted to include in their retirement house. They also had specific needs when planning the rooms their home would have. “We definitely wanted a garage and a laundry room off the kitchen. I also wanted a screened-in porch so I could enjoy the outdoors without all the bugs,” Sandi says.

Because Sandi and Joe are involved in a church ministry that provides guardianship to boys in need, it also was imperative that their home have a large game room above the garage, as well as a handicapped-accessible bathroom in the mudroom. “We knew we were going to have the boys come to stay with us,” Sandi says. “When they come in from a day of fishing or walking along the river, we wanted them to be able to get rid of their muddy clothes and go up the back stairs to the game room where they can sleep or watch TV.”

But it wasn’t only the floorplan that the couple was concerned with. Joe and Sandi also had precise ideas about how they wanted their home to look in relation to their land, and Appalachian Log Structures not only offered a design that appealed to them inside and out, they also offered the flexibility to make changes as the Lewises saw fit.

For instance, Appalachian’s original plan called for circle-top windows, but Sandi altered the design to incorporate triangular windows instead, because she thought it would give the house a woody look. Joe agreed, believing that the angular shape would blend in better with the home’s roofline. The company was also agreeable to incorporating materials other than logs in the design. “It’s nice to have other types of wall surfaces besides logs,” Sandi says. “Our first log home had too much wood. This time, we used dry-wall in many areas, including the bathrooms and the loft.”

Tiffany-style pendants cast light on the bar area of the kitchen’s bi-level granite countertop. The handcrafted cabinets, made from locally harvested butternut, have a subtle shimmer that adds a touch of glamour to the room.

Choosing a manufacturer that meets your needs and expectations is one of the most important processes in the log home journey, and Joe and Sandi took their time before selecting Appalachian Log Structures to craft their home.

They looked at a variety of model log homes and did a lot of research before hiring the Ripley, West Virginia-based company. “I read every log home magazine for several years before we started the project, just to get ideas,” says Sandi. After visiting several Appalachian homes, the couple chose its standard Richmond model as their base and customized it to fit both their lot and their lifestyle. The home is constructed of 6-by-12-inch eastern white pine logs with a

Local metalsmith Dan Easley forged the intricate wrought-iron chandelier suspended above the dining room table. An Edison crank phonograph that once belonged to the owner's grandfather adds to the room's old-fashioned ambiance.



double-notch profile and authentic dovetail corners. This log profile creates a tight, interlocking fit and doesn't require chinking. In addition to the logs, the package included the windows, entry doors and water-repellant exterior stain in a honey-toned hue.

Practical, but Refined Styles

Joe and Sandi planned to use asphalt shingles on their roof until they attended a log home show and saw a steel roof by Gerard Roofing Technologies from Brea, California. "I didn't really like the idea of a shiny green or red roof for our house," says Joe, "but when I saw Gerard's product, I was impressed." You can barely tell that it's metal. The shingle-like surface has a muted gray-and-brown finish that reminds Sandi of tree bark.

Rick Bennett served as the Lewises general contractor, and with his crew of two, he finished their home in just 18 months. A versatile jack-of-all-trades, Rick has been in the construction business for 25 years, and he enjoys the challenge of building a log home. "So many projects are a lot of work, and then you cover it up with drywall," he says. "When you build with logs, what you do is what you see."

Wanting to keep a watchful eye as their home went up, Sandi and Joe camped in an RV on their secluded property as often as they could. Joe videotaped the whole process, beginning with the day the logs were delivered to their hayfield. "It seemed like we were building a mansion compared to living in that RV," says Sandi of their 3,816-square-foot home.

Although the house doesn't have mansion-like proportions, it is distinctive. Appalachian Log Structures vice president Dorie Workman believes one of the most distinguishing aspects is their screened-in porch—a sunny space that offers a panoramic view of the Greenbrier River and ample space for indoor/outdoor entertaining. "This is the first house we've done that has that nice, big gable-end porch," Dorie says. "The dining room and kitchen both have French doors that open fully to expand their living area an-



Dorie Workman, vice president of Appalachian Log Structures, believes the spacious screened-in porch is one of the Lewis home's most appealing features. With the French doors flung wide, it doubles the size of the dining and kitchen area.

other 15 feet. The porch almost doubles the size of the kitchen and dining area, and it opens it up to the outdoors."

For additional outdoor living, a deck extends the entire length of the home's river front and accommodates a hot tub, a dining set and plenty of patio furniture for relaxing. On the other side of the house, a curved driveway leads up to the entryway, and a covered porch offers another peaceful nook to read or rock.

Finishing Touches

Inside, the home is impeccably finished. Every detail was given considerable thought, and it shows. A model of efficiency, the double-sided wood-burning fireplace opens to the living room on one side and to the master bedroom on the other. To face the living room's fireplace, which soars 25 feet to the peak of the room's cathedral ceiling, the couple saved money by selecting manufactured sandstone from Riviera Stone Company in

Jumping Branch, West Virginia. To give the fireplace a note of distinction, Sandi and Joe asked their mason to stack the stone on its edge, resulting in a chunky, dry-stacked appearance. A keystone at the top of the firebox's arch adds a sophisticated look to the hearth.

A friend, Rusty Hatcher of Alpha Music in Fairlea, West Virginia, wired the house for sound. This process took place during the early stages of construction, which enabled Rusty to properly conceal the wires. So that the volume and music selection could be adjusted from various points in the house, some of the surround-sound components are contained in an armoire in the living room; others are located in a closet near the master bedroom. Speakers are in every room and out on the decks, providing music just about everywhere you roam.

With the construction complete, the time finally came to select the home's decor. Sandi and Joe enlisted interior de-



HOW TO USE LOCAL ARTISANS

Log home owners Joe and Sandi Lewis are firm believers in going local, so it was important to them to use regional craftspeople to complete and finish their West Virginia home.

For example, a stained-glass window serves as a focal point in the master bedroom suite. Created by artist and friend Elizabeth Grafton, it features an angel floating over a log home and portrays the blessings the couple feels have been bestowed on them. Local metalsmith Dan Easley, whose work is featured at The Greenbrier in White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, forged a dramatic wrought-iron chandelier for the dining room, the base for a ceramic sink in the powder room and wall sconces in the living room. Neighbor Stan Eller handcrafted kitchen and bathroom cabinets of butternut harvested nearby.

To fill in the rest of their furnishing needs, Joe and Sandi found many talented artisans at The Tamarack in Beckley, West Virginia—a one-stop shop for West Virginian cultural items, handmade crafts and fine art.

Looking for local artisans to put the finishing touches on your log home? Seek out craft guilds, art galleries, gift shops and craft fairs in your area. Surf the Internet with success by narrowing your search criteria to include specific styles and geographic regions, and check with your regional chamber of commerce, visitors and convention bureau and college art departments. —M.A.H.

signer Martha Morris to help them furnish their house. Martha had decorated the couple's former house in Pensacola, Florida, but geography and climate differences dictated an entirely different style for their new log home. "I hadn't seen a lot of log homes," admits Martha, "so I looked at **Log Home Living** and other log home magazines to see what furnishings were out there."

Martha and Sandi selected warm shades of red, mossy greens and golden accents for the living and dining areas, but they sought a brighter, airier look for the spacious master bedroom suite—a 17-by-

ABOVE: Early morning sunlight streams through the custom-made stained-glass window in the master bedroom suite. A Bordeaux-and-gold area rug anchors the tufted chairs and ottoman in the room's sitting area. **OPPOSITE:** An iron four-poster bed with Florentine black-gold finish completes the bedroom.

32-foot room that contains a four-poster bed, fireplace and cozy sitting area. Colors such as butterscotch, sand and beige give this space a clean, tranquil look. Both Sandi and Joe say this is their favorite room. In fact, they enjoy spending time in here so much that for their 25th anniversary last year, Sandi surprised Joe with a catered, seven-course meal served to them in their master suite. “We had a fire going in the bedroom’s sitting area and had the courses served to us in front of the fireplace,” remembers Joe. “We’re extremely happy with this room.”

Friends and family from south Florida love to visit the Lewises’ log home. “It’s such a different lifestyle being in the country, away from everything. It’s reverse culture shock,” says Joe, who’s a self-proclaimed back-to-nature kind of guy. “To have a home built out of local materials in the way of our ancestors appeals to me. I believe that a log home here on the river bank, surrounded by the woods, blends in as part of the world’s bigger picture.” ■



HOME DETAILS

- **Square footage:** 3,816
- **Package price:** \$150,000

- **Log producer:** Appalachian Log Structures
- **General contractor:** Rick Bennett

