

Surrounded on three sides by water, this "man's house" has the appeal of a southern lodge built over a hundred years ago.





SWEET HOME **ALABAMA**

BY MICHAEL BAXTER

PHOTOS BY FRANKLIN & ESTHER SCHMIDT



The great room's lake theme resonates with the wide views of Lake Martin from the windows. An 8-foot-tall wooden Indian stands guard in front of the 28-foot-tall, freestanding fireplace made of cultured stone. Massive hemlock ceiling beams and pine flooring give the home its lodge appeal. INSET: A solid maple pool table takes center stage in the rec room, whose triple French doors lead onto the deck and down to the water.



WHEN NIGEL HORNSBY FIRST MET WITH APPALACHIAN LOG STRUCTURES owner Jim Cole, his only demand was that the custom log home that he wanted was to be “a man’s house,” and that’s just what he got.

“Seriously. Right from the beginning, Nigel told me that this was going to be a ‘man’s house,’” says Cole. “We did it all without having to worry about somebody coming along behind us and not liking what we did.”

“I’ve been divorced for several years, so I didn’t have a wife telling me what color to put here, what kind of curtains to put there, and what to put on the floor,” Hornsby says. “The whole project went so smoothly that way, and would you believe it, some people are really surprised that Jim and I did such a good job at decorating.”

This “man’s house” is a 3,300-square-foot, two-story log home with a full basement sitting on a small island in Lake Martin, about 30 miles west of Auburn, Alabama. A modified version of the Dogwood plan found in Appalachian Log Structures’ catalogue, Hornsby knew that this was his home as soon as he saw it in the plan book. “I’ve always had a fascination with wanting a home that looked like it was built a hundred years ago,” he says. “My great grandfather lived not far from here in an old house with a ‘dog trot’ down the center. This design reminded me of that home. It’s similar—less the dog trot—right down to the galvanized metal roof.”

Connected to the shore by a causeway, this landmark on Lake Martin has views in all four directions through spacious Hurd double-hung windows, oversized French doors, and large trapezoidal windows topping the front and back walls.

“When you’re looking out the front of the house, you’re looking at six miles of open water,” says Hornsby. “In another direction there’s nothing but hills and trees about a quarter of a mile across the lake. The third direction has our pier and gazebo, and the fourth side has homes. That’s not my favorite side,” he confesses.

One of the modifications to the original Dogwood design involved taking the downstairs master bedroom and connecting study and converting the entire space into a large recreation room for Nigel and his children, 19-year-old Ross and 18-year-old Kim, both students at Auburn University.



RIGHT: The custom kitchen is outfitted with all the amenities, but Nigel prefers to do his cooking outdoors on the deck.

BELOW: Light pours into the corner dining room, bringing the lake views inside. Nigel chose flat interior walls that are in keeping with log cabins that were built a hundred years ago.



“The rec room has a pool table, and I have to tell you ... it ... is ... nice!” says Hornsby. “It’s custom made by a company in Atlanta, Georgia, and is very unusual; it’s made of solid maple with rosewood rails.” The triple French doors lining the wall of the rec room lead onto a deck and down to the boat house and the water.

The nearly 400-square-foot great room has a lake theme from its pine floor to the massive hemlock beams high in the vaulted ceiling. “I have end tables made from boat paddles and fishing creels hanging on the walls,” Hornsby says. “One of the lamps is statuary of fish, another has sailboats, and yet another has lighthouses.”

A special artistic element to the great room involves hand-carved face boards around the doors created by Hornsby’s sister Sheila and her husband Tommy Godfrey. Keeping with the lake theme, one of the face boards has intricately carved fish, while another sports a detailed lighthouse carved into the wood.

“I also have an 8-foot-tall wooden Indian in the great room to go with other Indian things that are there now and that I plan to bring in,” Hornsby explains. “I have an ancestor who was part Indian and this area once belonged to the Creek Nation, so it’s important to me.”

Jim Cole describes the great room fireplace as awesome. “It’s 28 feet tall, sits in the middle of the house, and you can walk all the way around it,” he says. “It’s made of artificial stone, but it looks so natural that

you'd never know it wasn't real." In fact, it's the same stone used throughout the house and outside in the landscaping, retaining wall, and stairways.

"The fireplace is huge," exclaims Hornsby. "It's open to the great room and the back side is a wall to the kitchen and to the loft upstairs." The mantel is a piece of recycled wood from an old home, and inset front and center is a special wrought-iron plate with the name "Hornsby" laser cut into it.

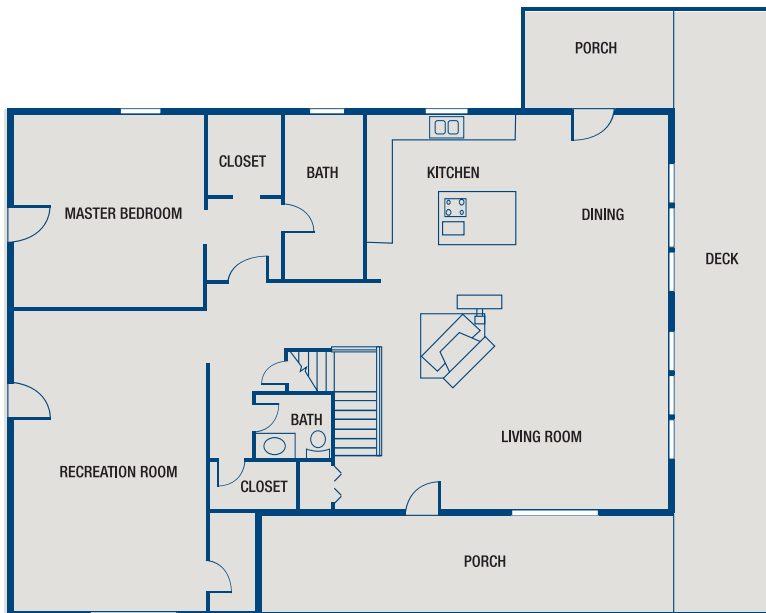
"The stairs in this home were custom designed with a special cut, sort of peg stairs," Cole said. The riser is a 4-by-12 beam that was cut to allow the stair treads to be inserted and protrude like a peg. "It really gives the stairway character and it's a focal point when people come in," he says.

Of the 11 rooms in this home, the upstairs master bedroom is Hornsby's favorite. "I really like that room," he says. "It has all sorts of angles in the walls and those big beams in the ceiling. It's just so unique."

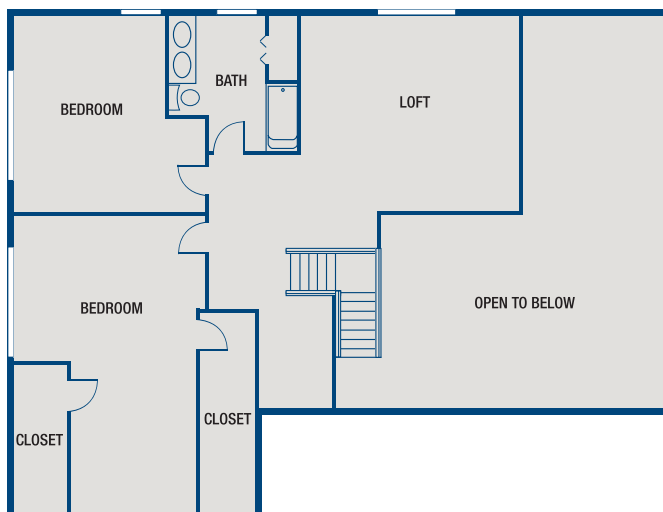
Hornsby's least favorite room is the kitchen with its custom cabinets, bar and countertops, and stainless steel appliances. He doesn't have much use for it and would rather do his cooking the old-fashioned way ... on a basic charcoal grill outside on the deck.

The massive pine logs that surround the home are dove-tail, or authentic, cornered, and although rounded on the exterior, all of the interior walls are flat. "I've never been able to make myself like the round walls on the interior," Hornsby says. "To me the flat walls are more natural in a home. Down here the old log cabins from the early 1800s were built with split logs and that is what I wanted." A clearcoat stain was originally used at construction, but the home recently received a new darker coat to better withstand the lakeside elements.

A self-proclaimed workaholic, Hornsby admits that he isn't the relaxing type, so for him this home is more of a hobby or a work in progress. But, when he can find the time to get away, grill a burger, and watch the sun go down over Lake Martin, this island dream home is truly his sweet home Alabama. 🌲



Main Level



Upper Level

LOG PRODUCER: Appalachian Log Structures, Ripley, West Virginia; **BUILDER/DEALER:** Jim Cole, Annewakee Log Homes, Douglasville, Georgia.

CHALLENGES OF BUILDING ON A SMALL ISLAND

According to builder Jim Cole, putting a large log home on a small island can present unique challenges.

"Nigel's home was complex with its big valley rafters and 28-foot-high ceilings in the great room," he says. "Then the upstairs master bedroom had its own set of huge rafters that were probably 6-by-16. It's not easy to deal with big beams on dry land, but on an island it's really tough. We had to hand-lift the beams to the sec-

ond floor because there was no room to get a crane or tractor in there," he says.

Then there was the issue of chinking all the walls. "Holy cow. It was really something putting the chinking inside as well as out," Cole says. "It's in every closet, on every wall, and then downstairs, where it's 28 feet tall, we had to set up scaffolding. That was a chore."

"What we finally did was tape every joint, top to bottom, throughout the house with blue

painter's masking tape, put the chinking in, and then removed the tape," he says. "It was wild looking, almost like the house was wearing pin-stripes."

The other challenge faced during construction was the stone retaining wall midway between the house and the waterline. "You start running around that lower level with a tractor and you'd better watch where you're going all the time. Otherwise, you could end upside down in the lake."