

North Lake Tahoe Bonanza

Wednesday, December 14, 2005

Incline home brings the outside in

By **Patricia Hickson**
BONANZA STAFF WRITER

There is a familiar story that every long-time Tahoe local tells. It usually starts with the love of the mountains, a broken-down car and an old pair of skis....

For general contractor Alan Richards, who said he "came up to Tahoe 28 years ago in a Volkswagen bus with a pair of skis," the carefree start of life in the mountains has expanded to a successful building career that began in his 20s and recently landed him in the national spotlight.

This winter, a log home Richards built in Incline Village is featured on

the cover of "American Dream Homes" magazine.

It was the sixth time that a home Richards built has been featured in a national magazine and the fourth time that this particular home has been spotlighted.

What makes the oft-featured house so impressive is not its size (though it is 10,000 square feet) or its location (though the expansive lake views don't hurt) but its design and craftsmanship, "A.D.H" editor Lauren Payne said.

"Character wood" gnarled and curled, is used for the banisters and railings; cedar bark covers all the gabled ends of the home and a carved tree pushes up from the first floor into the second floor living room, its

smooth branches extending over the stairway.

Bern Falke, owner of Incline Village Ace Hardware, remembers working with Richards when they both first moved to the area.

"Most of the time we worked for a very fine home-builder, Franklin Builders, and we did custom homes," Falke recalled. "We both got pretty good at building normal homes and then Alan took it a step further. Alan began building fine log homes before anyone else had begun to build them. It is beyond carpentry; what he does is art."

"I lived in the woods, loved the

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Bonanza Photo - Emma Garrard

Wood from the property's lot was used inside the famous Incline log home.

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woods," said Richards, who spent three summers building trails in Yosemite before moving to Incline. "I always thought that if I had a house I would want a house that was like you were living outside inside."

Richards said that he tries to incorporate design elements that are indicative of the local history into the houses he builds.

"I look through historic magazines and at old pictures that people have hanging around Lake Tahoe," Richards said. "I like to bring into the homes some of the character of where we live in the mountains."

Richards' interest in log homes was sparked by a friend he worked with in Yosemite, Sherry Guzzi, who

was the architect that designed the nationally featured home.

"(She) said, you've got to come check out this log home in Big Sky, Mont.," Richards said, "and I went and I said, 'this is what I want to do.'"

Guzzi, who resides in Tahoe City and moved to the basin 20 years ago, said she has worked with Richards on nine log homes here.

"They key is to come out with a design that fits with the site and works well with the views and the sun," Guzzi said. "In this case we stretched the home out long so that every room has a view."

Guzzi said she specializes in designing log homes and that in an average year two of the five homes she draws are log homes.

The logs that make up the featured home in Incline are imported from Montana-

based Alpine Log Homes.

Chris Bishop of Alpine Log Homes said that most of the trees the company cuts are Lodgepole pines and Anglemanspruce with a diameter base height maximum of 30 inches.

In addition to the Lodgepole and spruce main logs, Richards also incorporated incense cedar, Douglas fir and pine into the walls floors and banisters of the inside of the house.

The Nevada rock, quartzite, was used for the floor in the main entry while a rock called Montana antique combines with the log structure on the front of the home.

"Every house is a challenge to make more beautiful," Richards said. "It's really neat to be able to build such interesting homes and to get recognized for your work."



Bonanza Photo - Emma Garrard

A log home on Fairview Drive, built by local contractor Alan Richards, is featured on the cover of American Dream Homes magazine.