

THE MAGAZINE FOR CAPTAINS OF INDUSTRY
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TODAY

SPG

This mid-sized NY based firm maintains excellence in everything from homes in the U.S. to villages **p82** in Rwanda

Schneider Heating p127

Mark Schneider explains why going green is worth spending the extra green.

PTC, Inc. p26

CEO Dawn Kori shows that the only woman-run post-tensioning company in the nation can take on huge projects.

Lake Tahoe is the inspiration for the log home masterpieces of

A Richards Built Home p72



RESPONDING TO OUR PAST AND PRESENT

Log Homes Continue To Stand As an Iconic Staple of American Living

by Jane Caffrey

Owning a log home provokes an emotional sentiment. This is perhaps because the log home is rooted in the American past, recalling the heritage of the pioneers and the frontier. Several aspects of log home living contribute to the recollection of a simpler life; the warmth of the wood, the feeling of comfort and security inside, and the beauty of log home structures. Yet even while providing these sensations of comfort, log homes also respond to the present in the United States. With a variety of styles and designs, log homes can be an economical living option. They are also completely natural and the most sustainable form of building, at a time when people are increasingly gravitating towards environmentally

conscious decisions. All of these factors will contribute to a robust market for log homes in the foreseeable future, as homeowners embrace both the past glory and the modern benefits of a log home. Jim Young, President of The Log Homes Council, sends a word of advice to those seeking to realize the dream of log home living: "People want a retreat; a home that represents an escape from the chaos of daily life. The Log Homes council is an available resource for those looking to begin the process of realizing that dream." Responding to both our past heritage and our present necessities, log homes continue to offer a welcoming, heritage-rich, and sustainable way of life.





Mountain Inspiration

by Jane Caffrey

Colossal mountains stretching into low clouds; sweeping jade forests; pristine waters of a glasslike lake; and the expansive dome of blue sky on crisp days. These are the scenes that embody Lake Tahoe, the country's large freshwater lake nestled at the foot of the Sierra Nevada mountains. Yet they also form the base to a fountain of inspiration for Alan Richards, Founder and President of A Richards Built Home. A deep love of nature led Richards into a career of producing mountain and lodge style homes that boast both classical beauty and environmental sustainability. With his work, Richards strives to give justice to the stunning mountain ambience of his community.

"I live in this beautiful mountain environment, with a bright blue sky, forests, no pollution. To me, Lake Tahoe is one of the most beautiful settings in the world. Having a great attitude about where you live and work has allowed me to create beautiful houses," Richards said.

The splendor of natural settings drew Richards from a young age. After serving in the military during the Vietnam War and then earning a B.A. in psychology from California State University, Sacramento, Richards explained that, "I just wanted to get out in the woods." The young graduate got a job on a trail crew in

At A Richards Built Home, the stunning natural scenery of Lake Tahoe inspires mountain and lodge style homes that are both traditional and environmentally sustainable



We think green, green, green. We spend a lot of time on that. It's the big shift, and we're doing a lot of research on this ... We're looking to use greener products, and overall we want to create more self-sufficient homes It's really about being sensitive to the environment that you live in and to planet Earth.





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Yosemite National Park, and spent three years in the backcountry re-carving trails and building bridges. During the winter off-season, he began helping a contractor friend with carpentry work.

"I love working with my hands, and I thought maybe I should learn a trade because it's always good to have a trade," Richards said. "I said that I would give myself three years to learn the trade of carpentry, then go back to the route of psychology and teaching. It ended up that I was a carpenter for 15 years, learning all aspects of building a house, and I really enjoyed it."

After 15 years of working on conventional homes, Richards decided to break out on his own and start a general contracting business. He built his first log home for his own family on Lake Tahoe, and after later constructing an additional log home for a friend, Richards' company took off. A Richards Built Home was founded in 1988 and based in Richards'

hometown of Incline Village, Nevada.

"I thought, after being in Yosemite and enjoying the beauty of nature, that when I started building houses on my own I really wanted them to fit into the environment, to almost feel like you're living outside," Richards said. "I was going to do something unique, and that was to build log homes because they fit so well into this environment. Even at that point, I knew that they were so ecological."

Two decades later, A Richards Built Home continues to serve the Lake Tahoe, Reno, and Carson areas, and sees annual revenue of approximately \$7 million. While the company has built several stunning contemporary homes over the years, its specialty are the rustic log homes in mountain and lodge styles. As a focused, hands-on contractor, Richards undertakes a limited number of projects each year, to ensure that each home is distinguished by fine craftsmanship, artistry, and attention to detail.

"What sets us apart is attention to detail. Clients will say, 'You're a perfectionist.' I really know the whole process, after working 80 hours a week to do my full time job in the past, and then building additional houses on the side. That's a huge advantage."

Arched trusses, wooden stairways, wide porches, and the natural beauty of log material define artistry and fine craftsmanship in each A Richards Built home. Yet these stunning structures find place in the mountain environment not only for

their natural beauty, but also because the company remains devoted to the construction of sustainable homes rated by LEED standards. Adam Robb, Alan Richards' 28-year-old son and business partner, has been at the head of this wave of green building. After graduating from St. Mary's College, Adam Robb began working in construction with his father as a LEED certified professional.

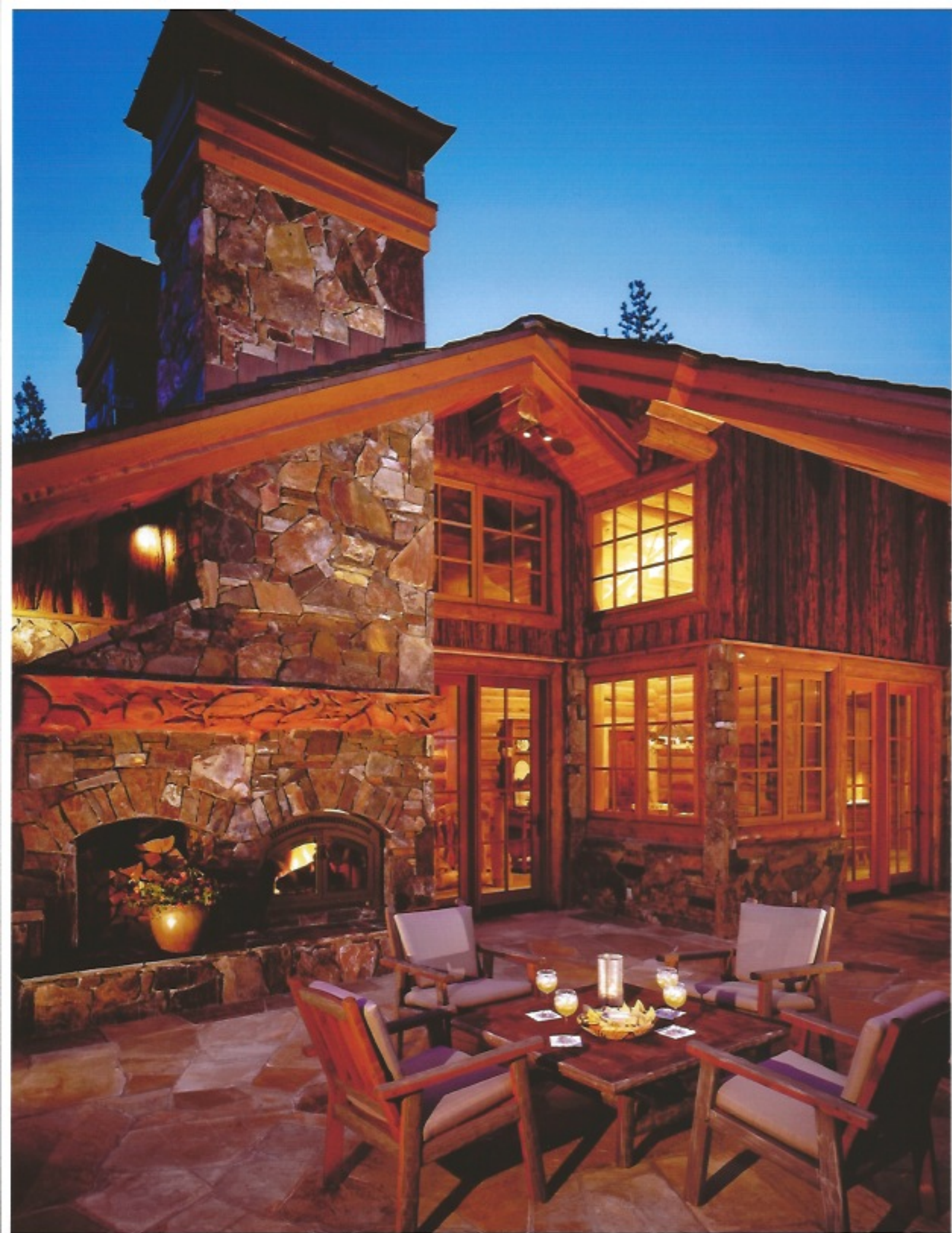
"We think green, green, green," Richards said. "We spend a lot of time on that. It's the big shift, and we're doing a lot of research on this, particularly my son Adam with his LEED certification. We're looking to use greener products, and overall we want to create more self-sufficient homes."

Sustainability manifests in Richards' homes in the forms of foam insulation, geothermal heating systems, solar energy, and earth sod roofs that allow homeowners to grow personal gardens. Careful to protect the clean waters of Lake Tahoe, the company also prevents erosion both during construction and by implementing rock trenches around houses so that dripping water does not cause dirt to slide into the lake.

"It's really about being sensitive to the environment that you live in and to planet Earth," Richards said.

The company has completed a multitude of green projects, including a LEED Silver Certified, 2,500 square foot Frank Lloyd Wright hybrid home. Yet the crown jewel for this company is a stunning log home constructed eight years ago. Dubbed "The







Secret Cabin," this 10,000 square foot house rests on the eastern slope of Lake Tahoe. All logs utilized in the home were cut from dead-standing forest, and a Vermont slate roof promises durability and energy efficiency. The home was also designed with passive solar to take advantage of the southern exposure that the lot it rests on affords.

"Everybody just put everything into this house. The clients were very supportive of every creative decision and every practical decision, and they were not afraid to spend money to go over the top. We stretched all of our creative abilities to make it the most beautiful house at that time," Richards said. Featured in several national magazines around the country, "The Secret Cabin" bolstered the reputation of A Richards Built Home as an exceptional contractor. Paying due tribute to the spectacular natural environment, the completed masterpiece offers panoramic views of Lake Tahoe and the surrounding mountains.

The mountain environment at Lake Tahoe not only inspires beautiful and sustainable natural structures, but also exceptional service from A Richards Built Home. "Being a contractor in a small town where everyone knows everyone, you really can't make any mistakes. We really strive for and provide clients with excellent services," Richards said. Incline Village has a population of just less than 10,000, and A Richards Built Home

maintains a strong reputation within the community due to its commitment to honesty and integrity. Richards is dedicated to superior service to clients in this friendly town, and that extends to former customers. If a client has a problem at any point, even years after a home was constructed, Richards will respond in less than an hour.

"If a something doesn't work, if for example a door knob is sticking, I'll go up there and fix it, pay for the door knob, and do the labor for free. We back our product, with the knowledge that clients might call 10 or 15 years down the line. You've got an extended warranty when you build a house with me," Richards said.

Honesty and integrity remain at the heart of company philosophy, as does producing handsome homes that pay justice to a breathtaking natural environment in terms of both beauty and efficiency. In upcoming years, the company plans to remain on the forefront of green building. As Adam Robb increasingly takes on more responsibility, preparing to one day run the business independently, research on sustainable construction will persist. Thus, A Richards Built Home will continue to produce stunning houses into the future with green features that will protect the remarkable environment that inspired such homes in the first place. *CLT*

