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Sierra Serenade

Teamwork builds a Nevada home worthy of its setting

On 16 acres overlooking Lake Tahoe, a self-described outdoors woman created a mountain home with the help of architect Sherry Guzzi, interior designer Jan Gardner, Tahoe builder Alan Richards, landscape designer Brent Thrams and Alpine Log Homes. By assembling such a talented team, the homeowner assured that the home would be designed and built to fulfill her vision.

"Among the mandates the client gave me when we first discussed the project was that she wanted the house to be tucked as close to the ground as possible, to fit into the landscape," Sherry recalls. "She didn't want that tall, remote feeling. Her previous Tahoe home had too many stairs to comfortably enjoy the environs and to allow her dogs to exercise. The vast majority of the homes here are on steep slopes that lead to the lake and often extend high into the air. From the roadside, this house appears to be only one story."

The woman had definite ideas about the interior as well. "Secondly, the house she envisioned as 'refined, not Western or cowboy,'" Sherry says. "The rooms were to be people scaled, not the soaring peaks often seen in homes along the shoreline."



Top: The setting overlooking Lake Tahoe is steep and covered with foliage. Architect Sherry Guzzi sited the home in order to preserve as many trees as possible.

Above: This upper deck is the ideal place for taking in a summer's day on the lake.

Opposite: The stone-paved patio adjoining the kitchen, which has a fieldstone fireplace, is the setting for evening cocktails. An embellishment added by contractor Alan Richards is the vertical bark-on cedar log covering on the gables.

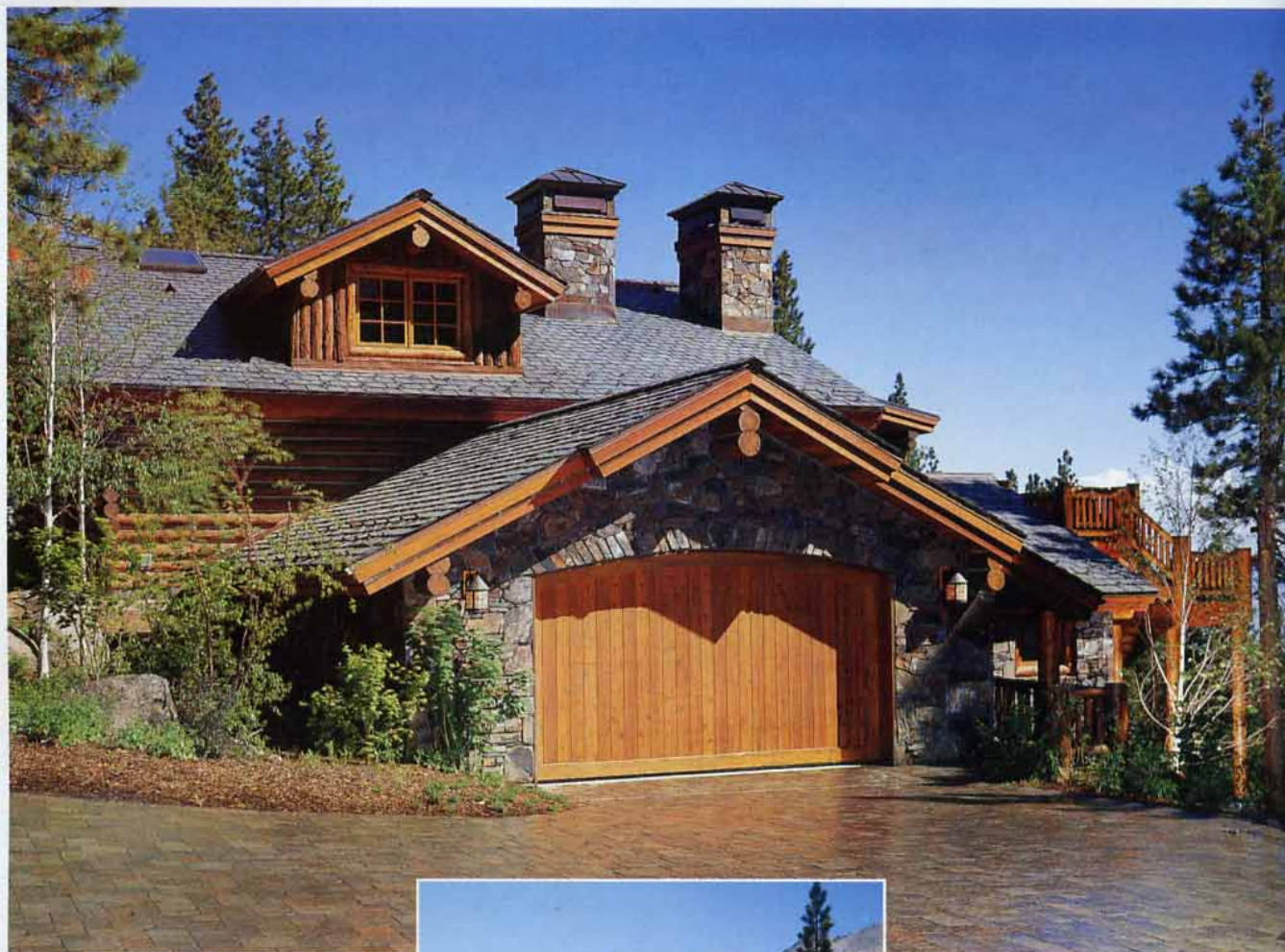
After presenting her requirements to the architect, the homeowner called Jan, who had put together the owner's previous home in Carmel. Jan is known for her interior designs of Carmel cottages, as well as mansions at Pebble Beach. "Because we had worked so well together before, the owner asked if I wouldn't help her. 'It is going to be a log home,' she told me," Jan says. "I explained that I knew nothing of log homes. Her reply was, 'Then we will have fun learning together.' It was not difficult. Good design is good design, whether you are doing a Park Avenue apartment or a log home in the mountains."

Jan continues, "Inside, my client wanted the home to have more of an elegant, international feeling, not the typical Navajo rugs and plaid fabrics." The homeowner has a large, extended family, along with an assortment of cats and dogs. Guests and family visit year round, partaking

in water sports, mountain biking and hiking in the summer, and skiing the nearby resorts in the winter. As a result, the decor needed to be easygoing.

With the concept design in motion, Alpine Log Homes was brought on to the team. The residence was handcrafted





by Alpine at its plant in Victor, Montana, according to Sherry's specifications. The logs were cut from dead trees that had remained standing. Each log was hand-peeled, and the entire framework was assembled, numbered and loaded onto flatbed trucks, then shipped to the building location.

In the meantime, the general contractor had been preparing the site and installing the foundation, readying for the logs' arrival. "The restacking of the logs took only four days," Alan says. "The fifth and final day was dedicated to unloading the log siding that would eventually cover the lower level foundation walls."

With the support of her creative team, the homeowner proceeded to build the 10,000-square-foot home on the hillside property dotted with pines and oak. The site, located 2,200 feet above the lake, offers far-reaching views of the shimmering shores and the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The process took over two years, in the course of which the architect, designers, and builders paid attention to the many



Top: In order to keep the home's profile low, architect Guzzi pushed the stone garage into the hillside. A dormer that sheds light into the workout room is faced with vertical cedar logs.

Above: With winter snow and occasional summer rains, a circular drive leads to the entrance structure that allows guests to enter without getting wet.

details that this size project presents. "She allowed me so much freedom, and she was open to many innovations and creative embellishments," Alan recalls. "We shared in her dream. That's a lot of what log homes are—pieces of dreams."

The house spreads across the generous site. "She wanted to walk through the front door and see the lake and mountains," Sherry notes. Hence, the entry hall is elevated with three steps down to the great room. Decks extend across the width of the house with a series of French doors that open on to the same view.

The house faces southwest and needed to be protected from both the summer's harsh afternoon sun and the winter snows. This was accomplished with 2,000 square feet of covered decks connecting the outdoor living terraces. The

larger rooms of the upper level—the living room, kitchen, master bedroom and spa room—all have large gables with overhangs that open up spaces, allowing light in yet protecting it from the elements.

Designer Jan Gardner created the warm, easy-going interiors. The sofa table and its "elk herd" were hand-made by Bruce Newell.





Architect Guzzi defined the central seating area at the center of the great room with a Sierra Rock hearth. Above the fireplace hangs an antique grape-gathering basket filled with dried flowers.





Sherry, Alan and the homeowner worked in partnership, choosing the Vermont slate for the roof and the Sierra Stone for foundation and chimneys. The floors are Nevada quartzite, a nice mix of rustic materials that will weather gracefully over time.

This is not a formal home per se, where the main rooms

On the opposite side of the living area fireplace is the dining area. A bronze chandelier hangs above the hefty table by Guy Chaddock.

are separated. Instead, it consists of open space—the great room—into which all the smaller rooms flow, like the office-library, breakfast room, workout area and master suite. The great room is the public room, used for entertaining, visiting and taking in the lake views. It is divided into multi-seating areas for



The kitchen, designed by Kitchen Studios of Seaside, California, takes advantage of space with plenty of workstations, a substantial center island and top-quality appliances.



The breakfast room is brightened by the day's early rays. The hand-painted table and chairs are by Woodland.

Porches and decks along the home's back vary in width. Some are covered, some step up and others step down.



large groups. There is a cozy seating arrangement around the hearth, a game table with four chairs and a third grouping next to the window wall.

Intentionally, there is not a guestroom on the main level so that the homeowner and her visitors have quiet, private

places. The guest apartment and bedrooms, family and media rooms are located on the lower level. They are reached from either the front or back stairwell.

"The collaborative nature of the project was evident throughout the design and construction phases," says Chris

In the master bedroom, builder Richards and his crew created a "head-board" from the branches of dead trees. To soften it, interior designer Gardner draped the bed with a gauze-like linen.



Bishop of Alpine Log Homes. Sherry sums it up best: "Each craftsman and artisan put forth their best work. The homeowner was very hands on. If the house succeeds, it is because we had a incredible client who put herself into each and every detail." **LHI**

RESOURCES

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Designer: Sherry Guzzi, Architect AIA, P.O. Box 7763, Tahoe City CA 96145, (530) 583-9573.

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Interior Designer: Jan Gardner & Associates, Carmel CA, (831) 624-8686.

Landscape Architect: Acanthus Studio Inc., 1723 J Street, Sacramento CA 95814, (916) 444-9020. Website: www.acanthusstudio.com.

Right: Guests enjoy gathering in the lower level family room with its wine bar and pool table. Through the iron gates near the bar, the climate-controlled wine cellar can be accessed.

Below: On the door leading to the media room, the homeowner had a box office window painted with a likeness of her mother inside.

