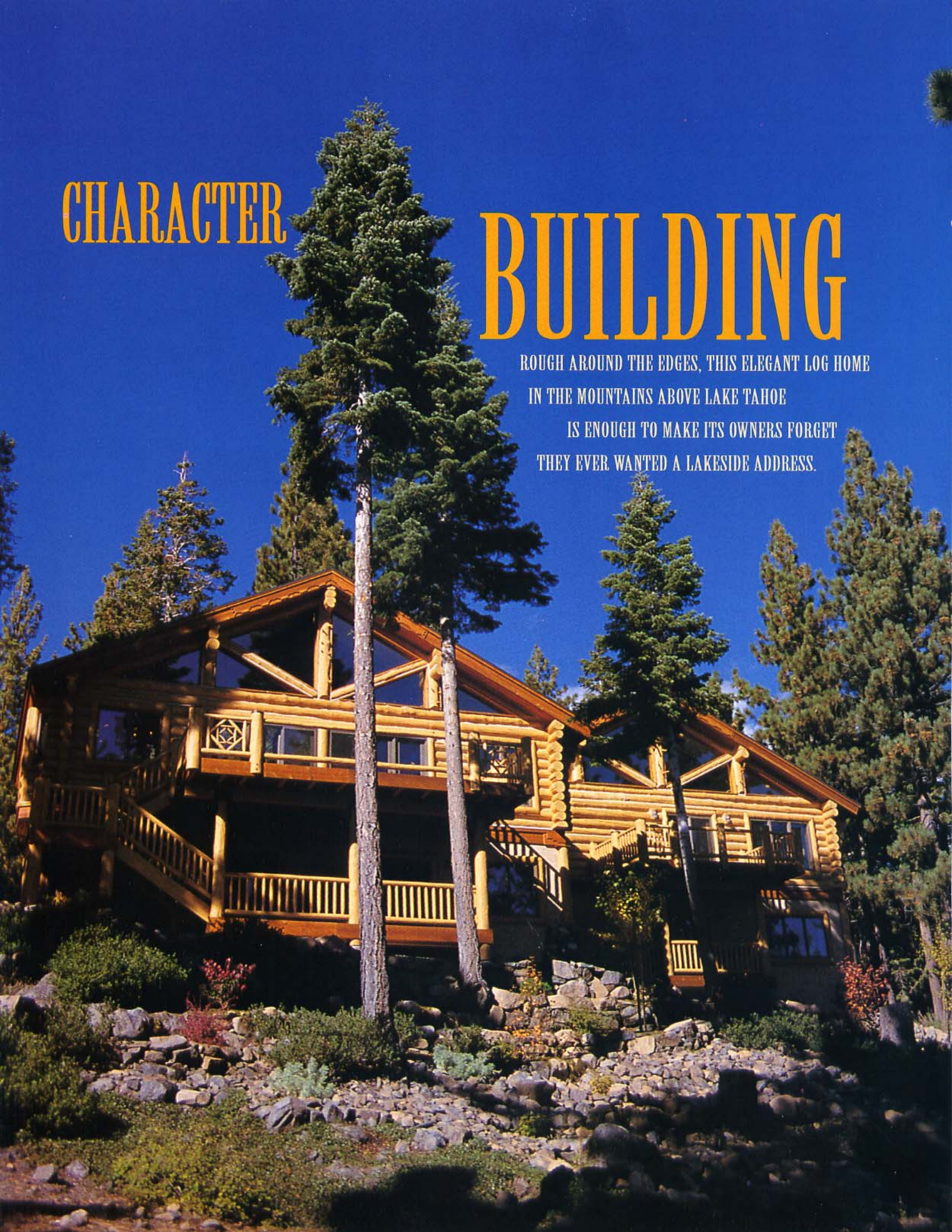


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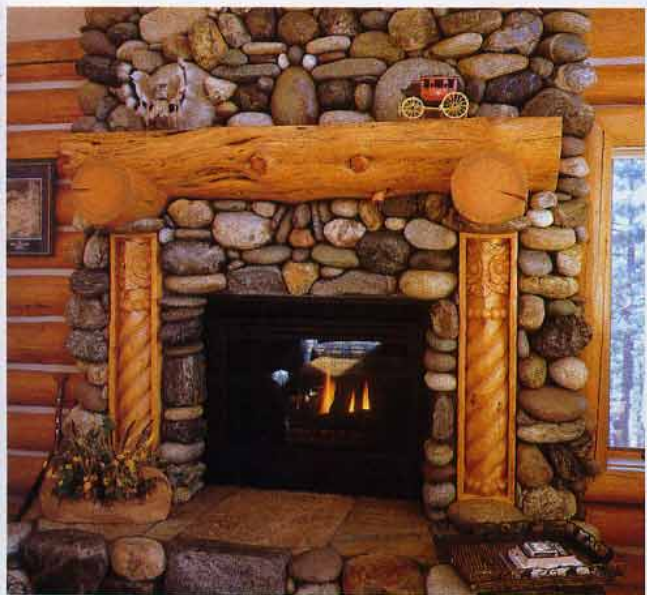
BUILDING

ROUGH AROUND THE EDGES, THIS ELEGANT LOG HOME
IN THE MOUNTAINS ABOVE LAKE TAHOE
IS ENOUGH TO MAKE ITS OWNERS FORGET
THEY EVER WANTED A LAKESIDE ADDRESS.



By Kim Pryor

Photography by André Ramjone



Lisa Nesbitt's first glimpse of what would become her family's alpine retreat was not love at first sight. It had almost everything; a handsome facade, an interesting personality; but it lacked her husband Steve's primary requirement. Their second home had to be by the water, he declared. To make him happy, Lisa restricted her house hunting to Lake Tahoe's shores. So, when the real-estate agent first showed her the log home, she ignored its beauty.

But, when the couple's planned purchase of a lakeside home fell through, Lisa gave the log home a second glance. "The second time I saw it, I fell in love with it," she says. "I called my husband, got him to fly up, and then it really was a matter of convincing him to get over the hurdle of not being right on the water." The 4,000-square-foot mountain home, above Incline Village near the Nevada/California state line is easy to fall in love with.

With an eye for detail, builder Alan Richards added many of his own personal touches, elevating the home from beautiful to breathtaking. One of Richards' signatures is his use of "character logs," tree trunks and limbs left in their natural state, and deadwood that Richards finds along the side of the road or in designated firewood-cutting areas.

One of those logs perches above the hallway leading to the home's master bedroom, in an eye-catching arch. Another log reclines over the

downstairs hallway in the shape of a tilted S. In the entrance-way, a curved pine log is embedded into the window. "I liked this particular log because of its ruggedness," Richards says. "It looked like it had been hit by lightning a couple times."

Richards embellished the home's original plan with other unique touches. Below the upstairs balcony gables, branches, some as thick as an arm, others as fragile as a twig, jut out of the wood. In the great room, lichen still clings to rocks surrounding the fireplace, an impressive structure made even more so by carved wooden Guadalupean porch posts Richards used on the hearth. Posts on the decks of the Nesbitt home form a diamond pattern rather than the usual vertical lines. This elegantly rough-around-the-edges style is reminiscent of Adirondack log homes built in the 1920s and 1930s.

Richards attributes his home-building philosophy to his days working on a trail crew for the National Park Service in Yosemite National Park. After he graduated from college with a degree in psychology,

Log-home builder, Alan Richards, creates the natural look by using nature's basic shapes—river rocks, field stones and "character logs." He wants his houses to be as close to nature as possible.



Richards realized his heart was really in the outdoors. “I think my whole philosophy from living in Yosemite’s backcountry for three years was that if you wanted to live in a house, you wanted it to be as close as possible to feeling like you’re living in nature with a roof over your head,” he says. “And that’s what I’m trying to achieve with these houses, to make you feel like you’re outdoors when you’re really indoors.”

In keeping with this philosophy, Tahoe City architect Sherry Guzzi designed large gables and floor-to-ceiling windows in the master bedroom of the Nesbitt home to allow for a panoramic view of the lake. “Lying in the master bedroom, when there’s a full moon up there, it’s incredible,” Lisa says. “It’s like a light’s on in the room, but it’s this beautiful gray light. And, sometimes, you see the moon reflecting on the lake.” Even the artificial lighting adds ambience. At night, low-voltage lights bathe the logs in an orange glow. Richards says, “The home’s original owner, Linda Cathey, says that it would bring tears to her eyes, it was so beautiful.”

Sam and Linda Cathey, the original owners, wanted large, open spaces. The great room reflects their desire. It also suits Lisa, who loves to cook in the kitchen and still feel part of the family as they lounge around, read or watch television.

When building the house, the Catheys other priority was to

take advantage of the property’s spectacular view of the lake. Guzzi designed the upper floor to meet their needs. Surprisingly, the Nesbitts never even saw this view when they bought the house. On a house-hunting trip from Southern California, Lisa visited Lake Tahoe in the middle of an El Niño winter and saw the home when the lake was swaddled in a cottony blanket of clouds. “We really bought the house for the house. The property and the view were just a lovely bonus,” Lisa says. “They promised us we had a view, but it’s better than we thought it would be.”

When the Catheys turned the completely furnished house over to the Nesbitts, they treated it more like an adoption than a sale. They had the trees trimmed to enhance the view, and even left the house completely equipped with pots, pans and linens.

The interior decor is primarily a tribute to Linda’s impeccable taste. She purchased much of the furniture and accessories in Scottsdale, Arizona. One of the great room’s most unusual items, an end table with a gecko stretched across its legs, was custom made. Linda visited a flagstone quarry to find the pink sandstone tops with broken edges for the table.

Linda worked with interior designer Janet Stock of Vil-



lage Interiors in Incline Village in choosing the great room's couches and dining-room tables. Stuffed with Clouaire® synthetic down, the couches are the perfect place to take an afternoon snooze. "One of the advantages of Clouaire® is it has a memory, so it just bounces back," Stock says. "You don't have to fluff it up all the time like down."

Stock also helped the Nesbitts add some personal touches to make the home their own. Lisa had to adjust to the Mountain Southwest decor, with more jewel tones and deep reds, as opposed to the usual Southwestern earth tones. "I think initially the Indian motif was a bit much for me because I wasn't used to it," Lisa says. "I had to get comfortable with that, and now I love it."

She is so enamored with the decor, she's adding to the theme with her own acquisitions. She purchased two South American Indian armbands, clusters of bird skulls, rabbit tails and colorful feathers to decorate a drop-leaf table in the living room. For one of two niches above the master bedroom's bed, Lisa found an Indian feather lip-and-nose ornament.

Lisa left most of the house almost exactly as it looked when purchased, with only small changes. The master bedroom loft, which looks like the outside of an adobe house, will become her husband's hideaway. She's purchasing a Natura® bed; a legless, low-to-the-ground piece of furniture, so that Steve can read or take naps during breaks from his job as partner in an investment, consulting and money-management firm.

When the Nesbitt's two teenagers, John, 15, and Blake, 13, feel like having some privacy, they retreat downstairs to a space the Catheys built for their grown children and five grandchildren. The three downstairs bedrooms and the small family



room offer children plenty of room to roam.

Even though the Nesbitts' house is a few miles from the water, Incline Village offers residents a private beach and boat launch. The family plans to buy a motorboat. Besides, being tucked away amid the pines has its advantages. Avid mountain bikers, Steve and Lisa explore the fire roads departing from the neighborhood, and the family takes long walks on the quiet streets. And, in the winter, they plan to go snowshoeing and skiing, both downhill and cross-country.

For Lisa, who left the San Francisco Bay area in 1981, the home means more than just an escape. "Our log home has changed me," she says. "Having grown up in Northern California, I get a sense I'm going home when I come up here. Maybe because it is more rustic and more casual and in a more wooded area. I feel a lot more at peace."

Because Lisa had never actively searched for a log home, she knew very little about them. Since she purchased the house, she's learned a lot. "I feel like a log home is a little bit of Americana," Lisa says. "I think it'd be fun to pass the log home to our children and have our children and grandchildren enjoy and live in it. Somehow it gives me a little sense of his-

Inside the Nesbitt's home, Southwestern decor has been modified to suit the mountain setting. American Indian artifacts and Western art live in harmony with the home's log construction.

tory, and, in a way, that's what's nice about collecting some of this American Indian and South American Indian art. They are truly some of the few things you can buy that are really American. The log home gives me that same sort of feeling." ▲

