

ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS THE FAMILY BOUGHT THIS PROPERTY WAS FOR THE PRIVACY. "ON OUR 20 ACRES, WE CAN BARELY SEE A NEIGHBOR. ALL WE HEAR IS THE WIND," SAYS THE HOMEOWNER.



Close to Heaven

The beauty of mountain living is showcased in a handcrafted log chalet that would make the Von Trapps green with envy.

BY GLORIA GALE ✨ PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEIDI LONG

MOTHER NATURE OUTDID HERSELF imbuing mountains, ocean, and lush forests into the Pacific Northwest.

The outdoors becomes integrated into the lifestyle in these environs. It's an opportunity that doesn't go unnoticed for one former Seattle family now residing just outside the Bavarian-like town of Leavenworth, Washington.

As avid hikers and skiers the active threesome, mom, dad, and son, often find themselves outside as much as inside. This led them to seriously considering buying a vacation home over a decade ago.

"LAURI BRENAN WAS OUR INTERIOR DESIGNER. SHE HELPED US WITH ALL OF THE FURNISHINGS AND DECORATIONS THROUGHOUT THE HOUSE," SAYS THE HUSBAND.

THE FAMILY ROUTINELY EATS TOGETHER AT THE WOODEN DINING TABLE.

"Why not?" says the husband who kept the dream perking for years. "Truth be told, I'd always wanted a log home. Then, on a camping trip with our good friends, the idea surfaced."

The two couples agreed to move forward and decided to buy a small, two-bedroom log cabin near Leavenworth as a getaway.

"Initially we toyed with the idea of buying a vacation home near the ocean, but that side of the Cascades is wetter than the east side, which has mountains, is generally drier, and has all four seasons," says the homeowner, admitting they missed the sun and the snow while living in Seattle.

The cabin, slightly over two hours from their Seattle residence, was a successful partnership for five years. "At that point, my wife and I decided it was time to spend more time here and build a bigger log home."



As luck would have it, a realtor friend called and mentioned he knew of acreage close to the mountain town that was being foreclosed and divided into 20-acre parcels.

"I took a look and was blown away. The parcel was perched approximately 800 feet up the mountainside, surrounded by woods and with outstanding views of the Cascades beyond. Once the rest of the family saw it, there wasn't any hesitation," says the homeowner.

Bringing the idea to fruition took time and research.

The Internet yielded not only a great deal of information but, most importantly, a log home designer.

"After months of conversation with Cyril Courtois of RCM

CAD Design, I asked him to visit the building site with me to discuss the possibilities. I had my ideas, he had his. I wanted an interesting staircase, benches, and other accoutrements.

"After many revisions, I undid my edits and took Cyril's lead since he knew what he was doing and I didn't. Actually, if there is a theme for this journey, I learned to follow those who are more talented and smarter than me."

The final design took months, and the result was a beautiful, handcrafted two-story home surrounded by panoramic views.

Narrowing the field to two different log manufacturing companies, the family chose Summit Log & Timber Homes of Boise, Idaho.

According to the homeowner, "I walked the log yard in Vancouver Island with the Summit craftsman and picked irregular-shaped, Western red cedar logs not only for their size (14-24 inches) but the flared log root ends that are so distinctive. Summit uses a Latewood high-pressure hot water process to peel the logs. No drawknife is used. This process removes the inner bark, resulting in a silken finish that preserves the beauty and naturalness of the logs. It leaves the logs absolutely gorgeous."

The excitement was palpable the day the logs were delivered in 2009. Two trailers from Summit inched their way up the winding mile-long drive. The homeowner held his breath, hop-

AS THE CHIEF COOK, THE HUSBAND CHOSE THE UNPOLISHED BLACK GRANITE FOR THE COUNTERTOPS AND SUGGESTED THE POT FILLER ON THE ISLAND. "WHEN IT CAME TO CHOOSING CABINETS, JOHNNY AND I AGREED ON NATURAL-STAINED FIR OUTFITTED WITH SOFT-CLOSURES," SAYS THE HUSBAND.

LAURI BRENNAN CREATED THIS COZY CONVERSATION AREA. "LAURI AND JOHNNY WORKED BEAUTIFULLY AS A TEAM. HER RECOMMENDATIONS TO USE SOFTLY COLORED NEUTRAL WALLS AND A MORE ORGANIC PALETTE RATHER THAN BOLD COLOR WAS RIGHT ON," SAYS THE HUSBAND.



ABOVE: CAPTURING THE BEAUTY OF THE CASCADE RANGE BEYOND, THREE DECKS WRAP AROUND ALL LEVELS OF THE HOME. AT THIS ELEVATION THE HOUSE, PERCHED MOUNTAINSIDE, ALSO AFFORDS UNENCUMBERED VIEWS OF THE FIR AND PINE FORESTS.

LEFT: ONE MASSIVE LOG THE FAMILY CALLS "THE WHALE" STARTS AT THE MAIN LEVEL STAIRS AND WINDS UPWARD TO THE SECOND FLOOR LOFT. A LARGE, DECORATIVE BRANCH REACHES OUT FROM THE SIDE AND FOLLOWS THE LINE OF THE STAIRS.

ing the trailers would make it. It was a challenge but in just a couple of days the logs were re-assembled by the Summit's craftsmen and the builder's four-man crew. "I have to say everyone was amazing," he adds.

The 3,000-square-foot home, positioned on a base of ledgestone, distinctly showcases the profile of the house with impressive flared ends of roof members and scissor trusses with hanging king posts. It's as impressive outside as inside.

On the interior, the logs average 14½ inches in diameter. Combined with the custom log staircase and log railings, the inherent beauty of the logs is highlighted.

The family hired local Leavenworth contractor Johnny and his wife Lauri Brenan, an interior designer, for the finish work that evolved over the next 2½ years.

As the house became a home, according to the homeowner, "I had anticipated a unique staircase and I have to say, this one is exactly what I had in mind. We call it the 'Whale' since it's one single tree that twists and turns as it rises to the second level."

The anticipation of living in the home full time heightened as construction came to a close.

"Since there were no glitches throughout the building process, I have to say it was an enjoyable experience, except for the tragedy of losing



LEFT: THE BUILT IN DRESSER SERVES DOUBLE DUTY AS A WINDOW SEAT. "WE NEEDED SOMETHING CREATIVE AND THIS IDEA MADE SENSE. IT'S A GREAT PLACE TO READ AND LOOK OUT THE WINDOW," SAYS THE HUSBAND.

BELOW: KING POSTS, DRAMATICALLY ANCHORING MASSIVE WESTERN RED CEDAR LOGS, BRING THE STRUCTURAL DESIGN OF THE ROOF LINE INTO FOCUS. "THE KING AND SCISSOR POSTS WERE SUGGESTED BY CYRIL COURTOIS, THE LOG DESIGNER," SAYS THE HOMEOWNER.

Cascades Cabin

The homeowners began the design process by visiting the building site with the architect to make sure the proposed structure would fit the land and maximize the views. The home is full of creative touches, including built-ins, which are practical and save space. The most outstanding aspects of the home are the creative use of the handcrafted logs both inside and out and the stunning mixture of materials.

Log Home Producer: Summit Log & Timber Homes, Boise, Idaho
Architect/Log Designer: Cyril Courtois, RCM CAD Design, Chilliwack, British Columbia

Two-story home + full basement
Square Footage: 3,000 (approximately)
Bedrooms: 3 🌟 **Baths:** 3



Johnny Brenan in a devastating avalanche at Steven's Pass. This house, in so many ways, is a tribute to him. Since the house was 98 percent finished when Johnny died, I became the GC."

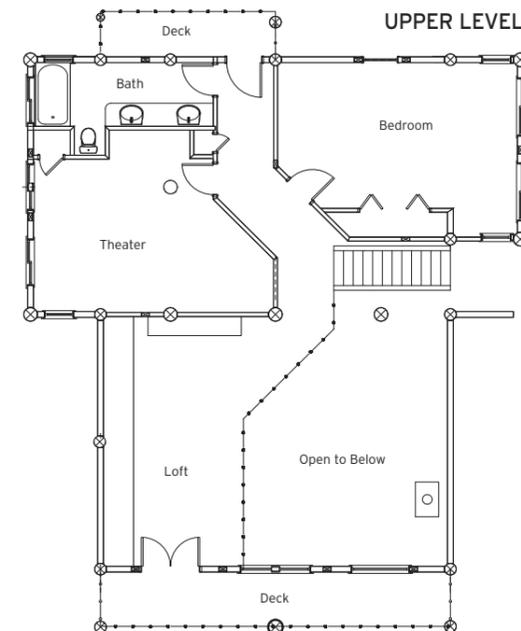
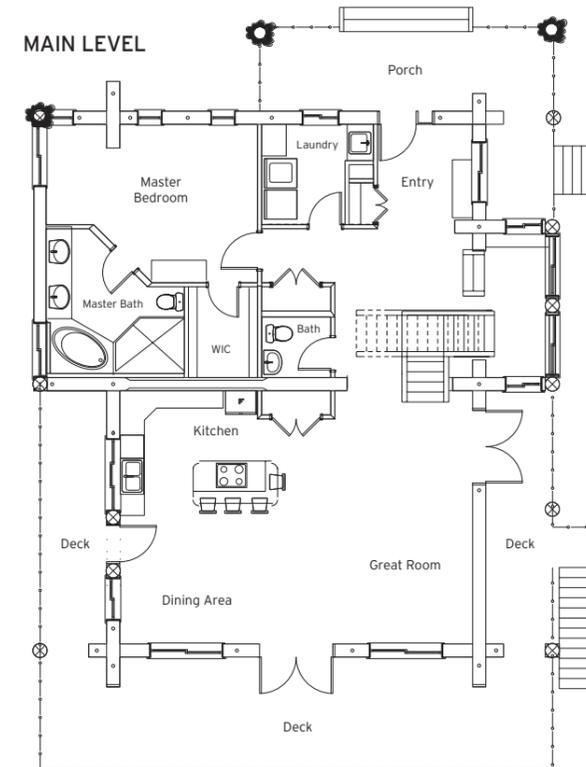
What's impressive about the house is the beauty of the design and smart inclusions: built-in benches, an exterior shower, starburst-patterned planks on the landing, solar panels, and a soon-to-be irrigation system that the homeowner will be installing himself. "Even the fireplace has hidden compartments built into the stacked stone. The 89-year-old stone mason was a genius," marvels the homeowner. Local stone mason Graham Murray built the all of the stone accents on the exterior.

Although most of the project was helmed by Summit, Johnny Brenan, and the husband, the homeowner's wife did have one request. She wanted an outdoor shower that faces the mountains. "I thought that was a great idea. Now when we're finished hiking for the day, we shower before coming inside," says the husband.

The novel use of the logs was put very succinctly by Heidi Long, professional photographer while capturing images of the home. "What struck me throughout the home was the playfulness of the log design. The interior features logs that twist and flow, are unexpected, radiating, contrasting, and organic. The flared posts at the gable ends are like floating trees."

The homeowners are in agreement that the tranquility and serenity of this high-country home are a pleasure.

They admit that there's still work to do. "But," says the husband, "I've found a reserve of patience and new-found respect for quality. Once I figured that out, helped along by having no deadline for completion, I've learned to admire the integrity of craftsmanship from the designer and log manufacturer to the builder. The entire experience was exceptional." 🌟



JOHNNY BRENNAN SUGGESTED THE OWNERS STACK A SOLID, 2 1/2-FOOT LEDGESTONE BASE AS A DECORATIVE ACCENT FOR THE HOME. SCRIBED LOGS FITTED WITH DIAMOND-NOTCH CORNER CONSTRUCTION PERFECTLY SHOWCASE THE FLARED ENDS OF THE LOGS.