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For their vacation home, Roy and Toni Bliss felt the setting called for logs, but instead of full-log construction, they used large-diameter logs as accents. The hunter green metal roof and Colorado stone base contribute to its rugged mountain look. The home features 5,600 square feet (6,200 if you count the guest apartment over the garage).

Dream Catcher

Log accents create a breathtaking Rocky Mountain getaway

Colorado's Crested Butte area has long been a favorite playground and getaway for hard-working people. In fact, Roy and Toni Bliss enjoyed vacations at their duplex beside the local golf course for several years before they decided to make a more substantial commitment and build their own home in the mountains nearby.

"We'd been thinking about it for a

while," Toni explains. "Friends told us we were crazy to consider building with log, but as it's turned out I'm really glad we didn't listen to them."

Roy and Toni purchased a 35-acre lot on a mountainside above the town, and the abundance of aspen trees, beautiful rock outcroppings and wildlife practically begged for something that paid homage to the surroundings. Through a referral from





The log elements play against the towering stone fireplace in the great room. Roy spotted the bison head in a Dallas shop and, according to Toni, "wouldn't leave without it."





friends, they selected local architect Bob Brotherton of Sunlit Architecture to help them realize their expectations.

"They came in with pictures of houses and interiors that they liked and some ideas of things that they really wanted in the house," Bob recalls, "but even though we didn't have a lot to start with, it was a great project to work on. As clients, they were a dream and allowed us a lot of leeway in bringing their

The two-sided river rock fireplace serves to separate the dining room from the great room. An elaborate antler-horn chandelier sounds a Western theme.

ideas to life."

The process began with a walk of the grounds. Building on a mountain is always a challenge, but in this case, the Blisses had bought during the dead of

winter, so "we walked it with five feet of snow on it," Bob says. "It made it a little difficult to know exactly what the features and lay of the land were, but we at least got started with some ideas."

Six months later, the plans were finalized. Roy and Toni had put their full trust in Bob, who selected Classic Log Homes for the log package and Zimmerman Construction as general contractor because he had worked successfully with both companies on prior projects. "Classic supplied a full-log shell for another house we did," Bob explains, "but this was a little different. Roy and Toni wanted the warmth

Abundant aspen trees, rock outcroppings and wildlife begged for a log home.

and good feel of log, but they also wanted a more conventional feel to the interior. What we ended up with might be called a timber-frame home, except that we used logs. And it's not really a post-and-beam home either. I think its rather unique in its style."

The 5,600-square-foot home features an exterior of 16-inch-diameter Western larch and fir logs from Montana that are also used in the interior in varying sizes from 12 to 18 inches thick. There is a stone-finished, poured concrete walkout basement that respects the natural contours of the land. Interior walls are mostly Sheetrock with some exposed logs. In-floor heating from a boiler keeps the mostly wood and Oklahoma-sandstone floors comfortable.

"On a previous project, Classic had built the shell and then shipped it to us," Bob continues, "but on this one they did the trusses at their place, while we did the roof purlins on-site. As we've worked together on more projects we've adjusted somewhat to make it a more customized project."

The biggest concern that a homeowner faces in building on a Rocky Mountain perch is the snow-load. A metal roof with a steep pitch seemed the best way to handle snow that is measured in feet. A carefully

A high ceiling and tall windows distinguish the kitchen, whose work space is bathed in light. The custom-built cabinets and wide-plank flooring add even more wood to the room.







prepared landscape allows for run-off away from the house while still maintaining the casual, natural look so popular in the area.

Another practical feature is a sprinkler system. "They're so far from the fire department and with the threat of forest fires you really have to fully sprinkle houses in this area," Bob says. "It's just one of several challenging factors you have to consider when building around here."

The loft is a favorite retreat. Toni picked up the quirky crow perched on the beam at a shop in Santa Fe while gathering pieces when the home was being built.

Fortunately for the Blissés, those worries were shouldered by their architect and by the contractor, Tony Zimmerman. During the 18 months of construction, Roy and Toni enjoyed getting ready for their home. "We kept a notebook so we wouldn't duplicate our efforts, but also so we wouldn't forget anything," Toni says. "As we traveled around the country, we began picking up artifacts and accessories for the home."



The Blisses wanted their four grown children each to have a bedroom of their own. This cozy room tucked under the eaves enjoys access to the deck.

The master bedroom was the hardest room for the Blissés to plan. They wanted to see both the fireplace and the television from their bed, which features a distinctive twig canopy. In the corner opposite the Southwest-style fireplace is a Jacuzzi tub.





Toni also selected many of the tasteful furnishings in the house, but she didn't hesitate to consult with noted interior designer Charles Faudree, who does business from the Blissess' hometown of Tulsa, Oklahoma. Charles's contributions centered on Geoffrey Bennison and Ralph Lauren fabrics, particularly for the great room.

And while the objective was to have a beautiful home they could be proud of, an even more important goal was to have a very livable house. "We have four grown children, three of whom are married," Toni explains. "We wanted our own area on the main floor of the house, but we also wanted the children to have their own rooms, too,

so no matter when they came to the house—or how many came—they had their own places. Each family has their own bedroom—and private decks off their bedrooms, too."

A very active couple, the Blissess enjoy outdoor activities year-round, but especially skiing in the winter. In fact, the outstanding ski facilities in the area were a major draw for the family in the first place. As a result, storing snow mobiles, skis, snowboards, mountain bikes, hunting and fishing gear out-of-sight but keeping it easily accessible was another of Roy and Toni's needs. A large mud room and laundry area also was a natural.

While family and friends enjoy the wintry slopes, it's during summer that the house is a virtual magnet. The crisp summer evenings are a welcome relief from the hot Oklahoma plain. "We come from mid-June until mid-September," says Toni. "Then we go back to Colorado around Christmas for the season and for a few weeks of skiing, too."

Because the Blissess are still relatively young, spending so much time in their vacation home means that it has to feature some practicality, too. A spacious office on the main floor helps Roy stay in touch with business requirements—before the couple goes out on the deck to enjoy their

hot tub and the view.

"Needless to say, the view was a major selling point for the property," Bob says. "That absolutely had to be incorporated into the plans for the house."

The great room looks out at Crested Butte Mountain, as well as the valley below where the nightly twinkling lights of the town add even more appeal. Almost every room in the house enjoys a view of a mountain or a meadow or the trees that provide so much pleasure. "The aspens give us privacy during the summer and a very cozy sense of comfort," Toni continues. "Then in the winter, it's practically like being in a whole different place because when the

The home's 35-acre lot assures the owners privacy year-round.

trees are bare, you see so many things you don't when there are leaves on the trees. But even though there are other homes on the mountain, because the tracts were sold in 35-acre increments, we all have privacy year-round."

Toni sighs appreciatively while talking from her Oklahoma home. "Oh, my," she laughs. "You know, just talking about it is making me homesick to get back out there."

Appropriately enough, the home has a front gate with the name of the home carved into it: "Dream Catcher." Surrounded by the warmth of logs and filled with the laughter of family and friends, it's easy to see how much Roy and Toni enjoy their time here. The real wonder is that they ever leave. **LHI**

RESOURCES

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