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Lakeside Delight

STORY & STYLING BY DEBRA GRAHL
PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE

A WISCONSIN COUPLE ENJOYS A
PRE-RETIREMENT BONUS

Wisconsin natives Jim and Sue Alexander were drawn to their state's northern lakes and forests for vacations and decided to buy land and build a cottage as a first step toward retirement. Sue

recalls one of their three daughters suggested diving into the project "right now, before Jim retired, so we could build before we were on a fixed income."

The couple purchased land in 1994 on one



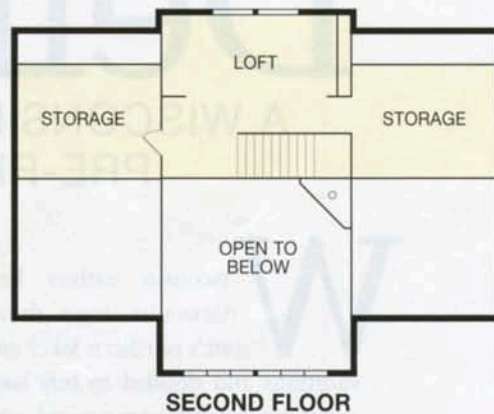
of the many lakes just outside of Rhinelander, about an hour's drive from their Wausau home. It came with a stone cottage that had four bedrooms but only one bathroom, with a tiny shower. There was also a shallow well with undrinkable water. They tolerated conditions for 10 summers before deciding to replace the cottage with a new log home.

Jim was the one who had his heart set on a log home. Sue was more concerned with the floor plan.

Above: Built on a gently sloping site in northern Wisconsin, the unassuming home features 3,200 square feet on two and a half levels. The half-logs are a mix of red and white pine.

Previous page 44: A distressed-leather sectional sofa provides cozy seating near the fireplace. The Kozy fire-place insert radiates heat into the room, with the option of increasing the warmth through the use of a built-in fan.

Previous page 45: The homeowners chose simple furnishings for their great room, wanting to keep household maintenance to a minimum. Large, insulated fixed panes of Weather Shield windows provide panoramic views of the lake. Hardwood floors are easily maintained with the home's central vacuum system.





Above: Barn wood dining table, chairs and sideboard are flanked by windows and French doors leading to the three-season porch. Walls are painted warm ivory and textured in a faux plaster finish.



Left: The staircase wall is faced with a large cabinet unit designed with open shelving for book and photo displays and cupboard doors for storing games and toys. Family room flooring is tough porcelain with a heavy texture to help prevent wet feet from slipping.

She thought she had it right until the day before they met with their designer, when Jim informed Sue that he wanted a loft, which her plan lacked. She wanted all of their living space on one floor, but Jim was willing to spend extra for a study where he could find solitude, view the lake and watch eagles, loons and deer, who cross it in winter. They changed the plan one more time and now agree the loft was money well spent.

They chose Tomahawk Log and Country Homes in nearby Tomahawk, Wisconsin, to produce their home. First,







they wanted a half-log wall system to avoid having logs in certain areas of the home, like the master bedroom. Second was Tomahawk's closeness to their home site. The company serves as a turn-key builder on projects within an hour's radius of their mill. Jim and Sue welcomed working from start to finish with the same team.

Despite the closeness of Wausau, the home site and Tomahawk, the couple and the company communicated largely by e-mail. "Unlike verbal communications, which can be misunderstood or, worse, completely forgotten, e-mails provide written documentation," Sue says. "This makes for less likelihood that mistakes will occur on the project."

The home is approximately 3,200 square feet,

including the finished walkout lower level with its own great room for living, dining and kitchen areas. Construction began in August 2006, and Sue did the final walk through on February 24, 2007—right on schedule. Jim, a vascular surgeon, was especially pleased with the construction crew, saying they were "as good with a chain saw as I am with a scalpel."

Empty nesters Jim and Sue designed the home to be cozy enough for two, yet spacious enough for their grown daughters to visit. The great room is completely open to include a seating area near the fireplace and adjacent dining and kitchen-bar areas.

The kitchen accommodates as many as five cooks at once and features extra-wide aisles surrounding the central island. Barstool seating at the island



Left: Soothing hues of sage green, ivory and brown grace the master suite. The log bed frame from *Roughing It in Style* is situated beneath casement windows. The not-so-big bedroom is made more spacious with its vaulted ceiling.

Opposite: The bar area features a built-in cooler for beverages, wine cubbies, a large hutch-style cabinet for storing liquor glassware and party items, and a built-in trash drawer. Charcoal soapstone countertops contrast beautifully with the golden wood of the cabinetry. Terra cotta tiles make for easy clean up.

Previous: Shaker-style maple cabinets contrast with the cocoa-colored kitchen walls. The room is well lit with strategically placed recessed cans in the ceiling, glass pendants above the island and the large window above the sink area. The half-wall between the kitchen and bar is used for stashing cookbooks, kids' books and family games.



Above: The lake side of the home features expansive glass to capture the panoramic view. Noting the lack of wall space in the home for hanging art, Sue says the view of the lake is nature's masterpiece. A large lawn between the house and lake provides ample play space for kids and friends.



The three-season porch is a popular hangout for the family. Speakers installed in the ceiling provide music, and card games and storytelling keep the family together late into the night. The log garage is equipped with a full-sized garage door on the lake side for pulling the boat trailer in and out of the lake.



Home Tour Resources

LOG PRODUCER, DESIGNER & BUILDER TOMAHAWK LOG AND COUNTRY HOMES
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encourages guests to sit and visit. The island is also outfitted with an Internet connection for Sue's laptop computer, which she uses for recipes. Other design details include an open bookshelf built into the half-wall separating the bar from the kitchen.

The wood-burning fireplace in the great room is the focal point for the seating area. Built with split-faced stone, 2 inches deep and weighing significantly less than full stone, it rests on multiple floor joists instead of a concrete foundation. Carefully placed can lights in the ceiling wash the rock with light that defines the irregular surface and dramatizes the stone.

Sue wanted not one but two laundry rooms, one upstairs for the couple and the other downstairs. "When company comes, large quantities of laundry are generated on the lower level with bed linens, bath towels and beach towels," she says. "After their visit, the laundry can be kept on the lower level, cleaned and easily replaced."

The master suite is located just off the great room. "When it is just the two of us, it feels like we have our own apartment right here on the main floor," She says. "There's no need for running up and down the stairs to the lower level."

Jim and Sue bought three lots, two on the lake and one further down the road. Tomahawk bulldozed the stone cottage two months after construction began. The new house sits on one of the lake lots and the garage on the adjoining lake lot above the couple's private boat landing. The garage has a large finished room on the upper level.

Jim and Sue are enchanted with their new lake cottage and say all of the effort that went into designing the home for their exact needs was well worthwhile. They envision the home being a wonderful retreat until they retire there full time, as well as a vacation place for their family and friends for many years to come. They are proud they did it their way and had fun doing it to boot. They even got what each of them wanted: a loft for Jim and an extra laundry room for Sue. |LHI