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Peak of Perfection

The Colorado Rockies inspire a Florida couple's log-home dream.

STORY TERESA L. WOLFF | PHOTOS BY JAMES RAY SPAHN

Because the roof is so prominent in approaching the home, it provides a dramatic focal point by using aged corrugated metal, accent ridges and fire-rated western red cedar shake shingles. Dramatic peaks over the front entry and the doghouse dormers top off the Engelmann spruce logs.



Florida natives Heather and Mike Sher have had a love affair with Colorado since college. That's where they got engaged, while night skiing in Keystone, and where they vowed to build a vacation home. After their wedding, they concentrated on their careers, but when the time was right, they purchased a one-acre lot in Breckenridge and began planning their log home. "Our many years of vacationing in the mountains led us to the conclusion that a log home is the epitome of luxurious mountain living," Mike says. "We didn't even consider any other style because we knew a log residence would fit perfectly into the wooded terrain."

Determined to make their home a work of art, Mike and Heather researched various log companies before selecting GreatLand Log Homes, a Colorado hand-crafter that produces large-diameter, rustic

logs and is experienced building mountain homes. Although the Shers' lot afforded them panoramic views across the valley to the Breckenridge Ski Resort, the Blue River and the Tenmile Range of the Rockies, its 45-degree slope presented an engineering challenge. GreatLand came up with a plan to situate the home on not one, but two levels below the main floor to provide a solid foundation and stabilize the home against the mountain.

Besides solving the structural problem, the tactic added abundant bonus living space: a billiards room and guest bedroom on the first basement level, and a combination great room-game room with balcony, a bunkroom to sleep six and a guest room with bath on the very bottom, walkout level. "Building on a sloped lot versus a level lot has its challenges, as well as rewards of fantastic views and lower levels that have abundant outside lighting

ABOVE: The custom 42-inch two-panel entry door includes a clear transom and insulated side lights. A flared-end western red cedar newel starts the half-log tread stairs. The slate inset with area rug is perfect for removing snowy ski boots without getting the pine floor wet.

RIGHT: The view from the entry into the great room captures the beauty of the eastern white pine wide-plank flooring, the drama of the large-diameter log posts that support the loft catwalk and the pine tongue-and-groove ceiling. Less evident is the subtle detail of the loft railing, whose irregular-shaped spindles mimic trees found around the home.





RIGHT: The oversized dining table seats as many as 14. The metal chandelier creates the semblance of branches, like those of the trees seen through the windows. Rough-cut timber boxes atop the massive spruce posts conceal the settling jacks.

LEFT: A king-post truss forms the upper portion of the two-story prow in the great room. The high-efficiency natural gas fireplace is made from Telluride flagstone. The room opens to the 1,867-square-foot deck.

from huge windows,” Heather points out, advising, “If you do select a sloped lot, understand the challenges of construction so you then enjoy the outcome, as we have.”

For their design, the Shers started with an existing floor plan but personalized the layout. For instance, they increased the size of the great room and kitchen for the way they intended to use the home. Their idea was to have an open great room, dining room and kitchen for socializing, with plenty of bedrooms to accommodate their large extended family and friends. “With bedrooms and living space on all four levels, we were able to host 26 family members spanning three generations last Thanksgiving, and we didn’t feel crowded,” Heather says.

Once they had decided on their floor plan, the Shers turned their attention to the architectural details. For the walls, they opted for full-round Engelmann spruce logs with 16-inch mean diameters, and flared western red cedar logs for the ridge beam and roof purlins. Rough-sawn timber framing further enhances the aesthetics of the home, whose rustic exterior finishes include rusted metal features, Telluride stone and weathered stain. To enhance their viewing opportunities, the Shers added 1,867 square feet of wood-textured composite decking. Log post-and-beam construction was their choice for the oversized garage, which has additional living quarters above.

Mike served as the general contractor on the project. Knowing he couldn’t be on-site often due to the demands of his Florida-based business, the Shers hired Jeremy Fischer of Ivan Stanley Associates,



OPPOSITE: Massive log columns support arched ceiling beams and the upper-level catwalk, creating a corridor between the entry and the great room.

RIGHT: In the kitchen, two-toned cabinets with a mix of glass and solid doors suggest a European kitchen. Half of the 12-by-3-foot island was built with hand-turned wooden legs to function as an informal eating space.

a custom-home builder in Summit County, to oversee the day-to-day operation and supervise subcontractors. Mike visited the site every three to four months, and the entire family viewed the home's progress whenever they came to Breckenridge for vacations. "Because we had finalized every detail prior to beginning construction, and everything had been pre-engineered and pre-designed, we knew what we were getting before we even started," Mike says. "We handled many details during the actual building over the phone."

Furnishing the home was also done from a distance. Heather and interior decorator Linda Clayton, who had assisted with the Shers' Miami home, as well as the homes of her parents and in-laws, transformed the mountain home into a French Provincial ski house. "I wanted the home to be functional, comfortable and practical," Heather notes. "We selected fabrics such as leather and chenille, which can stand up to wear-and-tear and are easy to keep clean."

Clayton referred to pictures and floor plans of the home to get a sense of the interior, and whenever Mike went to Breckenridge, he would take measurements so she could locate just the right pieces to fit the spaces. Most of the furnishings were purchased outside of the area and shipped directly to the home. Mike relates he might not have helped build the new home but he became a master of opening and unpacking boxes when each new shipment of furnishings arrived.

The Shers added large boulders on either side of the heated driveway and some annuals in the front to soften the hardscape. Otherwise, besides removing trees and vegetation required for fire mitigation,





they left the property to its own devices so it would blend in with its highland surroundings.

Living next to Arapaho National Forest is a major plus for the Sher family — “like having thousands of acres for your backyard,” Heather says. There are hiking trails where the family and their guests can meander through the wilderness and explore gold mines from the past. The nearby Blue River offers year-round fly-fishing. In the winter, skiing at Breckenridge Ski Resort is a part of their daily routine. “We picked our sloped lot for its view and for the wooded neighborhood, and love being in the heart of Breckenridge and Summit County to enjoy the world-class skiing and summer hiking and biking,” Mike says. “We love this home and mountain. We look forward to spending time there since it is so much different than Miami.” 🏡

LEFT: The double-headed shower in the master bath features oblong subway tile in the upper section, laid out in a herringbone pattern, and small square pieces in the lower half. The custom his-and-her vanity has a marble countertop. Porcelain flooring adds a stylish touch.

ABOVE: Colorful paisley bed linens and bright black-out window treatments glamorize the main-level master bedroom. Alder wood trims the windows and French doors opening to a secluded section of the deck.

ABOVE: Accessible from the great room, master bedroom and kitchen, the 1,867-square-foot deck stands 30 feet above the ground, placing it among the surrounding treetops. The outdoor fireplace features vibrant Telluride fieldstone, which harmonizes with the handcrafted Engelmann spruce logs. The deck was specially engineered to support the hot tub.

home details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 3,150

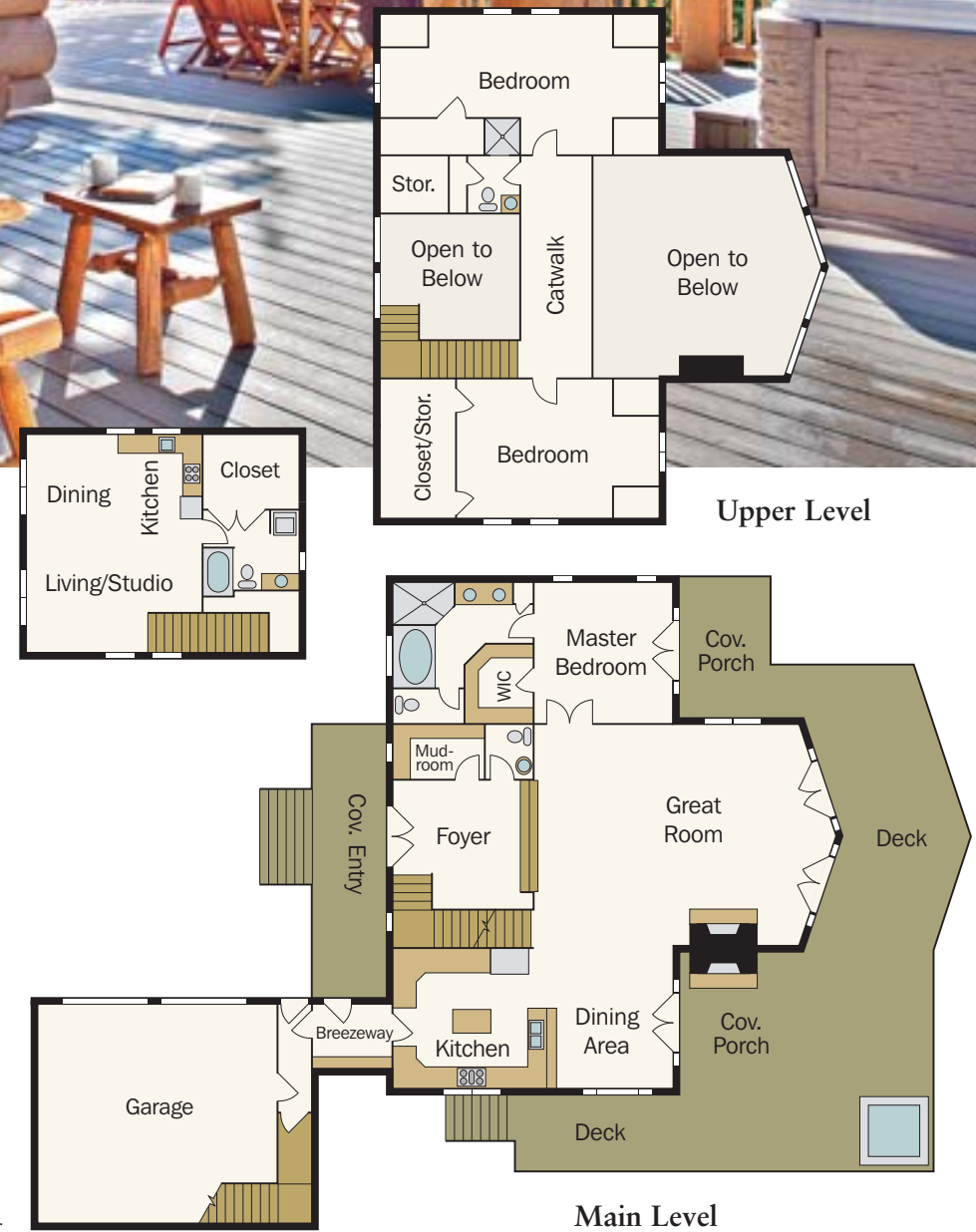
LOG PROVIDER: GreatLand Log Homes

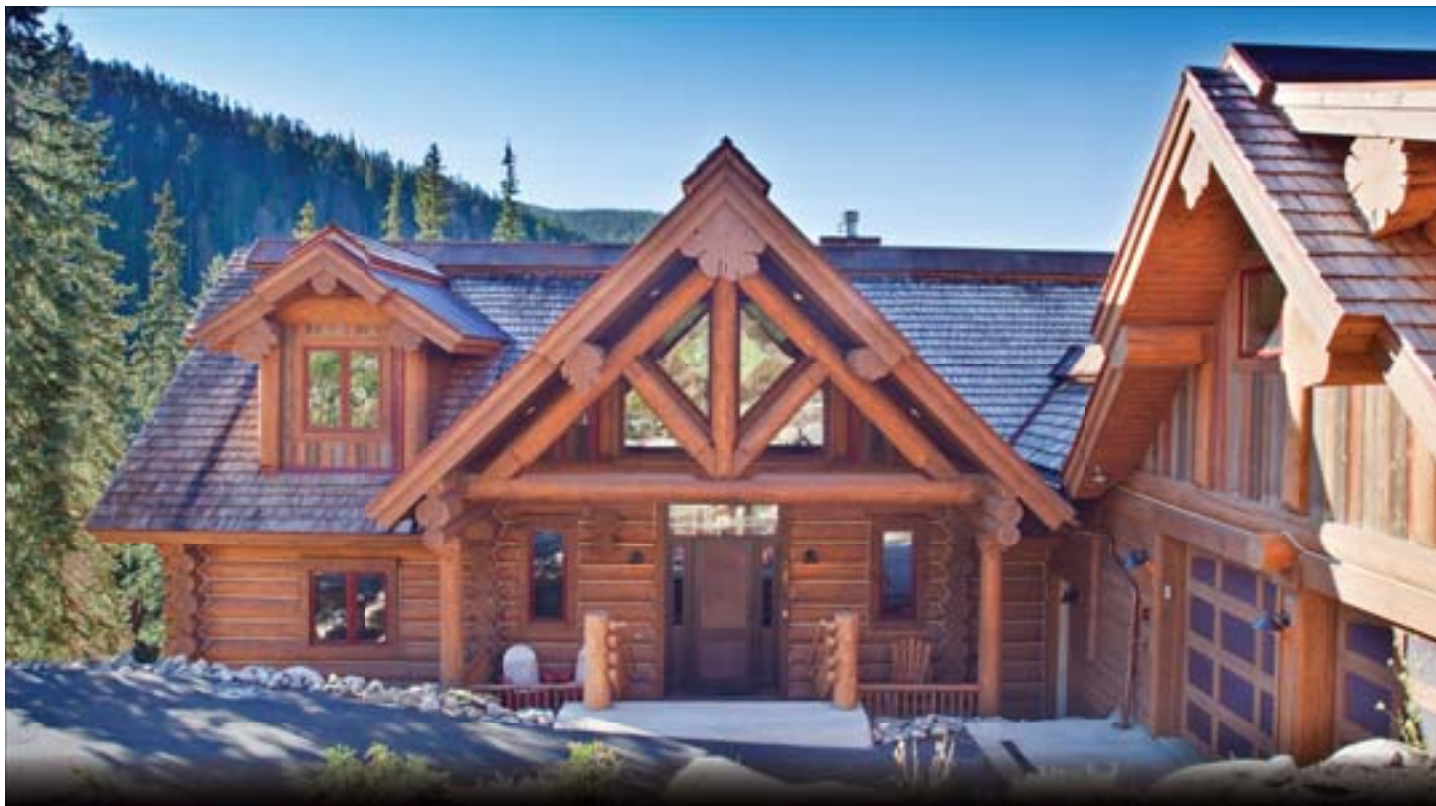
BUILDER: Ivan Stanley Associates

The spacious foyer with adjoining mudroom introduces the layout, but the highlight is the log post-and-beam apartment over the garage. The home comprises four levels, the lower two of which aren't included in the square footage.

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