



WINTER RETREAT. Snow caps the roof of the two-story log home on a winter evening. The various rooflines add visual interest to the Hlavacs' exterior.

town & COUNTRY

One Windy City couple sees their retirement dreams come true in a North Woods log-laden getaway.

STORY BY JENNIFER LECLAIRE | PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT AMUNDSON
HOME BY COTTAGE WOOD LODGE BUILDERS AND KEN LACOY CONSTRUCTION



WINDOW SEAT. "One of the home's most unique design features is the front facade, 80 percent of which is glass," describes builder Ken LaCoy, whose firm has been in business for 30 years and has built more than 20 log homes. The huge windows in the great room allow the couple to enjoy the snowy views hearthside.

BACK-COUNTRY CUISINE. The kitchen includes modest modern appliances and a bar, complete with deer-antler stools in keeping with the wilderness feel of northern Wisconsin and Bear Manor. The breakfast bar provides additional space for guests when the couple entertains and also works as a dining spot a deux.



LOFTY AIM. The spare bedroom with its loft bed makes way for overnight guests. Built-in bookshelves are designed to maximize the use of space and also work as a great showcase for pictures and knickknacks.



HOMESPECS

Square footage:
5,800

Log provider:
Cottage Wood Lodge Builders

Builder:
Ken LaCoy Construction

For more information, see
Sourcebook on page 95.

George Hlavac is an outdoorsman at heart, having grown up in northern Wisconsin's spectacular natural beauty. His wife, Ginny, on the other hand, has always been a city girl. Now living it up in their golden years, the couple found the perfect solution to where they should settle in their retirement.

With a cozy log cabin retreat in Wisconsin's North Woods and a luxurious home front in the Chicago area, they get to enjoy the best of both worlds in the town *and* in the country.

The Hlavacs spend two weeks each month in the woodland dwelling dubbed Bear Manor, a fitting name since George is an avid hunter. The house began as George's dream, but it's become Ginny's relaxing hideaway. "We enjoy the peace and quiet of this secluded area. Spending time in our log home is like getting back to nature," she says, noting that the nearest town, Hayward, is 30 miles away.

In fact, the Hlavac home is set so far back into the wooded 9-acre lot that they can't see another soul from their property, save for the eagles soaring overhead and the deer nibbling at their flowers. They relish the natural landscaping, complete with a beautiful pond, waterfall and more than 300 feet of lake frontage. Birch, hemlock, spruce, maple and white ash pine surround the property in all its natural splendor.

"I'll never forget the day when we walked into our home, stood in the middle of the great room and realized how huge it really was," Ginny recalls of their 5,800-square-

foot abode. "When our guests come into the house for the first time, they have the same reaction. But then we settle down and kick our shoes off. We designed the house with comfort in mind."

Seeing their vision come to fruition began more than a decade ago when the couple purchased the lush land. Then, during a hunting trip in 1997, Ginny and George met Ken LaCoy, a builder in Hayward. Ken showed the Hlavacs several log homes he had built. For Bear Manor, they took some design elements from them all, including picture windows, an open layout that locates the master suite and bath on the first floor and three oversized fireplaces made from native granite fieldstone.

On Ken's recommendation, the Hlavacs chose Cottage Wood Lodge Builders to hand-scribe the Engelmann spruce logs. These straight,

spire-like trees hail from British Columbia and are known for their massive size. The Hlavacs' home uses 24-foot-long logs that are Swedish-coped, allowing for the tightest fit between log courses. Ken broke ground for the home in April 1998 and, despite a long delay in transporting the logs from Canada, Bear Manor was completed in 1999.

"Our log home experience has been everything we thought it would be and then some," says Ginny as her old yellow lab, Kodi, and the couple's black lab, Baron, bark in the background. "Every time I walk in, I have to remind myself that this is really our home. This is what retirement should be. It's a dream come true." ■

BAR NONE (opposite far left). The home's basement serves as the local watering hole, with a bar, beverage sink and built-in wine storage in the stone walls.

HANDMADE HIDEAWAY (above middle). The master bedroom's granite fieldstone fireplace offers warmth day and night. The furnishings in the bedroom are all hand-carved.

SNOWY SANCTUARY (above right). Nature was preserved on the land as tall trees pepper the grounds. Exterior stone echoes the oversized hearth, a feature you can see clearly through the large picture windows.



Upper Level



Main Level



Lower Level