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Living Room

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NATURAL PERFECTION

THE MUSE'S MAJESTIC MOUNTAIN HOME

After decades of nose-to-the-grindstone work as a concrete contractor, Boyce Muse was itching to build a mountain getaway where he could indulge in his love for the great outdoors. All he needed was the perfect spot.

On a remote and rugged Siskiyou County hillside, he sawed his way through thick brush and fallen pines. When he turned around to survey his surroundings, he was stunned into silence. Nothing but trees, fresh air and sailboats dancing on Lake Siskiyou stood between him and majestic Mt. Shasta.

"This is it," Muse said.

Today, Muse and his wife, Joan, are reaping the rewards of a lifetime of labor as they settle into their extraordinary, forest-cloaked log home with a panoramic view.

The owners of Muse Concrete Contractors in Redding had always been intrigued by log homes, and after looking at models in several states, they fell in love with the craftsmanship exhibited by Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia.

Each Western red cedar log was hand-hewn during a six-month process. Workers then assembled the house at Pioneer Log Homes' facility in British Columbia, numbered the pieces like a puzzle, took them apart and shipped them to Mount Shasta to be reassembled. About four years after clearing the first tree, the Muses moved in last Thanksgiving.

Unlike traditional log homes where each log is perfectly round, each length of timber in the Muses' home is unique. Surveying them is like searching for shapes in cloud formations - the cut ends of the logs resemble shamrocks, butterflies, flowers. Some are flawless; others feature gnarly knots that ooze character.

"Who would think to use this on a house?" Muse asked, gesturing to a log that resembles a profile of an open-mouthed animal. "My kids think I'm nuts because I love my rocks and my



For more photos of the Muse home, visit www.enjoymagazine.net and click on the "Muse Home" link on the home page.

logs, but they all have character."

Seventy-five truckloads of boulders from the Burney Falls area were used for the foundation, the fireplaces and along the banks of the hills. The exterior fireplace's rocks were set one at a time with a tractor and chain because they were so heavy.

Even the home's accents are one of a kind. The stovepipe on the chimney is a 70-year-old water pipe that Redding general contractor Cole Laustalot discovered in Etna, and atop the stovepipe is a disc from an old plow.

Bear and deer tracks are stamped in the colored-concrete driveway, and a compass is embossed in the entryway. A picture of an elk with Mt. Shasta in the background is etched into the wooden front door.

Inside, a majestic "feature tree" looks like it sprouted right in the middle of the home for the express purpose of holding up the roof's peak. Norwegian carvings lend personality to logs that span entryways into some of the rooms.

The home's three fireplaces are crafted from lava rocks that were hoisted up one at a time using a piano dolly, a steel beam and an electric wrench. A stone mason sliced slabs of marble for the hearth and the 1,500-pound mantel.

The quartzite floor, rough-edged granite countertops and distressed alder cabinets echo the home's natural theme. Spikes driven into the kitchen walls hold up shelves that Loustalot built from walnut that his grandfather had purchased more than 40 years ago. The wood-framed windows were trimmed with planks milled on a 140-year-old portable sawmill in Etna.

An Alaskan Moose Lodge was the source of the old shuffleboard table that sits along a long wall (Joan Muse's uncle lives in Juneau). The aspen four-poster bed in the master bedroom was discovered in Colorado. Chandeliers and a standing lamp made from dropped antlers were found at a shop in the Nevada desert. You'll find no lace here.

"It's been really fun gathering old stuff – the more beat up, the better," Joan Muse said. "We have some friends who are ranchers in Fall River, and when they come, they bring us an old saddle or an old washboard or something."

Her husband added: "There's no foo-foo."

Rough-edge granite is also used for bathroom countertops. In the master bathroom, a spacious glass-walled shower and a clawfoot bathtub both overlook Mt. Shasta.

In the office, a built-in desk is topped with granite, and the cabinets echo the woodwork in the kitchen. Nearby, a breezeway offers a convenient spot to stash skis, boots and snowboards and to dump off one's wet laundry.

Upstairs, a mezzanine is an inviting spot to play a board game, and a bridge leads to the loft that provides a comfy landing spot for worn-out snowboarders – a great feature for a family with two college-age children and a high school student. "The loft sleeps at least a dozen kids," Muse said.

A 3,000-square-foot living space lies below the 4,600-square-foot main floor. Rock-embedded walls flank both sides of the staircase, creating a "cave effect" as you descend. Downstairs includes a kitchenette, television room, three bedrooms and two bathrooms so "the kids can stay and make all the noise they want," Muse adds.

Another 1,100 square feet of unfinished living space sits above the garage. Someday it will be an apartment, Muse said.

Outside, a 1,700-square-foot deck "overlooks the entire world," Muse comments, as he watched three bucks saunter into his driveway to see if he'd recently planted anything tasty. They've also seen bears and a mountain lion, Muse said.

Down a small staircase, a gazebo and hot tub await those who wish to soak their cares away. "We'd get our shovel out and dig our way through the snow to get there in the winter," he said.

Though the house is enormous, it's rustic and unpretentious, and visitors immediately feel comfortable.

"The whole mindset was having a comfortable place for our kids, families and friends," Joan Muse shares. "We wanted plenty of room for people to come and hang out. We have even considered the possibility of using some of the space for special events."

Boyce Muse still feels the same as he did the day they broke ground and he came to the job site every day. "Every day when I got out of bed, I couldn't wait to get up here. It's one of the most fun things I've ever done," he said.

Though he and his wife still spend plenty of time in the office, they get up to the log home at least a few times a week. They've hosted wild game feeds and entertained an assortment of guests – most of whom share their sentiments about the home.

"The second I leave, I can't wait to come back," he said. •