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# HOME *at* LAST

*Sweat equity pays dividends  
for a patient Colorado couple.*

Homeowner-builder Brian Wray enhanced his handcrafted lodgepole pine home's sustainability by topping the roof with ice-and-water shield plus 40-year asphalt shingles. Pavers forming the lower patio are set in sand to allow the ground to absorb precipitation. At the front doorstep (right), a metal grate lets snow fall through to avoid a slippery hazard.



**B**rian and Karen Wray's log home won a slew of awards and is certified energy efficient. But it almost didn't happen. After the couple wed in 2004, they moved into a townhouse. To Karen, that seemed like the cobbler's children having no shoes. After all, Brian sold log homes and had more than 20 years' experience building them. "We had often talked about having our own log home," Karen says, "but we decided the timing just wasn't right for us."

They didn't postpone planning, however. The couple purchased a half-acre lot in Silverthorne, Colorado, with views of the Gore and Ten Mile mountain ranges. Their plans took a giant leap forward when Karen brought along a sketchpad on their vacation to Mexico. While sunning on the beach, she began drawing different floor plans. Because Brian, as owner of Mountain Log Homes of Colorado, knew what a log home would cost to build and how much they might save by handling the job themselves, Karen figured their budget would allow a 28-by-42-foot footprint, with approximately 3,200 square feet of space on two levels plus a half loft.

As their plans unfolded, Brian and Karen began researching log-home companies. Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia met all of their expectations. Brian had just finished a project working with André Chevigny, Pioneer's general manager and master builder, and admired the company's Swedish-cope log profile. They

STORY BY TERESA L. WOLFF  
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES RAY SPAHN  
STYLING BY COLLEEN MACOMBER



showed their plans to Pioneer's senior designers, Donna Fitzel and Roy Keats, who note they made only one minor change to Karen's layout: "They flip-flopped the closet in the master suite," she says, "so that we could have a see-through fireplace between the bedroom and bath."

Karen wanted to locate the kitchen in the center of the home so cabinets wouldn't cover the log walls, but that arrangement raised the issue of how to vent a cooktop grill. Venting the exhaust up would place the ductwork directly in the middle of the loft. The couple solved the problem by selecting a Jenn-Air range, which includes a down-exhaust design as standard.

Building your home if you're a log builder isn't without its challenges. Karen relates they had to watch their budget carefully, and she scrutinized all bids so as to avoid overruns. Additionally, Brian, who's accustomed to multitasking, found it very hard to leave the building site and go to another job. He wanted to oversee every aspect of what went into their home. "Building with your spouse can be more emotional than when you are dealing with a customer," Karen explains. "For example, I had a minor meltdown when the company shipped the wrong hardware for our doors."

Karen felt more at ease decorating the new home herself, having worked

**OPPOSITE:** A carved eagle's head dominates the 28-by-15-foot great room above the native moss rock fireplace and red flagstone mantel. Spotlights tucked into the spruce tongue-and-groove ceiling illuminate Brian's Western art collection.

**ABOVE:** Large-diameter pine logs add drama to the kitchen, which also features burgundy-stained alder cabinets. Granite countertops brighten the space by reflecting light from the pendant lights. The eagle's head at the end of the log beam extends into the great room.



## Sustainability Features

Brian and Karen Wray's home meets Summit County's sustainable building code. They installed Eagle Windows, which use wood harvested from managed forests and cladding from recycled aluminum. Brian also used an insulated concrete form (ICF) foundation to increase the home's energy efficiency, beetle-kill siding from a local mill and native moss rock that traveled less than 500 miles from its point of origin.

Brian always dreamed of owning property with a stream or pond. Unfortunately, this parcel did not accommodate his desire, but it did have great views and southern sun. To compensate for the lack of a natural water source, the Wrays included a 50-foot recirculating water feature that would be a focal point of the yard. In addition to being a beautiful backsplash for a dry lot, it created a water sound barrier to drown out the noise of the nearby Interstate highway. And it attracts wildlife.

While excavating their site, the homeowners removed a great many lodgepole pine trees, many of which had fallen prey to the bark beetle infestation that plagues the Rocky Mountain forests. Because the town of Silverthorne requires that any tree removed be replaced, Karen and Brian planted more than 50 aspen and 12 Colorado blue spruce as part of the city's reforestation effort.



in a furniture store and helped remodel three different condominiums. She chose a European mountain-lodge style, mixing elegant formal upholstered Old-World-style pieces with cowhide and leather furniture for a variety of textures. Warm earth tones complement Brian's cowboy art collection. "Every piece of furniture in this home was either a carryover from our former homes, a gift or purchased on sale," Karen says. "I also bought several pieces, including the chaise lounge in our master bedroom, from a friend who needed the money to pay for her cancer treatment. These pieces

are especially precious to me."

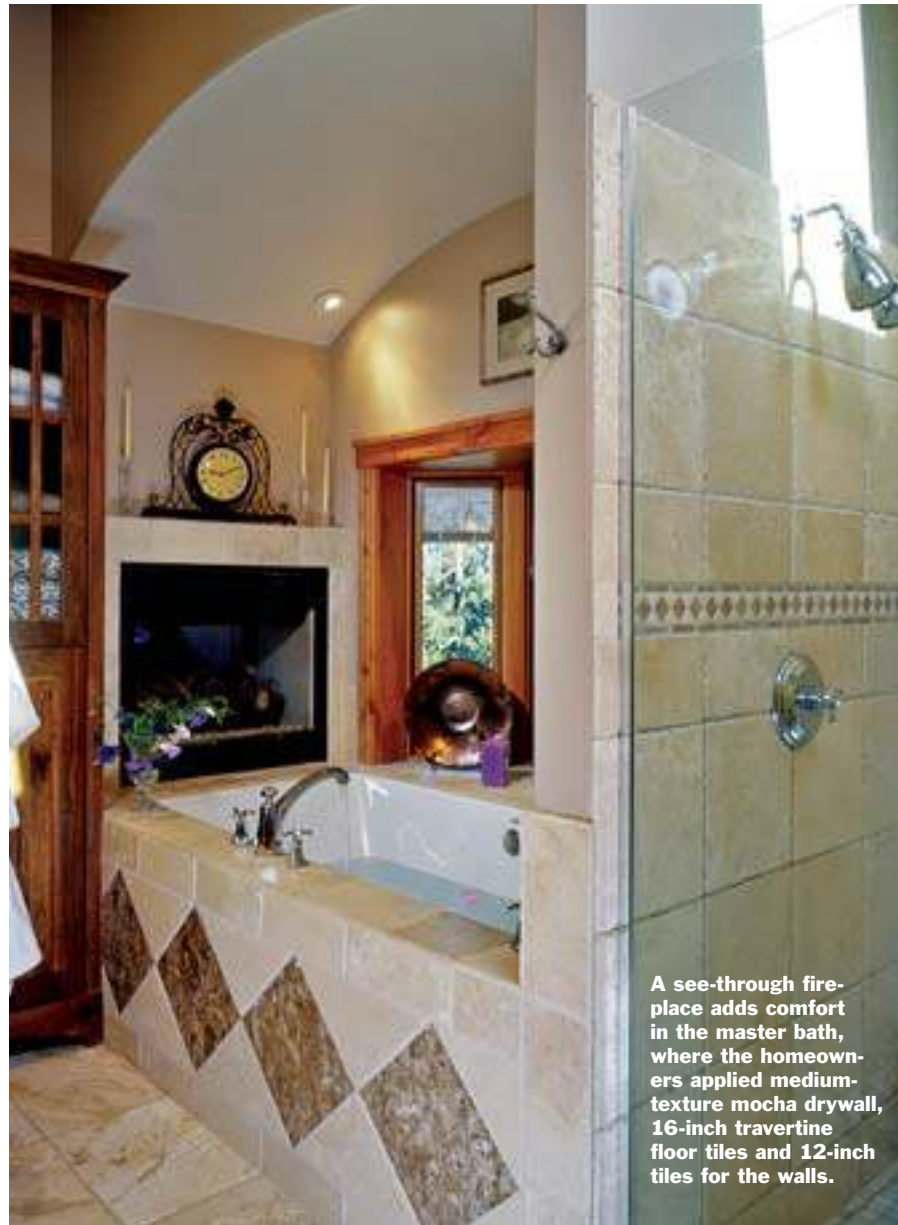
For Karen, lighting is critical. She coordinated the lighting to aid in the visual flow between the kitchen, dining and sitting areas in the open great room and installed a cable light system to take best advantage of the support logs.

Every log home that Pioneer builds features a carving. Brian and Karen selected a pair of eagles for the great room and exterior ridge beam because Karen's father is a retired Army full-bird colonel, and their property overlooks the Eagle's Nest Wilderness.

**OPPOSITE:** A carved archway highlights the dining room, which is dominated by a wrought-iron chandelier. A wool rug from Pakistan protects the African cherry floor. The Wrays bought the cherry table and chairs separately at great savings.

**ABOVE:** The American Indian carving in a sitting nook in the great room was a gift from Karen's parents.

The completed home won eight awards in the 2006 Summit County Parade of Homes, among them Built Green Colorado designation, Energy Star certification, Premier Builder Award, Best



A see-through fireplace adds comfort in the master bath, where the homeowners applied medium-texture mocha drywall, 16-inch travertine floor tiles and 12-inch tiles for the walls.

Floor Plan and Best Interior Decorating. This recognition encouraged Karen to join Brian at Mountain Log Homes of Colorado, where she coordinates interior finishes for their clients.

Initially, Brian and Karen had planned to live in this home for only five years. Now, they don't foresee leaving. "We just can't imagine living anywhere else or having anyone living in our home," Karen says. "We don't know how we would ever leave. We have our sweat equity in this home, and it truly belongs to us and feels like the cobbler's children now have new shoes."

She adds: "Several months ago, we had friends visiting, and we had planned to go to a concert that evening. Our friends asked if we could just stay at home instead as they felt so comfortable there. What greater compliment could we receive?"

the rest of the story...  
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### home details

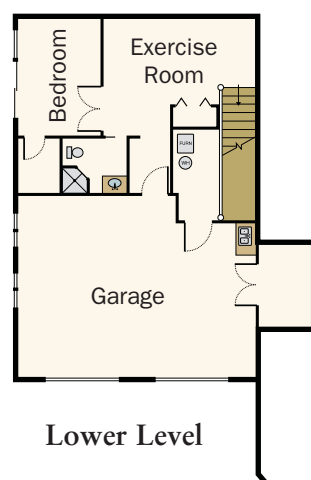
**SQUARE FOOTAGE:** 3,200

**LOG COMPANY:** Pioneer Log Homes of British Columbia

**BUILDER:** Mountain Log Homes of Colorado



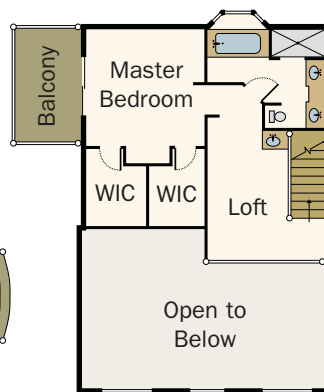
Textured pumpkin walls warm the second-level master bedroom, while large-diameter logs contribute structural stability and beauty. Sliding doors open to a private balcony.



Lower Level



Main Level



Upper Level