

TIMBER HOMES

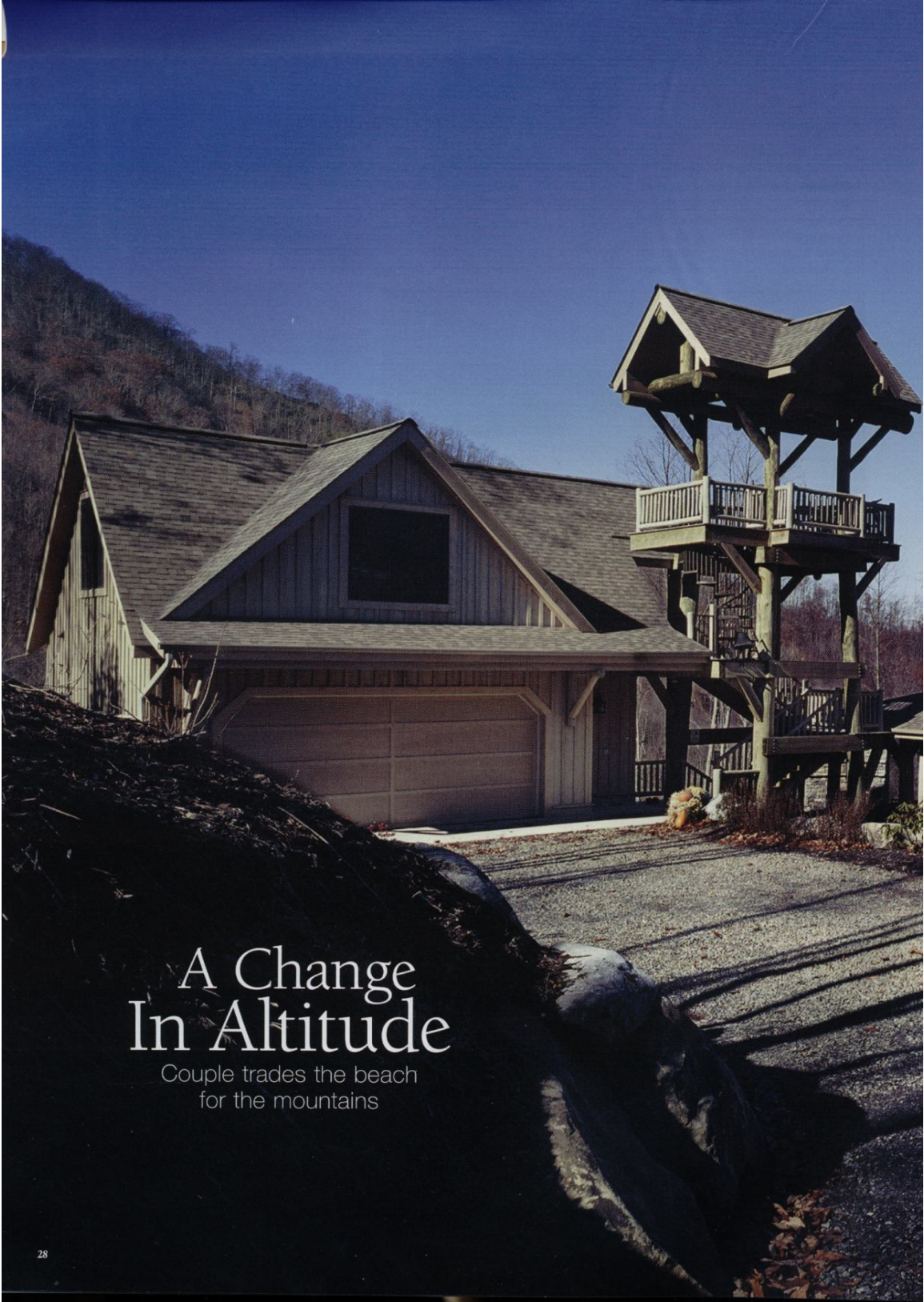
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A Change In Altitude

Couple trades the beach
for the mountains





ABOVE: The splendor of the Blue Ridge Mountains provides the backdrop for this Arnold Palmer signature golf course—just one of the many amenities found at Balsam Mountain Preserve in North Carolina.

ABOVE RIGHT: With 3,000 acres of the community protected by conservation easements, sights such as this magnificent cascading stream will endure for the enjoyment of generations to come.

OPPOSITE: A queen-post truss of Douglas fir logs accents the great room. Terraces placed to the side of the home don't impede the panoramic vistas through the bow windows. Antique heart-pine flooring and the pine tongue-and-groove ceilings provide the finishing touches.



Dave and Louise Sparks were just one day away from telling their builder to begin construction of their second home at Spring Island on the South Carolina coast when they heard of plans to develop Balsam Mountain Preserve. Situated just two hours from their permanent home in Clemson, South Carolina, the four-seasons location of the preserve appealed to the couple.

At the time, the developers, Chaffin/Light Associates, had yet to purchase the property. But Dave and Louise knew the firm's principals, James Chaffin Jr. and James Light, so they "took a leap of faith to become one of the founder members in the project," Dave explains.

Mountain Living

Set high in North Carolina's Blue Ridge Mountains, Balsam Mountain Preserve is a 4,400-acre community within a park. With 354 home sites and 3,000 acres protected by conservation easements, the preserve offers an authentic community in a natural environment. Community amenities include a nature center, equestrian center, 50 miles of trails that connect to the nearby Nantahala National Forest, and an Arnold Palmer signature golf course.

To create their custom home in the community, Dave and Louise began by interviewing architect Mark Sinsky. "We hit it off immediately," Dave says. "Mark had lived in Steamboat Springs, Colorado, for over 10 years, and had the experience necessary to design a home in a steeply sloping mountainous terrain."





The couple's grandchildren love to sit at the kitchen island to color or eat lunch.

The open kitchen is ideal for entertaining on the spur of the moment. The custom-made, glazed maple cabinets feature granite countertops.

Mark visited the Sparkses' home in Clemson to gain an idea of the couple's lifestyle, their tastes and how they would use the home. Next he studied the topographic maps and toured the available lots at Balsam Mountain Preserve to help Dave and Louise select a site that would have the most spectacular views.

"Because this is a naturalist community in an environmentally sensitive area, we worked within the guidelines to incorporate native products and earthy, natural colors," Mark says. "I designed the home as a hybrid timber frame built using conventional stick framing." Mark's design called for massive Douglas fir logs for posts and trusses, supplied by Old Yale Log Homes in British Columbia, to give the interior special flair. "The hybrid results in a tremendous amount of character value for a very reasonable expenditure for logs as compared to a full timber frame," Mark explains.

The Lay of the Land

Mark created plans for a 3,750-square-foot, long, narrow home that would run parallel to the site's grade, resulting in less need for cut and fill on the slope. The plan also allowed for a view from every room. Three distinct rectangles form the separate living areas on the main floor. Entering the home from the front porch, which sits down a half-level from the driveway, the middle rectangle contains the foyer and the great room.

To left of the foyer is the dining room and open kitchen; a powder room and laundry room are found in the vestibule to the right of the foyer that leads to the master

bedroom suite—a private retreat for the homeowners. A covered porch opens on the view side of the home from both the great room and the master bedroom.

The lower level is designed for the couple's guests, including their two daughters, their spouses, and the Sparkses' four grandchildren. A "wreck" room, accessible through French doors, is situated straight ahead. Both the wreck room and righthand bedroom open to a covered porch. On the right side of the stairway landing are a guest bedroom and bath and a playroom, which leads to the wine cellar; to the left of the landing is a second guest-bedroom suite.

Originally, the couple and Mark planned to have a covered bridge over the walkway connecting the front porch to the garage. Eventually, they expanded the bridge to become an outdoor staircase leading to a 500-square-foot guest suite over the two-car garage. "We then added a look-out tower where Dave and Louise could entertain with a spectacular view of the adjoining golf course," Mark explains.

Finishing Touches

Based upon a strong recommendation from friends, Dave and Louise chose Richard Lanning Builders to act as the general contractor. Richard and his crew worked closely with Old Yale Log Homes, which prefabricated the timber frame and shipped it to the building site. Old Yale Log Homes' owner, Scott Jackson, spent several days in North Carolina during the construction of the lookout tower as this was a unique addition to a timber frame home.

While many houses have large expanses of windows for passive solar heat, the Sparkses' home has a passive cooling system. Warm air rises to the ridges and blows out through motorized sensor windows in each end of the three gables.

"Because of the cross ventilation created by the placement of the windows, we only had to turn on our air conditioning system approximately three days last summer," Louise says. "This is especially delightful for me as I thor-

oughly enjoy the cool breeze in our mountain home."

Once the Balsam Mountain Preserve home was completed, Dave and Louise sold their larger home in Clemson in favor of a smaller place in the city. Consequently, they were left with an abundance of furniture. Louise's goal was to create a comfortable yet traditional style in the mountain home. She enlisted interior decorator Judy Hebart and her daughter, Kathryn Tompkins, of Design Team of Clemson to assist her in



Tuscan gold walls are accented with horizontal beams to augment the timber feel. Comfortable furnishings, which the couple collected throughout their marriage, reflect their traditional style. Dave and Louise often retreat to their escape nook, a porch accessible through French doors from their master bedroom.



Native plants and grasses surround the home's intricate water feature. Two waterfalls cascade down the slope, past the view-side terrace. The pleasant babble of the water makes eating outside even more enjoyable.



deciding on wall colors and furnishings.

"Dave and I spent quite a bit of time searching for special 'quirky' things for our home," Louise says. "We especially wanted an antique country table that could accommodate 10 to 12 people." They found what they were looking for at a shop in Sperryville, Virginia called Antique Tables Made Daily. "While we were there we spotted an unusual chandelier made of twisted willow branches that is now hanging in our stairwell," Louise says. They subsequently ordered a second, larger chandelier for the great room.

Outside, the new property's landscaping is in keeping with the Balsam Mountain Preserve guidelines, which prohibit the introduction of non-native plants into the park. Patrick Langford of Hillside Services in Waynesville, North Carolina, took on the challenge of creating a pond and a water feature with two waterfalls that flow beneath the bridge and cascade down the side of the sloping hill past the view-side terrace. Patrick added native grasses that augmented the existing foliage.

Recreation and Relaxation

When Dave and Louise aren't preoccupied with running David Sparks and Associates, their marketing research company in Clemson, they enjoy the many amenities of Balsam Mountain Preserve and the nearby communities of Waynesville and Sylva. With three full-time naturalists on staff at the preserve,

nature walks are not only relaxing but also educational. Additionally, Dave and Louise enjoy attending special functions, such as the annual barn dance, Camp Balsam—a homecoming that kicks off the summer season—and the road rally scavenger hunt. Dave joins in a variety of golf tournaments.

The couple's daughters and their families live within a reasonable drive-time to the preserve, so Dave and Louise host frequent family gatherings, especially during the holidays.

"We are so pleased we made the decision to build here," Dave adds. "This is a place that is so wide open. We can see the Blue Ridge Parkway and watch the wild turkeys. We can be as active as we want or just sit and do nothing. It's perfect!"

Resources:

Antique Tables Made Daily, (800) 413-2459,
www.farmtable.com

Balsam Mountain Preserve, (866) 452-3456,
www.balsammountainpreserve.com

Design Team of Clemson, (864) 654-3448

Hillside Services, (828) 452-0382

Old Yale Log Homes, (866) 485-2608,
www.oldyale.com

Richard Lanning Builders Inc., (828) 452-2616,
www.richardlanningbuilders.com

Mark Sinsky, (828) 258-2288,
www.marksinskyarchitect.com

Massive Douglas fir posts and beams form the truss for the lookout tower. The cypress deck floor and yellow cedar railing refine this outdoor space. From this vantage point, homeowners Dave and Louise delight in the view of the golf course and mountains.

Out of the Routine

I know it's happened to you. You arrive at a familiar spot and can't remember anything about driving there. With your mind occupied elsewhere, you trust your eyes, hands and feet to get the car where you need to go.



So many times in life, we find ourselves not being mindful of those things that seem routine. It's easy to just motor around on autopilot—paying little attention to the food we eat, the day-to-day contacts we have with familiar people, the trees and flowers growing around us, the sky above us.

When it's time to *plan your new home*, mindfulness will be required. Things you take for granted—the faucets on the sink, the knobs on the doors, the tiles on the floor—must be given thought. One area that deserves extra attention is your **heating, cooling and ventilating system.**

The traditional systems you're used to are not the only options. In fact, one type of system—**geoexchange or geothermal**—*could be the best thing you've never heard of.*

Using the near-constant temperature of the earth just a few feet below ground level, geoexchange systems heat and cool buildings with far less energy than any other type of system. You could argue that building a well-insulated home with a geothermal system would be a smarter option, environmentally speaking, than choosing solar or wind power.

Start your research into geothermal systems with the article on page 14 of this issue. You'll find good basic information, along with sources for further reading. Talk to your builder, designer or architect, and ask if there are other homes in the area where you plan to build that are using geothermal. If you can, speak to those homeowners about their experience with the installation, operation and costs of geothermal.

Your mindfulness in making this decision about heating and cooling your home could pay off big in terms of both comfort and cost savings.

Janice Brewster
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ON THE COVER: As the sun sets, a roaring fire makes the great room in Balsam Mountain Preserve's Boarding House Lodge a welcoming place to gather. To read about another custom timber home in the preserve, go to page 28. Photo by Richard Leo Johnson, courtesy of HistoricalConcepts.

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