

A front view of the house shows that the challenge of building a two-story ranch-style log home with character was met. Beautiful northern white cedar logs blend perfectly with the surrounding woods. Lots of windows on the front wall allow a view of Lake Walloon from most parts of the house.

*This Ann Arbor couple owns a
3,500-square-foot getaway home
at a Michigan vacation spot
made famous by Ernest Hemingway.*

The CEDAR LOG HOUSE *On Walloon Lake*

BY JOHN BROCKWAY

PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE • STYLING BY DEBRA GRAHL

To the literary world, Walloon Lake in northern Michigan is best known for the summers author Ernest Hemingway spent there as a child.

To Steve and Janet Swanson, it's a place where they retreat summers and holidays to get away from their busy lives in Ann Arbor, about three to four driving hours south.

Walloon Lake stretches along 26 miles of shoreline inland from Lake Michigan. For the most part, it is lined with the summer homes of Midwesterners. Its spring-fed waters offer excellent fishing and boating. Its surrounding woods and hills foster invigorating hiking and skiing.

And the Swansons do it all. But when they think of Walloon Lake, they think about the comfort of their 13-room cedar log home, a far cry from what Janet Swanson describes as their "funky little townhouse" in downtown Ann Arbor, Mich.

Until their recent deaths, Janet's parents owned a log home at Walloon Lake, so traveling there was second nature to her.

She and Steve first bought a conventional home on the lake in the early 1980s. Tragically, in 1993, the house was destroyed by a fire.

"It was a devastating experience," recalls Janet. "Not just for the cottage so much. But my dad had built a lot of furniture in there for me and I lost a lot of paintings and pictures. It was really about the personal things."

The Swansons knew that replacing the house that burned wouldn't be easy. They also knew they wanted a different style of house — one that provided more atmosphere and living space than the three-story house that was destroyed.



The great room (above and right) is another favorite spot to relax. Janet Swanson went to great lengths to buy specially made or refurbished furnishings so their new home would look lived in right away. Stones for the fireplace, which extends to the lower level of the house, came from nearby fields.

Memories of her parents' log home led Janet and Steve to Town & Country Cedar Homes, in Petoskey, Mich., less than 15 miles from their lakeshore property.

After working on the layout with the help of Town & Country's design department, they built their new 3,500-square-foot house facing the lake. They wanted to get the utmost enjoyment from the water and the reflections of sun and moonlight that provide the colorful backdrop to this peaceful vacationland. They knew their new log house would make living at their 150-foot lakefront property even more enjoyable.

"The cottage that burned," Janet says, "seemed to be all bedrooms and not so much living space, and it seemed we always had a million people about the place. This time I wanted to create more living space and not so much bedroom space. That's why the bedrooms aren't very large."

Janet recalls those days in 1993 when their log home dream emerged from the smoke of tragedy: "Steve and I just kind of played around with a design until we came up with something we liked. Then we showed it to Town & Country and they translated our ideas into house plans."

Steve Biggs, president of Town & Country Cedar Homes, recalls the challenge of designing a house for the Swansons' 150-by-400-foot lot. It was unusually difficult because the road into the property was at the top of a steep grade that sloped down to the lake.

"In addition," Biggs says, "the house needed to be a ranch style but with a lower walk-out level and with real character. We also had to create a way to get around the house and down to the lake."

The logs are all northern white cedar harvested nearby in northern Michigan's Boyne Valley. Biggs described them as "tree-length scribed logs," a milled but naturally tapered cedar log. "White cedar is very different from the nontapered pine," he says. "The white cedar log — when you use them in a long length — shows a taper that really enhances the art form of a wall.



They wanted to get the utmost enjoyment from



the water and the reflections of sun and moonlight.





Instead of a stacked log arrangement, it's more of a woven arrangement where you're alternating bottoms and tops of trees. It really gives a wonderful character to the home."

By June 1994 the Swansons' 3,500-square-foot log home (which Janet still refers to as "the cottage") was completed. But since all their summer home belongings were destroyed in the fire, they had to go shopping for furnishings.

Janet, who holds a master's degree in watercolor painting from Eastern Michigan University, and sells paintings through a local gallery, decided she didn't want her new home to look "brand new."

It would look too sterile, she thought. "So an artist friend of mine — Marilyn Longtain — and I drove to upstate New York and went to various antique markets and rustic furniture shops and just had a great time. We also visited flea markets and found things to fix up. I wanted to fashion the cottage after an old Adirondack lodge."

Janet had to buy a lot of furniture and accessories to fill 13 rooms on two levels, especially the 22-by-25-foot great room with a 16-foot-high cathedral ceiling at the center of the upper level. Off to one side of the great room is a 14-by-13-foot dining area and behind that a large kitchen area that needed plenty of furnishings, too. On the other side of the great room is a 15-by-17-foot private master bedroom with two walk-in closets and a 9-by-10 master bath. At opposite corners of the upper level there is a small mudroom and a 12-by-12 screened porch.

"I love the living room," says Janet, relishing the enjoyment her log home brings, "I know it's big but it's real cozy. And the screened-in porch is a real favorite in the summer. You can hear the water from it and see the sunset, and it's always cool because there's always a breeze."

The porch has clear plastic curtains that can be rolled down during storms. In the winter, Janet says, Plexiglas replaces the screens.

"We even use the porch in the winter because it has its own electric heater," says Janet. "Unfortunately it sort of becomes the smoking room when we have par-

ABOVE: A rough-hewn country style bed adds to the atmosphere and comfort of the master bedroom. Windows along two walls allow a full view of the lake. **BELOW:** Three beds tuck snugly into a loft in the Swanson home. **LEFT:** The dining area is set between the great room and the kitchen and is always ready for culinary delights.



RIGHT: Just off the great room, the dining area is open to the kitchen. The Swansons tried several designs to create the openness between rooms and yet preserve some privacy. The twigging at right solved the problem.

ties and things. That's where they're allowed to smoke their cigars and cigarettes. But it's better than having smoke going through your whole house."

The lower level of the house has a different purpose. It comprises two bedrooms and a full bath for use by the Swansons' three grown children, Kimberly, 28; Betsy, 27; and Matthew, 24; and other guests. And there's a 650-square-foot family room with an adjacent alcove for lounging and relaxing.

The lower level also has an 11-by-20-foot laundry and tool room with small storage areas next to it. In an opposite corner there is an 11-foot-square studio used by the artists in the family. Naturally, it has a window in the one wall facing the lake.

Once the Swansons decided to build a log home on their site, they sought out local craftsmen to do the work and add the artistic touches. Janet even put the builder, Christopher Kuhn, from nearby Boyne City, in that category. "He's a real craftsman and fun to work with. I greatly admire his work."

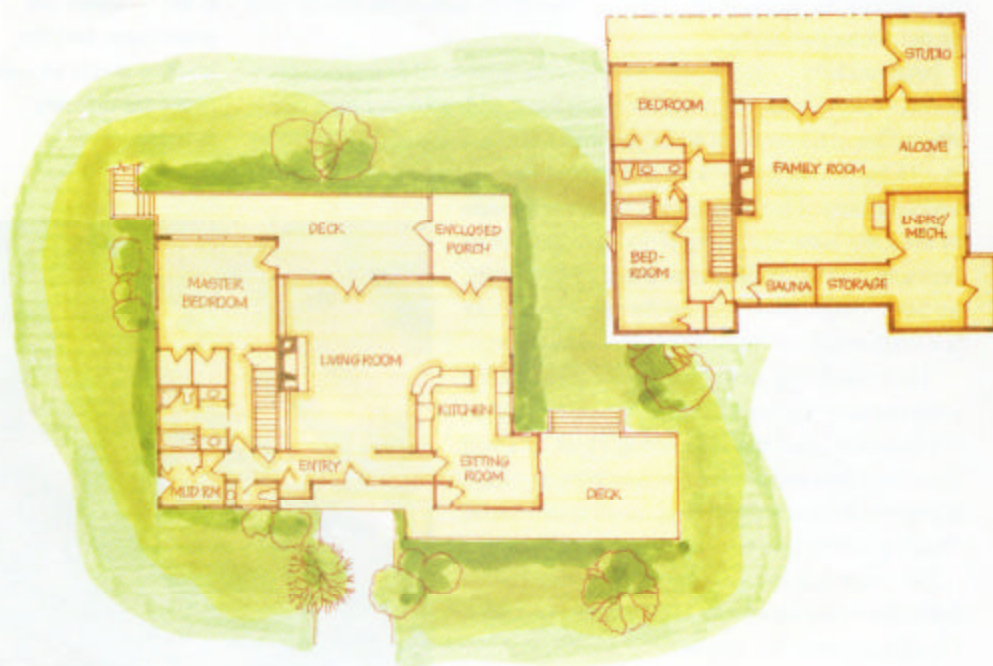
Another local craftsman built the stone fireplace from nearby field stones. It extends from the lower level and has working openings on both floors. Another artisan, known in that area for carvings, fashioned an eagle into a wood beam and carved a mural on the edge of the fireplace mantel.

"Even when we drove to New York, a lot of the furniture we bought was made by a craftsman from that area—the dining room table, bedroom tables, and end tables in the living room. He lived way out in the boonies and he was wonderful. It ended up being artists working for an artist. Everybody really got into it."

Even the flooring fits the motif. At the suggestion of the builder, the Swansons had eight-inch pine plank flooring installed in the upper level. Carpeting was laid only in the master bedroom.

Because the house faces the lake, a long deck was built outside the great room entrance to view nature's wonderland. The 150-foot slope leading down to the lake is beautifully landscaped. Since most of the residents on the lake have boats, the lakefront serves as entrance to the Swanson's home.

There is plenty of wildlife in this remote part of Michigan and lots of animals come to visit the Swanson property — especially deer. "It's kind of neat," Janet says. "I love seeing them. I think they're gorgeous. Unfortu-



It ended up being artists working for



an artist. Everybody really got into it.





nately, they're kind of pesky. They ate all my perennials.

"Everybody in this area has to protect their plantings from the deer, and we put fencing up during the winter months. As far as other animals, we have a couple of harmless foxes that visit from time to time."

Even the Swansons' two dogs — a springer spaniel named Spinner and a black labrador called Capt. Bligh — don't discourage wild animals from coming during the night.

Janet admitted she and Steve ponder living full time at their Walloon Lake home. "We say now that we don't think we would want to live there year-round, but I don't know. It's really our main house. We sold our house in Ann Arbor and we live downtown in a funky little townhouse, a duplex thing. So when all the family comes, we go to the lake house.

"We'll just probably spend more and more time there — but if we did I think I'd get too lazy. There's a lot more for me in Ann Arbor as an artist and I don't think my husband's quite ready to retire. We want him to keep working, you know," she says laughing.

Steve is a partner in an investment management and venture capital firm in Ann Arbor. He's also "a fanatic fly-fisherman" according to his wife, so the attraction to Walloon Lake is magnetic.

ABOVE: This screened-in porch is a favorite lounging spot for the Swansons.

Sights and sounds from Lake Walloon can be enjoyed year-round. LEFT: Located just off the kitchen, the deck is a favorite eating spot when weather permits. A hot tub at right beckons tired bodies after a vigorous day of activity.

Continued on page 96