



## SOLITARY SPLENDOR ON MICHIGAN'S UPPER PENINSULA

**A**bsolute privacy. Except for a few bears. Complete quiet. Except for the loons on the lake. And uninterrupted views of nature in all directions. This, plus every modern comfort, equals the perfect getaway house built by Neil Krushcke, Sr., and his wife Nancy in Michigan's far north.

In 1988, Nancy and Neil, who had been attracted to log homes pictured in the magazines, visited a finished log house in New Hampshire and decided to build one of their own to suit themselves exactly. That summer, Neil, on business in Detroit, saw an ad for property in the state's Upper Peninsula and decided to investigate. In a region of hardwood forests and reachable, in part, only by logging track, was a scenic property of several acres on Gibson Lake.

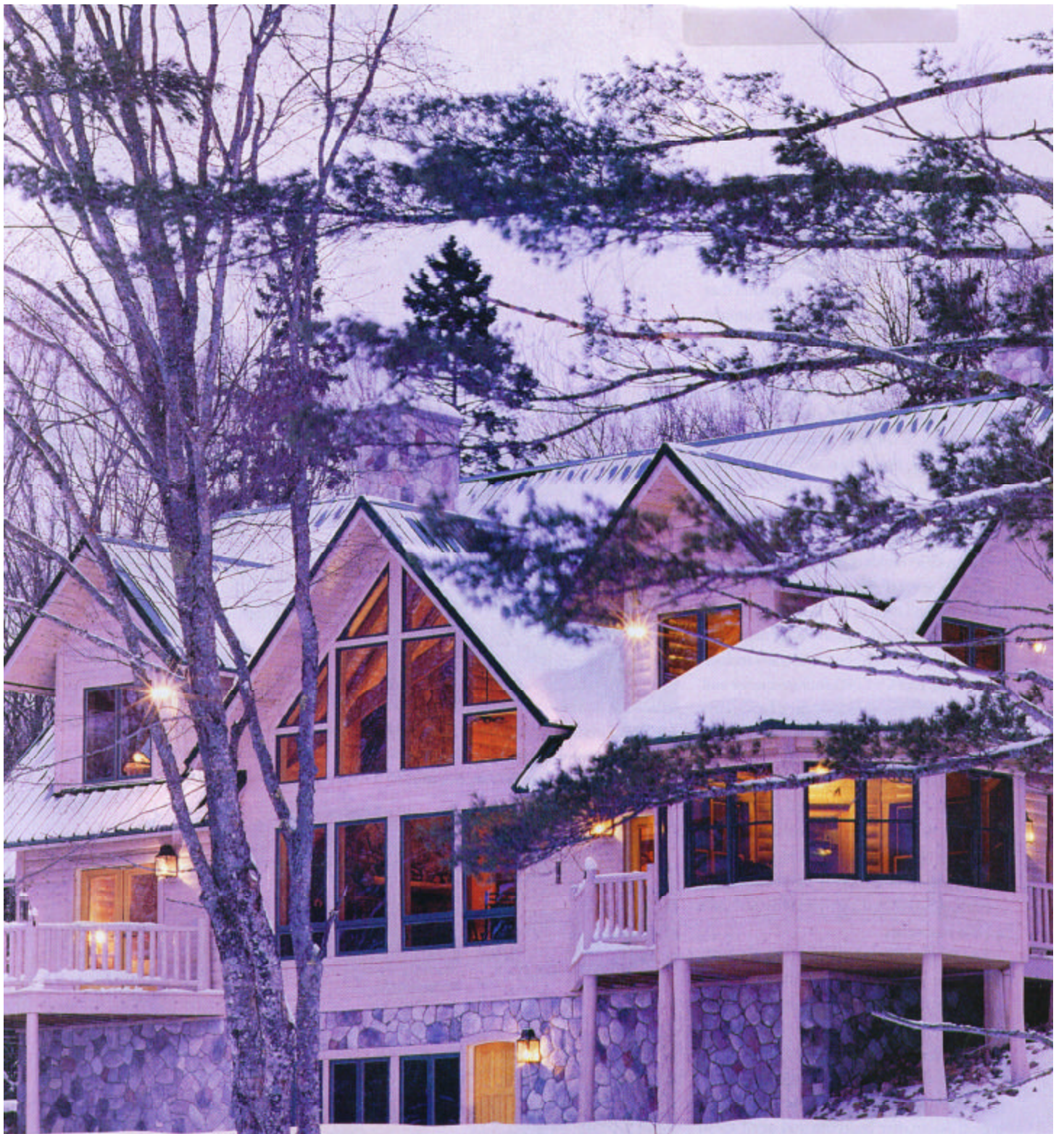
Neil liked it and bought it on the spot. But when it came time to actually build a home, the rigorous prevailing winters added a new dimension to the planning stage. Neil and Nancy consulted Town & Country Cedar Homes in Petoskey and found Doug Boor, a forester by training and someone ideally suited to appreciate the couple's objectives as well as the demanding climate they were planning for. (In late spring of 1995, he visited the site on snowshoes and, he says, came away inspired.) Neil sketched a layout for a spacious three-bedroom, three-bathroom house; it would have three levels, including a walkout basement. Doug, using his firm's computer-aided design (CAD) software, then came up with suggestions and solutions that made the final design a model of energy efficiency and visual appeal.

**ABOVE: Massive posts and beams frame the home's entry porch and custom-carved oak front door.**

**RIGHT: Amid beech, maple and pine trees, the 3,600-square-foot house offers a warm welcome.**







# A GETAWAY HOUSE THAT REALLY IS.

BY LORETTA NOVICK/PHOTOS BY ROGER WADE/STYLING BY DEBRA GRAHL



**K**iln-dried Northern white cedar logs were used for exterior walls. Besides its moisture resistance, the wood has a natural compound that inhibits insects and decay. To ensure an airtight structure, the log manufacturer employs a unique post-and-sill construction system, whereby foam insulation is inserted between split log sections attached to vertical posts. The resulting R-24 level of insulation keeps the house snug, even when, as Nancy reports, "We had a whole month of winter weather when the temperature never went above 10 degrees below zero."

With a short building season, the work proceeded in several phases, starting with the concrete foundation in 1996. Since that time, Neil has added land, mainly along the shoreline. His present three-hundred acres include most of the lake's 13,000-foot perimeter and a large assortment of moose, deer, bears, coyotes and beavers. After the foundation was capped, cold weather set in and work on the house proceeded at the mill, where logs were hand-peeled, hand-scribed and readied for delivery. By 1998, the 3,600-square-foot house was finished. Neil and Nancy were able to get away from their year-round Cleveland suburban home and the demands of Neil's several businesses.

The home's rugged yet comfortable look, both inside and out, complements its majestic natural setting. An open, airy main floor is achieved with many windows and a cathedral ceiling over the entry, great room and kitchen. Next to the dining room, a large gazebo virtually brings the outdoors inside. Decks leading off the master bedroom and great room have a view of the crystal-clear lake, a special summer pleasure. An imposing fireplace built of local stone in the great room is matched by another fireplace on the floor below, while a third offers a cozy hearthside in the master bedroom. The kitchen has its own wood-burning stove for extra heat.

Upstairs, a catwalk leads to a loft with a hand-woven "branch" railing and a view of the great room, entry and kitchen below. There's also a very large (nearly four-hundred-square-foot) bedroom, a walk-in closet, full



**ABOVE:** Formal upholstered chairs add elegance to the dining area, where guests can enjoy views of the lake. **BELOW:** Sunshine is plentiful in the Krushcke great room. When the sun is low, the moose antler chandelier takes over.







A decorative raccoon descends the fireplace in the comfortably furnished great room with its cathedral ceiling. TOP LEFT: A bed fills the comfortable space where a dormer intersects the sloping roof. TOP RIGHT: The woven-branch railing defines the edge of the loft space overlooking the great room below.





bathroom and storage space. The basement level has, in addition to heating and hot-water units, a recreation room, storage space and, soon to come, an extra bathroom.

A getaway house, this remote (40 minutes to the nearest town) needs its own power sources, so there are two Kohler electric generators—"and a huge battery," as Neil describes it—in the sound-insulated three-car garage. Three propane tanks holding a thousand gallons each get filled twice a year. Solar panels on one side of the garage are another energy source. "I keep the temperature at 60 degrees even when we're not here," says Neil, "to prevent mildew." It also makes a more welcoming indoor climate when he and Nancy arrive, golden retrievers and cat in tow, after an 11-hour drive from their other home.

"I wanted a bright interior, with a lot of light," says Nancy, and the profusion of windows ensures plenty of sun. Traditional fixtures and a moose-antler chandelier in the great room take care of indoor illumination. The kitchen is particularly inviting, with its flood of daylight, a boon to the plants. A kitchen design firm, Puffs of Petoskey, supplied the custom cabinetry, even matching paneling for the Sub-Zero refrigerator/freezer.

Among other individual touches in the home is the wide oak front door carved with a pine tree, wolf and owl motif. In the guest bedroom there's a king-size bedstead made from standing dead juniper, with a headboard, bought in Aspen, that weighs nearly four-hundred pounds. Enhancing the natural look in the great room are several posts that

flare, tree-like, at their base. A cherry wood floor was laid in the dining area and kitchen, while the great room, gazebo and bedrooms have carpeting. The house was designed with an eye for both symmetry and variation, so the view from the lake side is of a hexagonal gazebo on one end balanced by an angled deck on the other. Dormer windows add further architectural interest.

The white cedar exterior has been finished with a Sikkens product for both its "antique gray" color and to inhibit decay. To support massive amounts of snow and help keep the heat in, there's an R-41 metal roof with high-density foam insulation, and rafters up to 12 inches in diameter. Respect for the elements is important. During the spring thaw, the ground can be muddy and deeply rutted. Neil and





**OPPOSITE and LEFT:**  
In the efficient kitchen, modern conveniences are paired with traditional wood fittings and an old fashioned wood stove for extra heat.

**BELOW:** Into the sleek, light-filled master bathroom, comes an open view of trees and sky.



Nancy keep the track in and out plowed through the winter—it's still 10 miles to a paved road—and a snowmobile stands by.

But that's part of the pleasure of this unusual getaway home. "We keep a couple of feeders on the property," reports Neil. "They hold about eight-thousand pounds and were meant for the deer, but the bears seem to get most of it." Bears figure in some of the couple's choicest stories, one being about the noise heard in the bedroom one morning and the discovery of bear paw prints on the French doors leading from the deck.

Sharing life with the animals is one of the area's attractions. Another is fishing on the lake in summer, where Neil has stocked the waters with trout. And finally, there's the feeling of being away from it all. "We don't even have a regular phone," says Neil, "though there's a cell phone if we need one." Amid the beech, sugar maple, white pine and aspen, the house is both refuge and respite from the couple's busy life—in Neil's words, "It's a pristine, wonderful place." ❧

**LOG HOME MANUFACTURER: Town & Country Cedar Homes, Petoskey, Michigan.**