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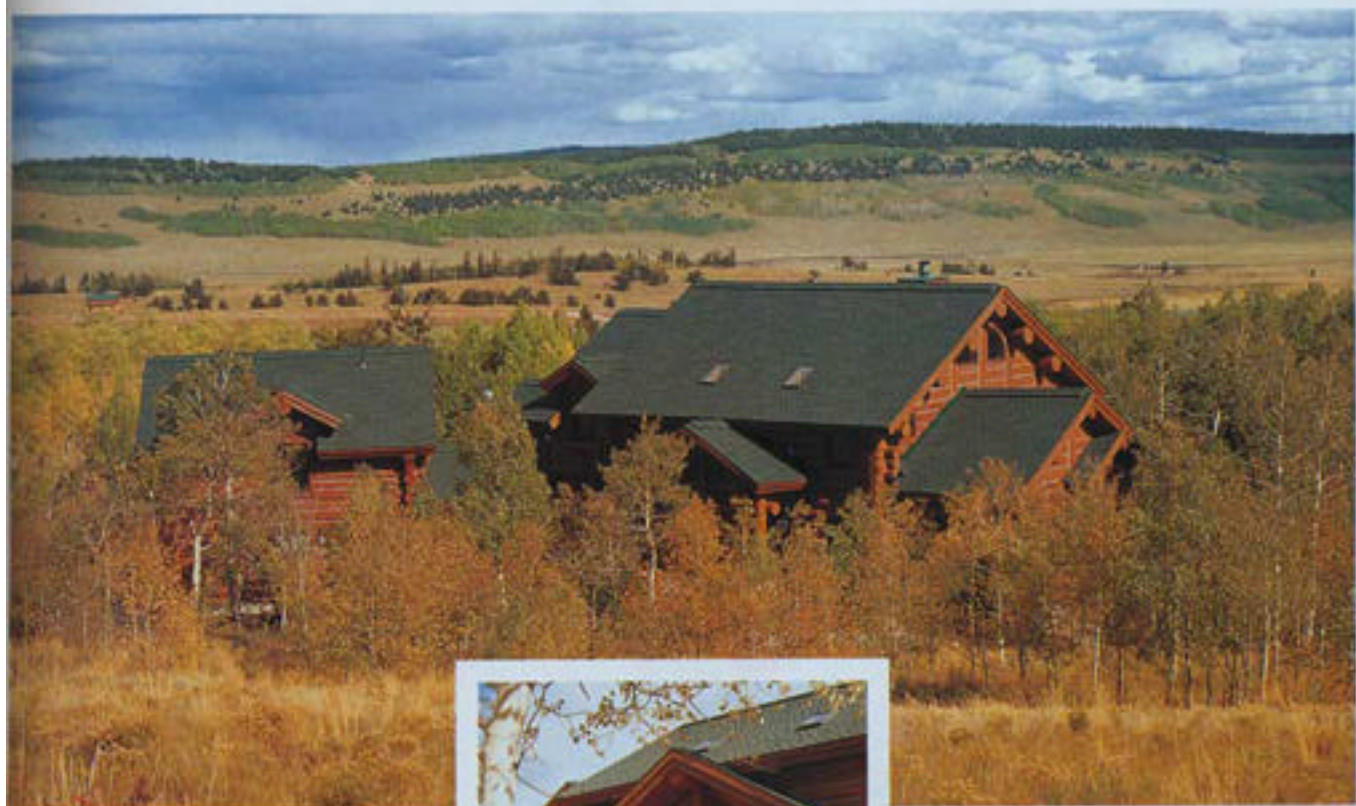


Inside a Perfectly Planned Colorado Home
Big Ideas for Not-So-Big-Houses
Matching Your Design to Your Site

Planned to Perfection

A Colorado custom home exceeds its owners' expectations

A patio off the lower level provides one of the few spots with a view since the Slubowskis elected to build in an aspen grove to be sheltered from the wind. The turret bumpout holds the dining room on the main level and a recreation room downstairs.



Anne and Dave Slubowski liked their old log home, which they built when they were first married because it seemed so perfect for the area. After their twin sons Dean and Ryan were born in 1997, they realized that 3,200 square feet wasn't going to be big enough for the family. They decided to build a bigger home and to switch from milled logs to handcrafted ones.

They already owned land, about 10 miles from their existing home. Dave had bought 5 acres in 1990 for \$14,000, then, after he and Anne were married, they added 12 acres. The property, located at about 10,000 feet elevation, is in a development that features several log homes.

Anne and Dave figured out the basic ingredients of their design from plans they saw in log-home magazines. Dave knew that fellow ski patroller Ethan Guerra was a contractor who had built several log homes and just started a design-build firm in Breckenridge with his wife, architect Suzanne Allen-Guerra. The Slubowskis hired Suzanne, who had never designed a log home but was eager to do her first one. After visiting the site, Suzanne declared that it "deserved something special."

The best place to build was on a small rise in a stand of aspen trees, which would protect the home from the



Top: The house was built in a grove of aspens at 10,000 feet elevation. The large-diameter logs are standing-dead Engelmann spruce shipped from British Columbia.

Above: The entry is built up with log posts, beams and trusses to create a dramatic first impression. The stonework is Colorado moss rock. Three boulders became an integral feature of the entry courtyard, which is also observable from an upper-level balcony off the master bedroom.

wind. The Slubowskis' desire for plenty of sun and a big deck suggested orienting the house toward the southeast with the main view through trees down a valley. The only obstacle was three massive boulders. Suzanne decided to design the house to "wrap it around so that when you're walking down the front path to the front door you're walking right by them."

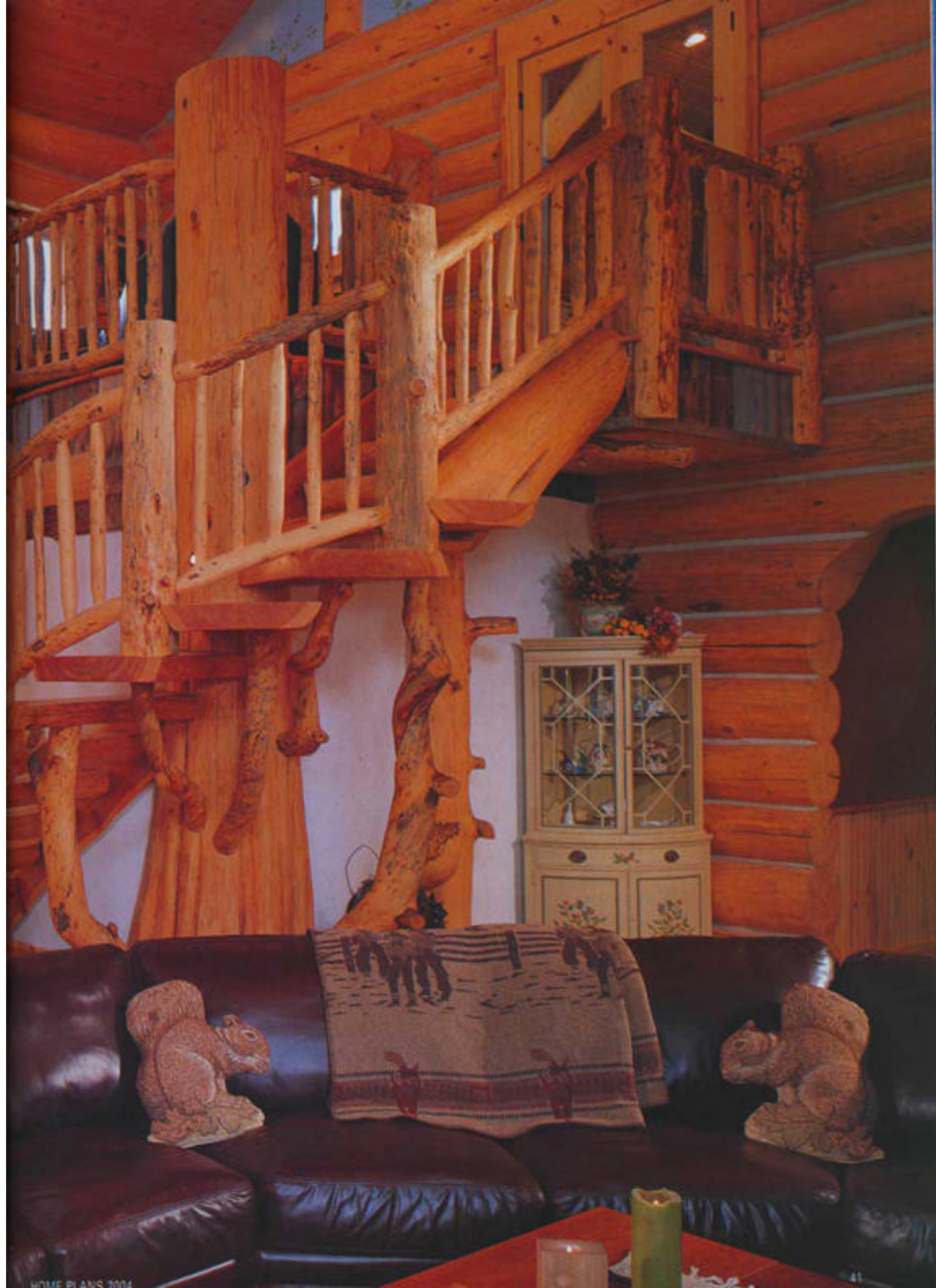
The design process unfolded over a period of six months, with plenty of give and take between the Slubowskis and Suzanne and Ethan. Besides being guided by the site, Suzanne incorporated features from Anne and Dave's wish list. One was a connecting loft between the twins' bedrooms

with a log railing and log ladders so the boys can get to each other's room without having to use the hall.

Dave, who handles the cooking, wanted a roomy, efficient kitchen that felt separate yet was open to the adjacent living and dining areas. Suzanne's solution was an arched doorway and an arched pass-through at one end of the kitchen to the living room with a bar where people can sit and talk to Dave while he's cooking. At the other end of the kitchen is a second door to the dining room, which is in a half-octagonal bumpout. "When we moved in, the kids found out they could do loops through the kitchen on

The staircase, made from a cedar log with Douglas fir treads attached, was assembled at the log producer's yard in British Columbia and shipped to the site intact. Local craftsman Kurt Lampe carved the railings. Stairs to the lower level are to the left featuring a painting of an aspen tree.







Left: Warm leather sofa, a present from Anne to Dave, and chairs enhance the setting for the fireplace, built of Colorado moss rock by mason Joel Munn and featuring a mantel by Kurt Lampe. Neighbor Todd Scholl designed the cupboard on the rear wall that houses the large-screen TV. The table in front of the fireplace breaks into four sections that can be moved around. The chandelier is 5-foot-4 and weighs 120 pounds. Clerestory windows lighten the logs.

Right: A detail of the great room furniture grouping reveals the artful interplay of light, stonework and logs.

Lower Right: The sunroom is a cheery extension of the living room that transitions to the south deck. Wicker furniture and plants enhance the casual setting. Stone floors radiate warmth throughout the room.

their tricycles," Anne recalls, pointing out, "It's proven to be just a child-friendly house."

The Slubowskis also wanted the master bedroom on a separate level from the rest of the house. Suzanne added a sitting loft and an office. The plans also called for a steam bath and an exercise room on the lower level, and guestrooms on the main level, the lower level and above an attached garage.

Suzanne specified using Colorado moss rock to face the foundation and create a natural transition between the ground and the logs. The moss rock was carried into the interior, most prominently in the great room fireplace, which Suzanne designed and mason Joel Munn built. "We really blew our budget on the stonework," Anne says, "The expense was unexpected, but we figured once the house is built you can always upgrade the furniture but you can't re-do the house. It turned out absolutely wonderful."

Initial plans called for around 8,000 square feet, but Anne and Dave didn't have enough money for that much house. Suzanne revised the design, eliminating, among other features, two huge walk-in closets in Dave and Anne's bedroom and a set of stairs leading from the children's bedrooms to a lower-level playroom. The revised plan was closer to 6,000 square feet, which turned out to be perfect.

Another blow to the budget came when the construction crew hit rock digging the foundation. "We had to get a licensed blaster out to complete the foundation and the well, and to get the driveway in," Ethan says, noting the unanticipated obstacle delayed work and added unexpected expense even before the first log was set.

The logs for the homes that Ethan had previously built came from British Columbia, where they were peeled and scribed by Sitka Log Homes, a handcrafter



in 100 Mile House. Sitka uses standing-dead trees removed from the northern B.C. forest by helicopter. The logs are naturally dry, eliminating the need to harvest live trees, and the selective logging method minimizes human impact on the forest. Before taking their place in the walls of a new home, the logs are graded by Timber Products Inspection.

The Slubowskis found Sitka's work to their liking. "Plus," Anne points out, "we got the favorable Canadian exchange rate."

Actual construction of the home began in the fall of 1998 and was completed in May 2000. Sitka's owner, John Johnson, brought a crew to Colorado to erect the shell. Since the wall logs had been fitted back at Sitka's yard, they came together on the site in five days. Ethan

The archway leading into the dining room is topped by a log truss with a decorative twig and a carved bear. The homeowners didn't want a formal dining area, but did want it separated from the living room, so they had it built in a semi-octagonal bumpout.



The roomy kitchen set apart but still open to the living area thanks to an arched pass-through and an arched doorway. A semi-circular breakfast bar invites guests to sit and chat with the chef at work. The stools, a wedding gift from Anne's brother, are more than 100 years old.



used a framing crew he had worked with before, chose subcontractors with log-construction experience and enlisted his father-in-law, Rod Allen, a veteran contractor and log builder in his own right. "The challenge of log construction is that you're working with a medium that's not square and straight," Ethan observes. "As a result, once you become a log-home builder you're forever labeled as such and people seek you out as a log-home builder because of that."

The task was even more formidable for the Slubowskis' house because its log walls rose to 17 feet. The logs themselves, Engelmann spruce, had average diameters of 12 to 14 inches. As with every log home, Ethan had to accommodate settlement caused by logs shrinking through evaporation and compression. Especially challenging was tying the stone fireplace in with the logs because of its backward slope and angles. "We did a lot of head-scratching to make sure that it worked," Ethan recalls.

The staircase became both a design and a settlement issue. Suzanne showed it on the plans as a winding stair, then Ethan, Rod and Sitka got together and came up with

the idea for a tree motif, using a cedar post, Douglas fir treads and bristlecone pine branches to support the treads. Sitka built the stairs with the treads pre-installed on the cedar post and shipped it to the site intact. "Then we had to get a crane to feed it through the front door and attach it to the roof members, and set up a block-and-tackle system to raise it into place," says Ethan, who found all the bristlecone branches around the site.

Originally there was to have been a wall beneath the stairs for storage, but once the staircase arrived, everyone realized it was too dramatic to add the wall. "That's the cool thing about design-build," Suzanne says. "Changes are no big deal."

A novel feature of the design is a phone room off the foyer. "In our other home, whenever you tried to talk on the phone there was always an echo," Anne says. "So we built this room with a door and a window. Rod always thought it was odd, but one day after the home was built he was over here trying to make a phone call, and the kids were going crazy, so I told him to go in the phone room and close the door. When he came out he



Top: The upper-level master bedroom is part of a suite includes a sitting room, library and office. Logs on this level are topped by drywall. A friend made the bed for Anne's 30th birthday. An indented shelf above the bed showcases collectibles.

Above: Logs highlight the master bath, which features a skylight above the whirlpool tub for a starry view.

said, "Now I know why you did it."

Anne points out that the best thing about their house is that it's a place kids and adults enjoy coming to. "I never thought we'd end up with a house, a, this big and, b, this beautiful," she says. "But we got just what we wanted." **LHI**

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