

Heavenly HAVEN

A Tennessee home provides shelter from life's storms. story by Deirdre Schwiesow
photography by Roger Wade | styling by Debra Grahl

The floors on the porch and the deck are pressure-treated pine. "We had to let it season for a year before we put a stain on it," Christine explains.



The fireplace mantel was fashioned from one of the red oaks that the Gilchris cleared on the property. "When it's cool enough to have a fire, we have one going almost all the time to sit in front of," says Christine.



Todd and Christine Gilchrist credit the weather for their log home. The Florida couple lived contentedly in the West Palm Beach area, where Todd has a commercial lawn-maintenance business, until the storms blew in. "The years of 2004 and 2005 were really bad hurricane years in Florida," says Christine. "So we decided to build a haven away from 'hurricane valley' in case it happened again."

Todd had purchased a 4-acre lot in Monterey, Tennessee, between Knoxville and Nashville, some 25 years earlier, so the Gilchris already had a location for their new shelter. As to what kind, Christine says, "It was always my husband's dream to have a log home." Looking through log-home magazines gave them an idea of floor plans they liked, and then they saw some Honest Abe Log Homes sales models on a highway near their property.

Although the couple had priced a few other companies' packages online, when

they met Honest Abe sales rep Sharron Billbrey, everything "just clicked," Christine says. What sealed the deal for them was that Honest Abe was a local company, based in Moss, Tennessee, and provided a dry-in crew to erect the log shell.

To pay for the home and buy an adjoining 6-acre lot, the Gilchris refinanced their house in Florida. They added to that some money from an inheritance and extra earnings from Todd's business.

The couple liked one of Honest Abe's standard plans, which had an open loft and big gable windows, and had Honest Abe alter it to suit them. Todd is an avid hunter, and the space between the two windows in the great room was enlarged to fit an elk head—one of his prized trophies. The main level of the cabin—an open-plan great room, dining room and kitchen, plus two guest bedrooms and a bathroom—constitutes a little more than 1,000 square feet. The master suite is upstairs in the 700-square-foot loft. (The basement runs the length of the house; finishing it would add another 1,000 square

ABOVE: Built into the side of a hill, the home has a walkout basement. "Eventually, we want to finish it with some extra bedrooms or an apartment," says Christine. The aluminum roof came from a local supplier. "I went with the metal roof because it was the most long-lasting, and it looked good with the trees," she says.

feet of living space.)

Christine served as the general contractor for the project, renting a room in a home near the job site. Todd drove up from Florida when his work permitted. The couple broke ground in February 2006 and moved into their home that October. "Most of the time I was here overseeing the work, and I believe that's why it got done as fast as it did," says Christine. "I could make the decisions as they came up."

First, the Gilchris had a foundation dug into the land's natural grade—"We were able to get a full basement without any blasting," Christine notes—and put in a septic tank and electricity. Then the Honest Abe crew did the "dry-in," stacking the D-style

In the kitchen, pots and pans hang from nails on the rafters. Like the walls, the floors throughout the home are all wood. "We didn't put any drywall or tile in our house at all," Christine says.

OPPOSITE: Sharron Bilbrey of Honest Abe Log Homes describes the house as "a warm, cozy little hunter's cabin." The antler chandelier came from Black Forest Decor.



eastern white pine logs.

Christine chose her subcontractors—most of them local—from names provided by Sharron Bilbrey and the community homeowners association. "We were very blessed—we didn't have to wait for anyone we wanted," she says. "I was very happy with every crew that was on my property. I did my homework, and without demanding things, I got what I wanted."

Once the building was complete, Christine and Todd decorated their home themselves. "It was a work of love," says Christine. "It's a more 'homey' kind of log home." Furnishings are a mix of hand-me-downs, flea-market finds, and selected purchases from stores and catalogs. They also made a few pieces themselves, among them a coat rack built from deer antlers and a tree from their land.

Knowing the importance of main-

tenance, Todd washes down the home's exterior twice a year, and—three years after construction—the logs are due for another coat of sealer and a stain touchup. "If we keep on it, it'll always look nice," Christine says, adding that maintenance is just part of the package when it comes to owning a log home. "If you love log homes, then you don't care."

The Gilchrists make the 12-hour drive from Florida every four to six weeks, staying for at least a week each time. (Todd can conduct business by phone.) And Christine's daughter and her husband visit at Christmas. "We love the fall here, and even the winter—Tennessee has mild seasons, so it's pleasant," Christine says. They won't be commuting forever, though. "Eventually we'd like to retire, sell our home in Florida and travel," she adds, "and have this as our home base." 🏠

design details



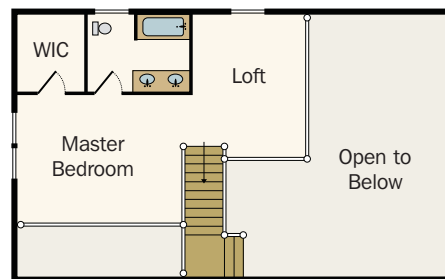
A window seat enhances corner paneling that covers the air-conditioning tube in a guest bedroom.

The sink cabinet in the master bath came from Stephen's Woodworks in Monterey, Tennessee.

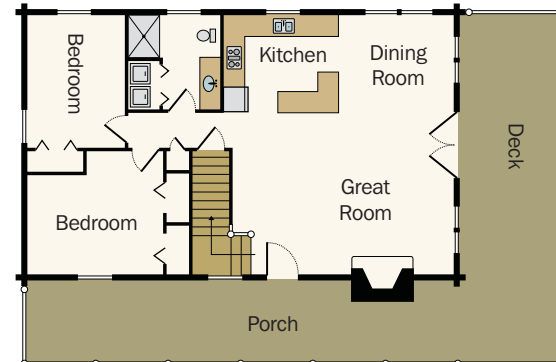
home details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 1,736

LOG COMPANY: HONEST
ABE LOG HOMES



Upper Level



Main Level

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: "You can see the master suite from downstairs," Christine says of the open loft area. "But most of the time, it's just us, so we don't mind;" the sitting area/office in the loft is furnished with an antique rocking chair and an antique Singer sewing machine cabinet; Christine loves the sound of the rain on the metal roof, especially in the master suite, and the red oak interior flooring—cabin-grade, 4-inch planks—"because we wanted knots and things," she explains; Stephen's Woodworks in Monterey made the kitchen cabinets and countertops.