

horsing around

**North Carolina cabin accommodates
renters and riders.**

story by TERESA WOLFF photos by ROGER WADE styled by DEBRA GRAHL



Located in the resort community of Leatherwood Mountains in the beautiful Blue Ridge Mountains, this vacation cabin will eventually be the permanent retirement home for Mary Anne Duncan. She calls the porch "my favorite room in the house." Inset: The cabin is home to horses, too, who enjoy log stables with a custom horse washing station.



Mary Anne Duncan's love of horses led her to a vacation at the equine-friendly Leatherwood Mountains and a plan for her eventual retirement in North Carolina.

As both an established gated community and a vacation resort, Leatherwood Mountains offered her a chance to earn income by renting her cabin to others who wanted to experience the majestic beauty of the area while assuring her she would have a community with sufficient amenities for her retirement years.

"I was able to purchase two lots with a stunning view of the Blue Ridge Mountains and access to the main riding trails through Leatherwood. Looking out over the peaks and valleys, I just knew this required a log cabin to fit with the setting," Mary Anne says.

Taking Shape

Once she had decided on the style of the house, Mary Anne began considering log home companies. It was only logical that she purchase the log package from Leatherwood Mountains, which also is a dealer for Log Homes of America. She worked closely with Wesley Whitson, who is in charge of rental and maintenance at the resort, to design the two-bedroom, 1,440-square-foot cabin.

Mary Anne was introduced to general contractors Kevin and Lillie Troyer, co-owners of 4 Forty Four and toured some of the homes they had constructed. "About half-way through the project, we discovered that she had been the veterinarian for my father-in-law's horse when she lived in South Carolina," Kevin laughingly related.

An added plus to the workmanship she was confident the 4 Forty Four crew would put into her home was the feeling that she would work well with Ross Napier, the project manager for her home. This good relationship would be a necessity since she would be living six hours driving time away in Atlanta while the cabin was being constructed.

"Not being on site every day, I needed to be able to communicate with Ross via the internet. He would email the photo to my phone or computer, and I could give him the go-ahead or suggest something else," she says.

Because the home is in the rental program at Leatherwood Mountains, Mary Anne selected durable, low-maintenance interior materials, while keeping true to the equestrian theme of the resort. A recliner, rocking chair and small loveseat create a gathering spot around the fireplace. Each piece of solid oak furniture in the cabin was made to fit by Gateway IV.





ABOVE: "Mary Anne incorporated a richness to the detail to make the home feel like a grand space," project manager Ross Napier explains. She chose Uba Tuba "leather" granite for the fireplace hearth, the kitchen countertops and the range backsplash. Dry-stack style slate veneer covers the fireplace and remaining backsplash in the kitchen. John Page of High Country Cabinets fashioned the custom knotty alder kitchen cabinets and bar stools.

Design for Today and Tomorrow

One of Mary Anne's goals in the design of her cabin was to have the beautiful views from as many rooms as possible. A wall of glass in the living room would allow visibility from the loft and the adjacent open kitchen and dining area. A window in the main-level guest bedroom looks out over the covered porch to the mountains; the second-story master bedroom window seat, one of her must-haves, would open the cabin to the natural spectacle outside.

To further enhance the experience of living in these mountains, Mary Anne added a front porch. Although it can only accommodate four deck chairs tall enough to see over the railing, the porch feels larger because of its proximity to the landscape just on the other side of the railing.

As much as she admired the round log look, she selected the D-profile Eastern white pine logs because the flat interior finish was more amenable to hanging pictures and had

less surface to dust. Drywall with a mottled, knock-down texture gives a contrast to the interior pine and Douglas fir logs.

Since she was planning for this to be her retirement home, Mary Anne made several modifications that would allow for use of adaptive equipment, if necessary. She widened the doors to the main-level bedroom and bathroom to allow for a walker or wheelchair at the point when she would no longer want to climb the stairs to the second-story master bedroom suite. She also chose an adjustable-height showerhead for the main-level bathroom to allow her to use it when seated. The vanities are higher so she doesn't have to bend over so far to use the sink.

"I watched my mother struggle with the knobs on faucets and doors. I know how difficult that can be for someone with arthritis or muscle weakness," Mary Anne says. To prevent that from being an issue, she opted for lever-style handles in the home.



Creature Comforts

In addition to the cabin, Mary Anne also built a log two-stall barn with attached outside pens. Even though she owns almost six acres, because of the hilly and wooded nature of the terrain, she only has a small pasture for her horses. A special feature is a horse-washing station with hot and cold running water at the rear of the cabin.

Leatherwood Mountains is a preferred destination spot for those who enjoy the Blue Ridge Mountains. Even though it is very equine-friendly with a variety of horse trails, not everyone who seeks to vacation there is a horse-enthusiast.

Many people select Leatherwood Mountains for weddings or family reunions, and can rent any of the privately owned cabins in the rental program and enjoy hiking, fishing or just relaxing. "I have been very fortunate that my cabin has been in demand and receives good reviews from those who have stayed here," Mary

Anne says. Many people seem to appreciate the smaller cozy dwelling that is ideal for one to four people. Plus, they can bring their horses and stable them right next to the house.

"The way Mary Anne planned the home is an excellent example of how to efficiently utilize space," Wesley Whitson adds. Log Homes of America has used this plan for others who want a smaller log package. "This cabin is one of our premiere rental offerings, and we are always pleased when guests at Leatherwood Mountains give the home a positive rating," he says.

Although the day when Mary Anne can permanently retire to Leatherwood Mountains is still many years in the future, she is able to load her Labrador into the truck and her horse into the trailer for the journey north approximately four times year.

"When I pull into the driveway, I can feel my blood pressure drop," Mary Anne says. "I can hardly wait to get to the front porch as it is truly my favorite room in the cabin."

TOP LEFT: Chandeliers with an identical horse motif are found above the custom dining room table and in the adjacent living room. The kitchen and dining room were designed to fit precisely under the loft. Hardwood flooring gives a sense of continuity on the main level.

TOP RIGHT: The cabin's metal roof is low-maintenance and fire retardant, a plus in this heavily wooded area. Triangular windows in both the cabin and the barn visually tie the two structures together.

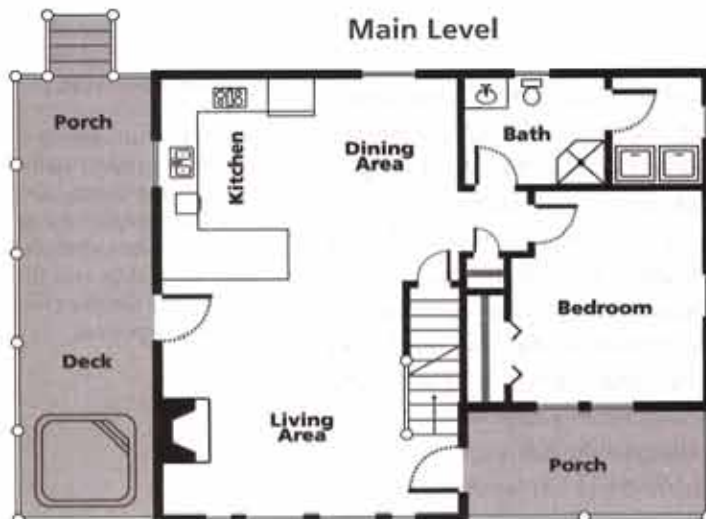
Loft Level



BELOW: Mary Anne choose porcelain tile with a slate texture and color for the shower and backsplash because of its beauty and durability. To prevent the home from feeling too dark, she incorporated drywall with a knock-down texture for the interior walls.



Main Level



SQUARE FOOTAGE: 1,440

BEDROOMS: 2

BATHROOMS: 2

Log home package: Log Homes of America, Inc. (800-564-8496; loghomesofamerica.com)

Log home dealer: Leatherwood Mountains (800-462-6867; leatherwoodmountains.com)

Builder: 4 Forty Four (828-295-8929; 4fortyfour.com)

Cabinetry: High Country Cabinets, Inc. (828-898-3435; highcountrycustom.com)

Custom furniture: Gateway IV Oak Furniture (678-488-3470; realsolidoak.com)