



Paradise Found

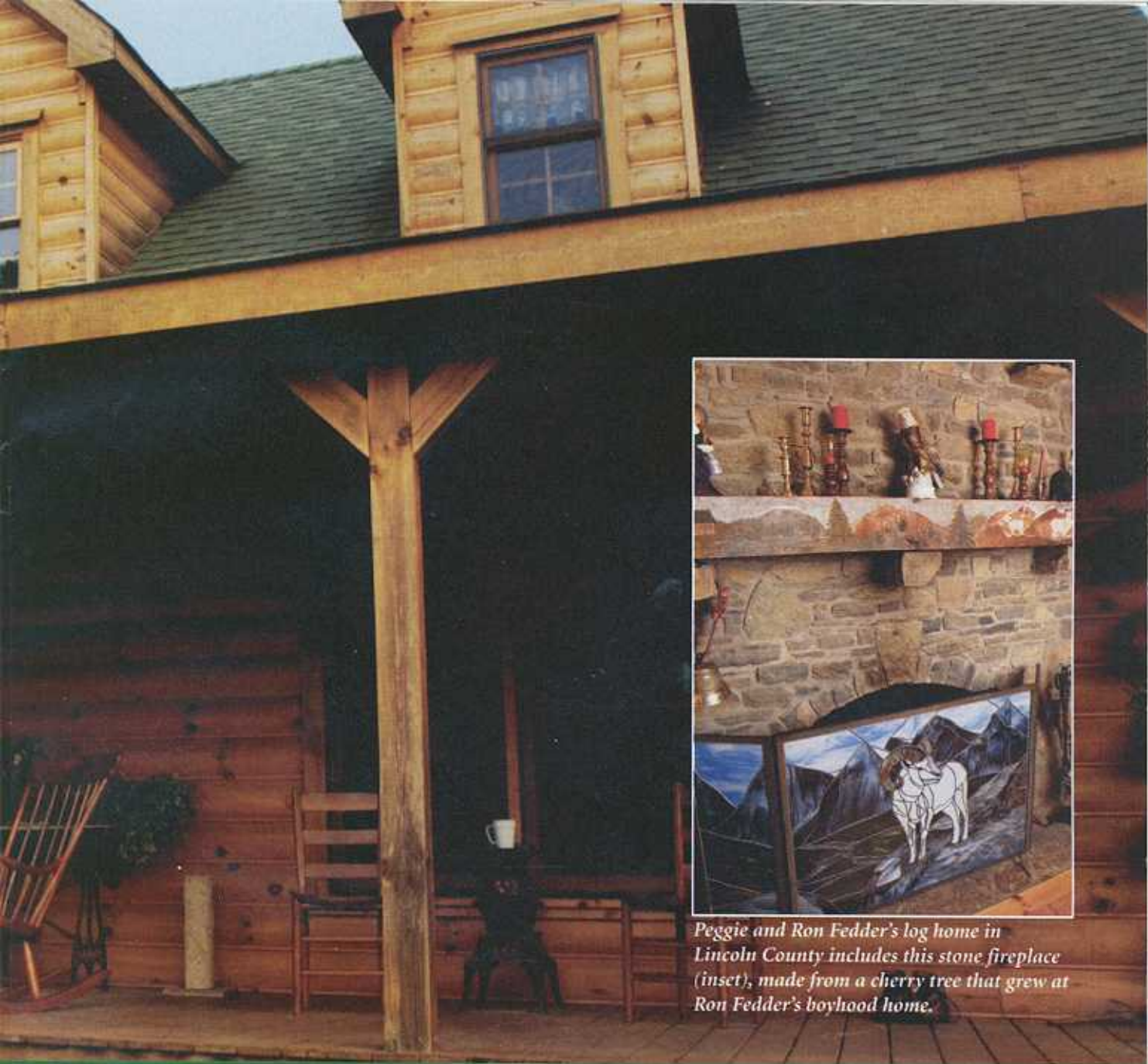
'A log home in the country' ... and a dream come true

*By Catherine Darnell
Photos by Greg Emens*

Until Peggie Fedder moved to Tennessee several years ago with her husband, Ron, she had never lived in a home that didn't have streetlights outside.

What a difference a state makes.

Now the Fedders live off a gravel road and down a tree-lined lane, on 66 acres in Lincoln County, eight miles from the Alabama border. Ron designed



Peggie and Ron Fedder's log home in Lincoln County includes this stone fireplace (inset), made from a cherry tree that grew at Ron Fedder's boyhood home.

his dream home two years ago, and the couple has enjoyed its country setting ever since.

"I would never go back to city living," Peggie says as she stands on the front porch where the Fedders often pass the time watching the parade of wild turkeys and deer.

Ron and Peggie may live an isolated life in the country, but

they are not alone. According to figures from the Log Home Living Institute, log-home life is on the rise.

According to an institute survey, sales of log homes in the United States increased 46 percent from 1995 to 2001. In 2001 – the last year for which figures were available – log homes represented 7 percent of custom-built homes.

During that same year, almost 100 log homes were built every business day, the survey found.

Tennessee Log Homes, headquartered in Athens, Tenn., has numbers to bear this out. Last year, the company sold more than 200 complete log-home packages and half again that many partial packages, according to vice president Jock Davidson.

"There is a huge level of interest," Davidson says, citing Web site inquiries. "Four or five years ago, if we got 50 in a week, that was a big deal. Today, we get as many as 1,500 a week."

Not only are they part of a trend, the Fedders fit perfectly in the log-home profile, according to Rob Clutter, vice president of Honest Abe Log Homes, which built the Fedder home.

"Most people design their own home or adapt them from the company's catalog of plans," Clutter says. "I had a guy design a house on a McDonald's napkin and we went from that. Less than 10 percent build it themselves. People don't have time and it's too complicated for a Bob Vila wannabe. And most are two stories or one story with a loft."

All Peggie Fedder cared about was having an indoor laundry room, a bathroom with a whirlpool accessible to the bedroom, and a central vacuum system. After that, she told her husband, "I don't care what you build."

Ron's wish list included a loft for his animals – hunting trophies from Alaska, Quebec, the Yukon and Newfoundland – and a special mantel.

The mantel is a story in itself, traveling many miles to get to the Fedders' stone fireplace. It was originally part of a cherry tree that grew on the farm where Ron was raised. He and his brothers used it for treehouses. One year, lightning struck the tree and it split. Ron told his dad he'd like to have a log from that tree; he'd like to put it in a house he was going to build someday.

In 1972, his dad hauled the log to Tampa, Fla., where Ron and Peggie were living at the time.

"We moved it around four times," Peggie says. "We moved it up here in '94 and put it in storage. Ron had a local artist carve into the wood his favorite things like sheep, deer, and, of course, a log cabin."

Ron is a former air conditioning and heating man who thinks that a log cabin is easy on the pocketbook.

"I know that if a log home is built right, it can be very energy-efficient," he says. "I like a log home in a country setting. That's what I like to do, I like to see the wildlife. It kind of takes you back to nature. It fits in. It all fits in."

The Fedders' 2,000-square-foot home has an open living/dining/ kitchen area, featuring a kitchen with hickory cabinets. The eating area has a bay window overlooking the lawn and woods. And from the living room, you can get a peek of the loft – and its caribou, moose, bears, sheep and even a resident mountain lion.

The couple's downstairs bedroom has the bed they used to set up housekeeping 47 years ago. Adjacent is the bathroom she always wanted, and upstairs off the loft is another bedroom and a bath.

"I like everything about it," Peggie says. "I really like the wood. When the sun is out in the morning, the house talks to you."

Talkative or not, most log homes follow today's design trends for conventional houses, says Clutter, who works out of Honest Abe's Murfreesboro location. That means lots of open areas with plenty of windows. Although Honest Abe offers plans, he says, owners tend to cut and paste, adding some features and subtracting others.

"Log-home owners are the most educated homeowners in America," he says. "They know tons of information and technical stuff. It's more



COURTESY TENNESSEE LOG HOMES

No two log homes are alike. This contemporary model – complete with soaring ceilings – was designed by Tennessee Log Homes of Athens.

Pettus Read's timber-frame log home was built in 1998.



Cabin Fever

This log home was 19 years in the making ... but worth all the effort

In 1979, my wife, Judy, and I were infected by the log-home bug and began the planning process for the creation of our own dream home, as many young couples do in the early years of marriage.

Our first encounter with modern-day construction of log-home structures was in the Upper Cumberland area of the state, through Honest Abe Log Homes. They were just getting started as a business – just as we were as a family – and we seemed to fit together like one of their log packages.

In the years following that early courtship of log-home company and young couple, we must have drawn hundreds of house plans. We also attended numerous home shows and purchased enough log-home magazines that their cost alone would have made a sizable down payment on a new home.

We knew we wanted a home that contained lots of wood and timbers, but found out early that many conventional builders did not share our feelings for log structures.

However, we knew we would not give up until we got the chance to build our dream house.

In 1998, that chance finally came, and we built a timber-frame home on the property once farmed by my grandparents. A timber frame is not completely logs, but it contains exposed timbers, framing and wood ceiling on the inside and cedar siding on the outside.

And, yes, Honest Abe from our early years provided the log package and dried it in for us, just as we had planned way back in 1979. We were our own contractors, painters and inside framers, and did the hiring of our subcontractors. A log-home structure does cost more to construct, but the quality and value of your own sweat equity is well worth it.

Take it from experience: Dreams do come true.

By Pettus Read

than picking out spec houses in a subdivision.”

Many log-home owners have attended log-raising demonstrations or have gone to seminars and home shows sponsored by log-home construction companies. Perhaps they have attended a company-sponsored log-home construction school if they opted to build it themselves, or had the home built and did their own finish work to save money.

In fact, Clutter says, most people do finish up the homes themselves, laying their own tile, using their own electrician and so forth. The basic cost of a log home is comparable to a brick home, but log-home

builders soon realize that a big stone fireplace is going to cost more than a small one, hardwood floors are more expensive than most carpet, and solid wood interior doors are pricier than hollow ones.

“That’s what makes log homes cost more than conventional homes,” he says. “But if this is the last time that you’re building a house, you’re going to put in nice things. You are not going to settle.”

Such is the case with Ron and Peggie Fedder.

“This is definitely it,” Peggie says. “I think everybody ought to live in a log house in the country. We love ours.” *Shafi*