

Bonus: 1996 Log Home Calendar

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November 1995

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From Deer Camp to Family Home

When Bill Crowley, a band director from the piney woods of deep East Texas, first started to build his one-room hunting cabin, it was going to be a simple place to come and hunt deer. It was a basic 16-by-24-foot log structure with a tarp covering. No amenities, just cheap and dirty. Then Bill met Susan Ann.

Before anyone knew it, she was Mrs. Crowley. Right off, Bill knew if he ever wanted the missus to go traipsing in the woods with him, he better add some conveniences to the place. So he transformed a window into a doorway and added a bathroom.

Susan Ann liked the place so well, they decided to make it their permanent home. While they lived elsewhere in a double-wide trailer, the couple spent evenings and weekends on their land, clearing and building. Realizing the house was not going to be big enough for a family, Bill added a large, second-story bedroom to his original floorplan.

Then along came baby Jacob. So Susan Ann and Bill divided the upper floor into two bedrooms. Three years later, little sister Ashley arrived. A third bedroom was added.

The 16-by-16-foot master bedroom expansion was located downstairs because, as Bill says, "Stairs were not made for grannies and old men." A hallway joins the bedroom to the open kitchen

and living area. The room has an outside door leading to the covered front porch.

Bill, a tenacious 46-year-old city-bred boy, built his log house from scratch, almost entirely by himself, with a double-bitted ax as his primary tool.

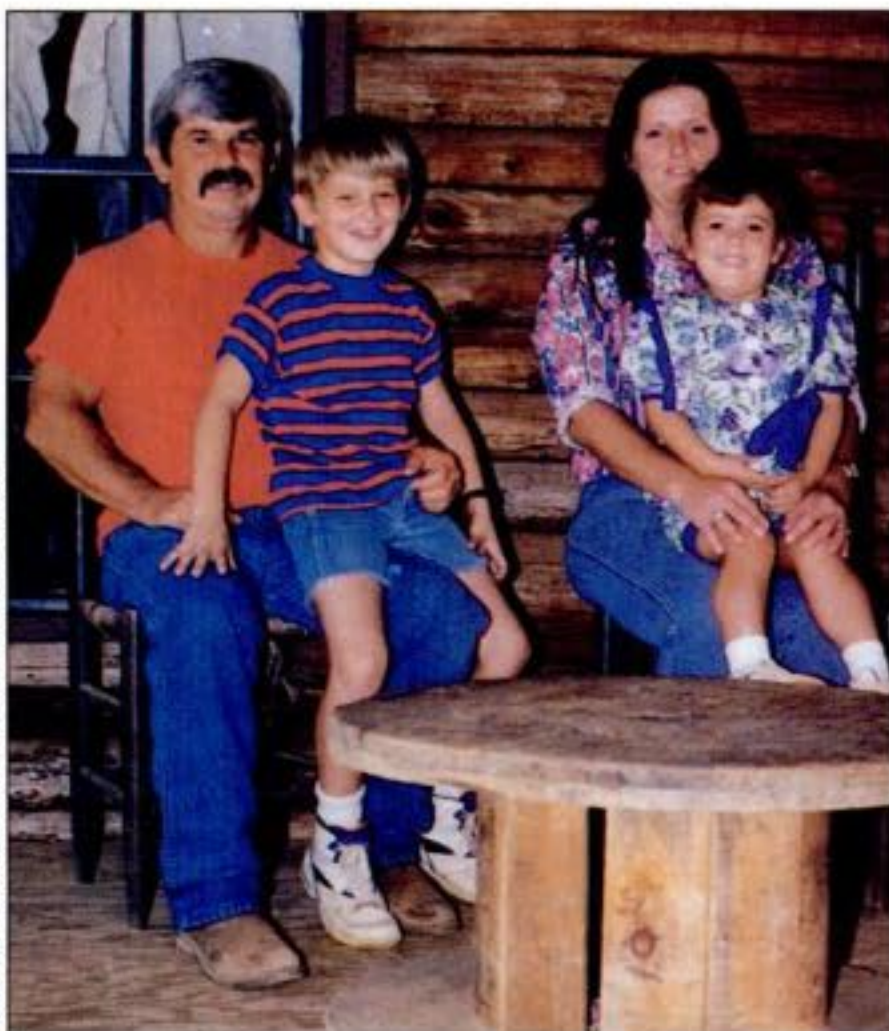
He used a chain saw for downing the trees, but he couldn't afford a tractor or a saw mill, so he substituted with a lot of grit, spunk, sweat and diligence. He dragged the logs out of the woods with his pickup or rolled them with a cant hook. Working with no more than three or four green logs at a time, he peeled them with a machete, popped a chalk line, then scored them with his chain saw.

Next, he faced, or hewed, two sides of each log with his ax. After repeating this procedure on log after log after log, Bill says, "I got to where I could do an 8- or 9-foot, 12-inch-thick log in 20 to 30 minutes."

After preparing three or four logs, he would stack them, spike them down, then return to the woods to spot the next group. The tedious, grueling work left Bill exhausted at day's end, but determined to tackle it all over again the next day.

A sensitive man, Bill's passion for the woods developed after hearing his father's tales of barefoot, boyhood days in the country. Raised on crowded Naval bases, Bill was accustomed to houses being jammed close together. When he moved to Texas, Bill says "it seemed like you could go anywhere and not see anyone. I liked that. I tried to go hunting and stay out in the woods as much as I could."

Lucky for him, Susan Ann also appreciates the peace and quiet of the
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B.J. Feath photo of Bill, Jacob, Susan Ann and Ashley Crowley

by B. J. Feath

with updated fabrics, an antique armoire mixed with a leather sofa, a lodgepole bed with elegant linens.

Eclectic is the term often used to describe the individual personality's style. Perhaps the individualist prefers country furnishings, but Western style fabrics. Or classic colors combined with contemporary lines.

This personality truly has a home that will elicit a response such as, "It's just perfect—and looks so much like you!"

The individual personality may often use a different style for each room of a home. The living room may be classic, the bedroom romantic, the kitchen country and so on. Yet the decor creates a harmonious ambiance despite its diversity.

Putting it all together. These are the predominate personality decorating styles. Which seems to be your style? Are there specific design styles you seem to feel more comfortable with?

If you are not sure of your personal style, you might begin with a big stack of home magazines and tear out pictures that naturally appeal to you. Be sure to select samples of all the different types of rooms in your home, including the

kitchen and bathrooms. If particular colors are pleasing, or if you find a window treatment, chair or sofa you really like, tear those pages out too.

Separate your pictures into categories by the styles described above to see if a trend emerges. Like many, you may be happier combining two or more of the basic styles. Remember to keep in mind your log home's architecture and location when making your selections.

If you are working with an interior designer, this is a great way to help him or her create the perfect home for you and your family. Armed with your dream rooms, you and your designer will be able to quickly target the particular look you wish to achieve to further enhance your log home.

What matters most is discovering the decorating style for your home that reflects your personality and creates a feeling of peace with your surroundings. In today's fast-paced world there is nothing quite as nice as having a home that makes you happy and content.

Priscilla Salley-Walsh is a free-lance writer based in Vail, Colorado.

LOGGIES

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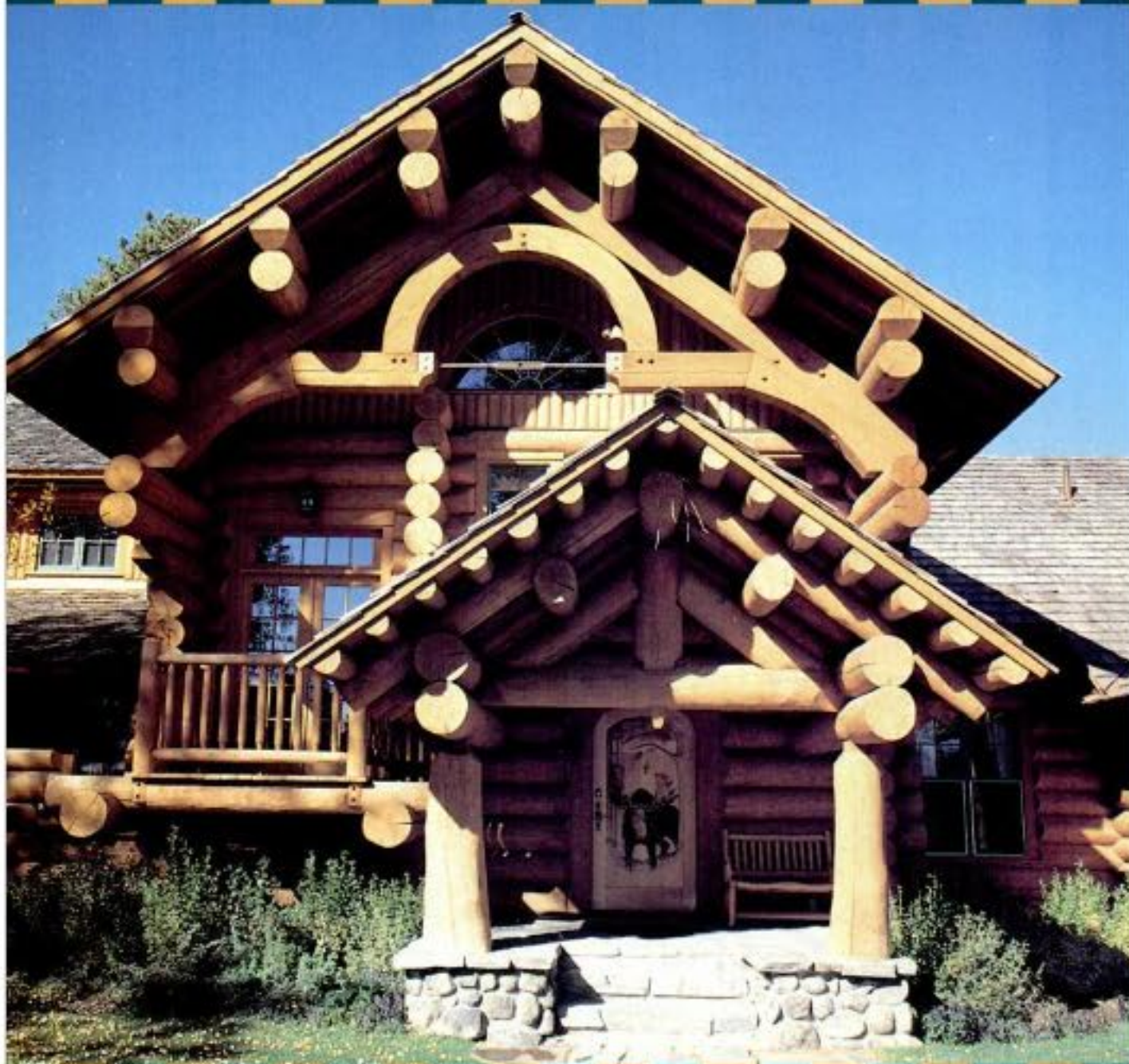
woods. "We're not really country people," Bill says. "We're just out here enjoying life." The couple hosts occasional music soirees on the porch at day's end. As friends arrive with guitars and fiddles, Bill fetches his harmonica, and soon music fills the air.

Now that the 1,100-square-foot house is occupied and almost complete, the Crowleys are proud of the fact that they were able to pay for the home as it progressed. Total costs so far add up to \$7,000.

"One of the greatest expenses was in getting electricity," Susan Ann says. The house is nestled among 40 acres of pine trees and is miles from the nearest state highway. "The utility company wanted \$5,000 to do the job, but Bill cut the right-of-way himself. Then, three years later, he finally was able to negotiate the fee down to \$1,900."

An additional \$500 went to the phone company to run the cabling. The remaining

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costs covered the roofing materials, electrical wiring, plumbing expenses and lumber for floors.

Attacking every building phase with a can-do attitude, Bill even learned to install plumbing by telephone! He would call his "jack-of-all-trades" brother-in-law when he needed advice, then hang up the receiver and pick up his tools. The same relative did the wiring.

Bill received a little help with the roofing. "Bartering with a friend who needed to borrow my electrical generator resulted in him building our kitchen cabinets, which Susan then stained," Bill says. "Another friend custom built a couple of doors for me."

Bill also benefitted from the support and encouragement of Susan Ann. Even when she was pregnant, Susan Ann cleared the land behind the house. She bleached the interior logs and helped raise the logs, when possible.

Susan Ann also played a vital role in working with the county commissioner's office to get the Crowleys' dead-end, dirt road made public, thereby allowing access to the school bus and also guaranteeing routine maintenance. "Until then, every time it rained, we had gullies a foot deep," she

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recalls. "We were always getting stuck. Bill would haul in rocks and pile them in the holes. I figured the way to a man's heart was through his stomach, so I started baking and delivering chocolate cakes to the maintenance crew. Pretty soon, they started bringing three or four truckloads of gravel whenever we needed it."

Besides negotiating, bartering and mediating, Bill and Susan Ann both know how to save and get the most for their money. The hardwood bathroom flooring is antique oak that came out of a schoolhouse. "The legged, cast-iron bathtub was a gift from someone who was using it as a worm bed!" Susan exclaims. "Bill dumped the dirt out and brought it home for me to clean up."

Construction on the house went well with the exception of two accidents. The first occurred when a flying wood chip seriously injured Bill's eye. "I became religious about wearing safety glasses after that," he says.

Another time, Bill was working alone on the top half of the house. A couple of boys, hunting in the woods nearby, ventured over to see what was going on. As Bill tells it, "They were big ol' high-school boys, football types, upperclassmen, with necks as big as bulls. They wanted to help, so I told them they could hand up the next log. I ordinarily used a come-along. When they hoisted up the 9-foot, green log, which probably weighed over 200 pounds, I was balanced astraddle the upstairs floor joists. They threw it up so hard it landed on top of me and knocked me between the support beams, breaking a rib. After that, I wouldn't let anyone else help me."

Now that it's finished, the Crowleys' homestead, deep in the woods of Rusk, is an ideal playground for deer, just as Bill envisioned. Bill says he would even consider building a home from scratch again. "It wasn't all that hard," he says. "It was just time consuming. In fact, I've even thought of doing it for others. It was just a matter of laying a log up there and doing it." He adds, "I have a house that, I think, is as good a quality as any other constructed home. I'm especially proud of the fact that we don't have any house payments."

Just four years, a wife and two children after breaking ground for his get-away cabin, Bill moved his family into their rustic, but comfortable, three-bedroom log house. Now he has his beloved deer camp and house and a cherished family.

B.J. Feath is a free-lance writer from Plano, Texas.