



# A Change In Plans

A family designs a new life by accident

When Washington resident Cynthia Frech headed to Montana in 2004 to help her friend, Lisa, evaluate property near Kalispell, she had no idea her life was about to change. She agreed with Lisa that the property was just short of heavenly and set out to convince her husband, Jerry Kennedy, a lifelong commercial fisherman, that they should purchase the adjoining 20-acre parcel.

Jerry agreed, so the following summer Cynthia and Jerry headed out to visit their newly acquired property in the Montana wilderness. At a stop in Spokane along the way, one of Cynthia's three Labradors pulled her out of their truck, and after a visit to the emergency room, she learned she had torn a ligament in her knee.

"After weighing all of the options, we decided it would be easier if our family lived in our 28-foot travel trailer on our undeveloped property and I had my surgery here in Kalispell, Montana," Cynthia explains. "I would be closer to the physical therapy clinic than I would be if we returned to our home in Washington."

## Plan B

The couple and their two sons, Quinn and Drew, set about adapting to what they thought would be their temporary home. Cynthia and Jerry enrolled the boys in a small community school, which Lisa's children also attended. The boys felt comfortable from the very beginning and quickly discovered they were country kids at heart. Before long, the entire family had adapted to living in this beautiful, rural area and was not inclined to return to their previous city habitat.

After six months in their trailer, the family decided it was time to get serious about building a house and



OPPOSITE: Larch and pine trees surround the Kennedy-Frech home in a small rural community west of Kalispell, Montana. River rock faces the lower walk-out level. The red metal roof matches the family's barn. LEFT: Jerry, Drew, Cynthia and Quinn with Miss Annie, just one of the many family pets, perched atop one of the large boulders uncovered during excavation for the foundation.

permanently relocating to Montana. The decision was difficult for Jerry, who had spent his entire life either on or within a stone's throw of salt water. After much discussion and finding small fish in the year-round creek that runs through the property, they opted to stay and draw up some plans for a home on the back portion of the property, which is situated in a valley between two hills.

"Lisa and her husband had built a timber frame home on their property," Jerry says. "Cynthia and I were very impressed with how sturdy and functional the home felt." They were also impressed with local timber framer Centennial Timber Frames. "For them, building timber frame homes isn't just a job," Jerry says. "It's all about the craftsmanship they put in."

OPPOSITE: During construction, the family would sit in the empty great room and admire the interesting ambiance created by the dual wrought-iron chandeliers and the rustic Douglas fir timber frame.

RIGHT AND BELOW: The fireplace is constructed of cinderblock, reinforced with rebar and poured full of concrete to act as the central structure of the home. A beam on one of the five kingpost trusses serves as the banister for the second-story loft. Coon Hollow Forge designed and forged the tie rods and turn buckles in the great room.



The family's real cowboy hats rest on the river rock fireplace in the semi-formal dining room. Tiffany-style pendant lamps are suspended from the tongue-and-groove ceilings to illuminate the dining room set from Pottery Barn.



### Building on a Budget

Initially, Jerry and Cynthia designed a house similar to the 100-year-old Victorian home in Port Townsend where they had been living. They worked with John Peterson of Architects Design Group in Kalispell to determine the feasibility of their plan. Unfortunately, the initial set of plans proved to be beyond their budget. Not to be dissuaded, they went back to the drawing board. They started with a basic log house plan and made alterations to fit everything they wanted into the 2,000 square feet on both the main and lower levels, and the additional 1,200 square feet in the loft.

"The homeowners wanted this home to be friendly and family-oriented," John Peterson recalls. "They also wanted to enjoy the outside from inside the home." A great room at the center of the home with as many doors as possible to increase access to patios and deck fit the bill.

Jerry and Cynthia hired Allen Ream and his Montana

Heritage Home Builders' crew to construct the home.

The main level is accessible through the front door and entry, which flows into the southern-facing great room with the dining room and kitchen on the opposite side of the double fireplace. The back door entry is finished with a Pennsylvania bluestone floor and leads to the mudroom, laundry room and bath and back into the kitchen. On the east side of the great room is a sunroom; on the west is the parlor-office and staircase.

All of the family's bedrooms are located on the second floor. The master bedroom suite overlooks the great room below; the boys' bedrooms mirror each other and are separated only by a double sliding door. A second bathroom is adjacent to these bedrooms. The walkout lower level has two guest bedrooms, a bathroom with an oversized shower, and a large entertainment and sewing room.

"I love windows, and I definitely don't like walls. In

BELOW: Cynthia selected blue and gray as the cornerstone colors for the kitchen. She then paired gray Zodiaq countertops over custom cherry wood cabinets by Whitman Boys Manufacturing with a blue backsplash for a fully coordinated look. RIGHT: Natural light flows in to the dining area, making the tiger wood floor glow. Douglas fir timbers perform dual duty as ceiling girds and floor joists for the second story.



RIGHT: One of the home's timber trusses forms the banister on either side of the river rock chimney, creating a master bedroom that is open to the great room below. A Tiffany glass chandelier hangs between two of the three queenpost trusses.

BELOW: Cherry wood cabinets in the master bathroom are adorned with a red Zodiac countertop. The copper sink was a housewarming present from friends, who located the item in Mexico. The huge cast-iron bathtub retains heat for nice long soaks.





this home, every room opens to every other room for an almost seamless flow of spaces," Cynthia explains.

Cynthia strongly believes a home needs to feel like a home; both functional and comfortable with plenty of room for family and friends. As a testimony to that belief, last Christmas, Jerry's children from his previous marriage joined them in Montana to make a total of 10 for the holidays.

#### Details, Details

Jerry took the lead in choosing lighting for the home. To counterbalance the abundance of wood, he selected metal fixtures with an oil-rubbed bronze finish. His choices add both hearty elegance and a sense of warmth.

During the process of building the home, Cynthia

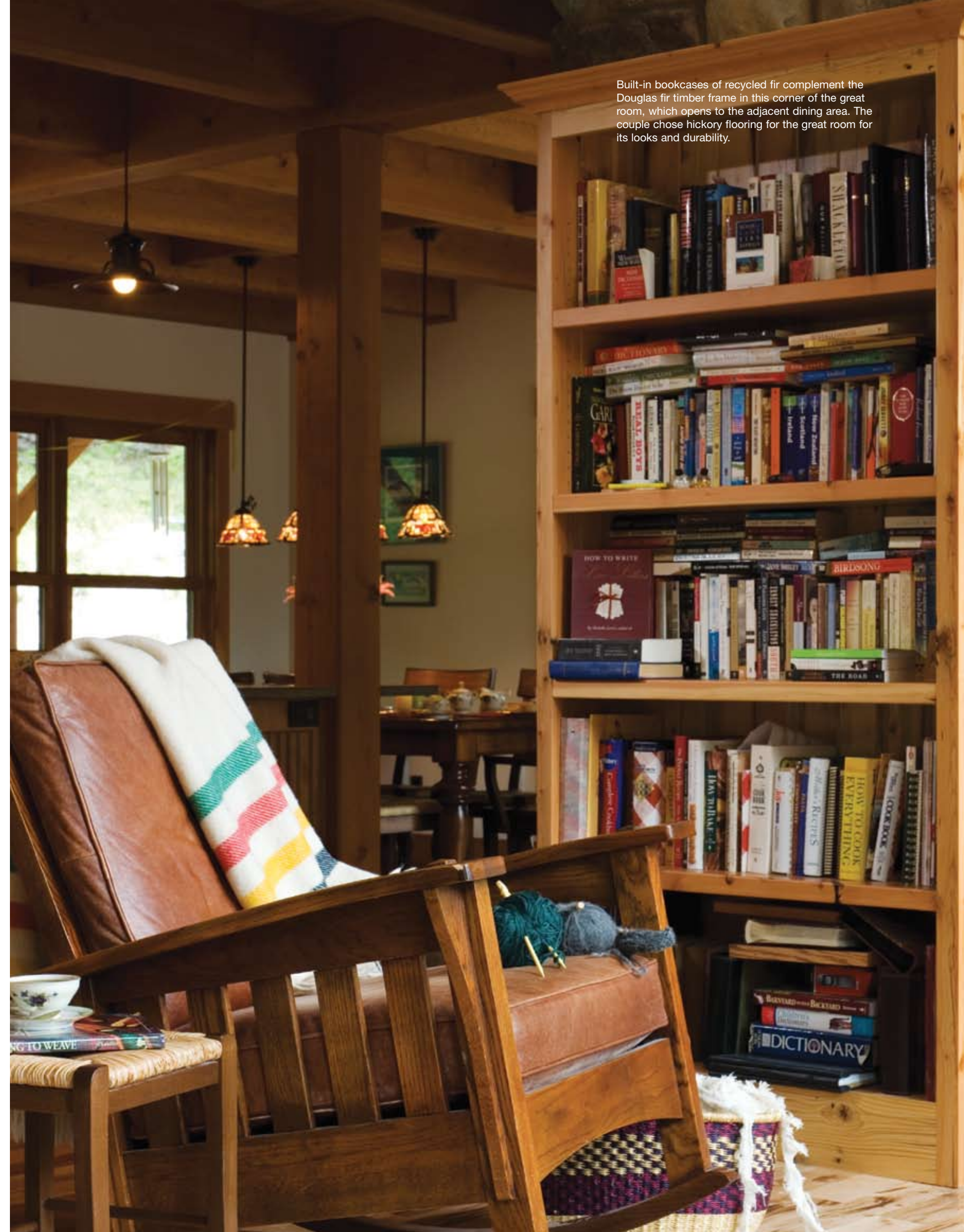
found making all of the necessary decisions became almost overwhelming. As an example, she wanted to paint the interior walls off-white but discovered a dizzying array of shades of off-white at the paint store. In order to mitigate the stress, she finally told Allen to use his judgment to narrow down the field, then only bring her three choices for any particular item.

To minimize the amount of dust and germs circulating in the home, Cynthia and Jerry opted for hardwood flooring and in-floor radiant heat, powered by a propane-fired boiler. They also installed a back-up generator, keeping their rural utilities in mind.

"As a gift for allowing him to feature our home on the local Parade of Homes, Allen graded and seeded around the house," Jerry says. "Otherwise we probably wouldn't have had a lawn as we all would much

LEFT: Montana Heritage Home Builders used Ipé wood as borders in the flooring to define the spaces in the open great room.

BELOW: A sliding double door separates the boys' bedrooms in the second story, allowing them privacy or the opportunity to share space. Drew selected a vibrant Caribbean blue wall paint that sets off the timber frame.



Built-in bookcases of recycled fir complement the Douglas fir timber frame in this corner of the great room, which opens to the adjacent dining area. The couple chose hickory flooring for the great room for its looks and durability.



ABOVE AND RIGHT: Montana Heritage Home Builders incorporated timber frame elements in the covered porch on the north side of the house. Fir posts and cedar railings and balusters create an outdoor living area that is accessible from the back entry, the dining room and the sun room.

WEB EXTRA:  
Look for floor plans and bonus photos of this home at [TimberHomesIllustrated.com](http://TimberHomesIllustrated.com)

rather spend our time with our animals than doing yard work.”

Both Quinn and Drew have become very involved in the activities of their new rural community. They have joined a 4-H group and show their angora goats, sheep and rabbits at the county fair. They also help their parents thin the trees on the property for pastures for their animals. With lots of wide open spaces, they have taken up horseback riding. With their acreage surrounded by forest service land, the family often see deer, moose, wolves, cougars or bears nearby. At night they listen to the plaintive howls of the native coyotes.

Even though the area is semi-remote, with the availability of modern electronic telecommunication, Jerry is able to continue to manage one of the three long-line vessel companies he co-owns. Cynthia is very involved at their community school and is co-president of the PTO and is active in fundraising projects.

“Our lifestyle here is great,” Jerry says. “We are surrounded by the sights and sounds of Mother Nature.” They relish hearing wind in the trees and rain on the roof and enjoy the changing of the seasons. “There is never a shortage of outdoor activities and adventures,” he says. “While our timber frame home is terrific, if

it were situated somewhere else, it would be a totally different experience. The house and the setting each contribute to the ambiance.”

“This home just feels so good when there is a fire going and people are laughing and enjoying themselves,” Cynthia adds. When evening rolls around and the last lights are turned out, Cynthia says there is nothing more spectacular than the true darkness and a sky full of brilliant stars. “How odd that the bizarre accident that resulted in my blown knee could lead us to such a wonderful and fulfilling life.”

#### Resources

**Architects Design Group**, (406) 257-7125, [www.architects-design-group.com](http://www.architects-design-group.com)

**Centennial Timber Frames**, (406) 755-8114, [www.centennialtimberframes.com](http://www.centennialtimberframes.com)

**Coon Hollow Forge**, (406) 752-4766, [www.coonhollowforge.com](http://www.coonhollowforge.com)

**D&M Forest Products**, (406) 675-4779

**Montana Heritage Home Builders, Inc.**, (406) 892-1972, [www.montanaheritagehomebuilders.com](http://www.montanaheritagehomebuilders.com)

**Skyline Stair Co.**, (406) 862-4494

**Whitman Boys Manufacturing, Inc.**, (406) 892-1501

