

Muskoka Lifestyles



A wood stove in the living room, as well as one in the sunroom, keeps the Clark's log house warm in winter.



A place to call home

Article and photographs by Heather Douglas

The drive out to Jan and Chas Clark's home on Buck Lake outside of Huntsville is as beautiful as it is long. It makes you wonder why someone would want to live so far from town, but that question is answered the moment you pull into the driveway of their beautiful Confederation Log Home, which has a stunning view of the lake.

The couple's life together began in Oxfordshire, England where Chas, who was born in Inverness, Scotland, was with the Royal Air Force. Jan was in training as a registered nurse in Oxford.

"We were married in 1968 and settled in Malta, where Chas was stationed," Jan says. "Our two daughters were born there in 1969 and 1971."

It wasn't until 1998 when Chas left the RAF and set up a business as a logistics consultant and Jan worked as a nursing home inspector that the couple had their first permanent home in England.

"But with a lifetime of no roots, the world beckoned when retirement came," Jan explains.

With both daughters married and settled far and wide, one living in the United States and one in Germany with a British military husband, Jan and Chas knew there was no particular central location to retire.

While Jan had spent most of her life abroad, she is a Canadian citizen.

"My father was a Canadian from Vancouver, B.C., who met my mother while stationed in Nottingham, England," she says.

The family lived in Canada for two years before returning to Britain due to her mother's health.

"However, myself and my siblings retained our Canadian citizenship, which was a factor that helped determine our move to Canada 55 years later," she says.

The definitive factor in retiring to Canada came when the couple attended a family wedding in



Jan and Chas work in the kitchen (top). The open concept allows for a view of the lake from all the rooms. The couple settled on Mossy Oak Green paint in the kitchen (left). Jan reads a book in the Muskoka room, one of her favourite spots (above).



Large windows occupying almost an entire wall of the Clark's bedroom give the space a natural, bright feel (above). The master bathroom is Jan's oasis and the first place she heads after a day of skiing or snowmobiling (below).

Midland, Ont. and all the British guests were accommodated in a cottage on an island.

"It was a turning point," she says. "Sitting on a rock watching the sun set over the water and a float plane landing, the idea began to form that there was a wonderful opportunity to move for the last time and retire to the country that my father had talked about so much."

With the idea of moving to Ontario, Jan joined her sister at her cottage in Haliburton. With Chas working, Jan took on the task of searching for a cottage they could possibly buy for their retirement.

"Having studied Ontario maps and wanting to

be within reach of Georgian Bay, as we both love sailing, I started my search in Huntsville," Jan says.

A week later, Jan phoned her husband to inform him they were the proud owners of a cottage in Huntsville.

"He was delighted," Jan says. "My first impression was of this picturesque town sitting between two lakes, and the friendliness of everyone, that made the decision to buy easy."

On the insistence of their daughters, who both questioned why wait, Jan and Chas resigned from their jobs, sold their 18th century home in England and by August of 2003, headed to Canada.



"We were overwhelmed by the welcome we received from everyone we met, and realized we had finally found the place we could call home," Jan says.

After settling in Canada, the Clarks decided to buy land on a lake to build their dream home, something that would never have been possible in England. They scouted the location on Buck Lake and knew right away they wanted to build something uniquely Canadian, a log home.

The Clarks chose Confederation Log Homes to build their dream and construction began one year after they had purchased the land.

"Confederation Log Homes is a great company to deal with and made the process so easy," Jan says, adding she had wanted to improvise on one of the plans and the company was accommodating to that suggestion. She wanted a cathedral ceiling in the main living area and another in the master bedroom.

After what seemed like only a few weeks, the company was done erecting the building and handed over the keys to the delighted couple. Several years have passed since then, but the couple is just as enamoured with their cozy abode as they were the first day they moved in.

"I love the unique smell of wood throughout the cottage, the attractiveness of both the front and back and the aspects of the wraparound deck, so I can have my morning coffee on one deck and watch the sun rise and a 'sundowner' to be sipped on another deck watching the sun set over the lake," Jan says.

Chas holds bragging rights to the interior of the home, which he finished himself.

"He has done an amazing job with little previ-

ous experience, learning many new skills," Jan says proudly of her husband who had some help from a friend who was a builder before moving to Huntsville.

The home was built with a four-season Muskoka room with a wood stove, which makes it a wonderful winter haven. In addition, the Muskoka room has its own deck to provide a cool retreat in the height of the summer days.


"The cottage has so many wonderful areas, but if one room had to be a favourite, it is the Muskoka room," Jan says. "With the ambience of the log burning fire in the winter, many hours are spent with a good book and watching the wildlife."

For Chas, his favourite place to spend time is his workroom, where he carries out his hobbies that include building train layouts and model aircraft. Of course, that is when he is not out snowmobiling or working on completing the cottage.

Jan reminisces that many years ago, Chas and his best friend decided that when they retire it had to be somewhere where they could fish, hunt, play golf and sail.

"Chas has achieved his goal and his best friend is due to visit next year to take part, so it looks as though they have done it," she says. "And I have returned to the country my Dad always wanted me to go and it feels as though I have come home."

Despite living a great distance from their daughters and five grandchildren, Jan and Chas say moving to Huntsville was the best decision they ever made.

Jan concludes, "After a lifetime of living like gypsies with no permanent home, we have at last found a home in the friendliest town we have ever lived in, with wonderful friends and a lifestyle we never thought possible." 



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