

LIVING WELL IN THE TWIN CITIES

# spaces

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Wisconsin's  
Passive House**

THERE'S NO ROUGHING IT FOR THE OUTDOORSMEN WHO RELAX  
AT THIS HANDSOME WOOD AND STONE FAMILY RETREAT.

BY MOLLY GUTHREY \* PHOTOS BY SUSAN GILMORE

# Hunting Comfort



The lodge's guests can't watch cable television, but that's OK; it's the kind of getaway where people prefer to sit in front of the fire or take a walk.



Built-in beds provide valuable sleeping and storage space in this compact hunting lodge.



Let's just say that when "the guys" go hunting and fishing, the places where they crash typically aren't worthy of being highlighted in a magazine.

This one, though, is different.

The 1,800-square foot shelter, situated on 220 acres in west-central Minnesota, is a handsome family retreat of wood and stone.

"It is truly a hunting lodge," says David Heide of David Heide Design Studio. "It's an architect-designed house trying not to look like an architect-designed house. That meant paying attention to scale and proper site

lines, but keeping the profile similar to buildings indigenous to the area: A simple timber frame building, a simple roof shape, a building pure and simple in its form."

The setting, with its lake and its pine trees and its trails, is as important to the owner as the building itself.

"He bought all this land and returned it to a natural state," Heide says. "It's very much about the wildlife preserve, it's about the hunting and fishing. It's very much a retreat for him and his son — I think his wife got tired of him dragging dead animals to their other place nearby."

For a long time, though, the

guys roughed it at "the hunting place."

"We used an old garage frame for 12 years, but it was only about 20 feet by 48 feet and not very well insulated," says the owner.

The original hunters' cabin on site also wasn't ideal after a day of deer or duck hunting.

"It was only about 400 square feet, and there were more mice than people," he says.

Underneath, though, hid something special.

"It was an old tamarack log cabin," he said. "You wouldn't have known it from the siding outside and the plaster inside. I knew someone who reclaimed

old log cabins, and he took it down piece by piece. We found newspapers from the 1860s used for insulation."

A new home was built as carefully as the old one was taken down.

"In the spirit of being prudent with resources, the new house was built within the footprint of the old foundation, with bumpouts for the prowl window in the living room and a side vestibule," Heide says.

That vestibule is now a mudroom outfitted with built-in storage space for coats and boots and locking up rifles. The entry and the rest of the first floor are laid with stone, and not



The wood-burning fireplace acts as both a visual focal point and a centralized chimney, radiating warmth to the open second and third floors.

**A mudroom is an essential space in a hunting lodge; this one has slate floors and built-in storage space.**



just because it makes clean-up easier.

"We have geothermal heat, so the first floor has a cement slab underneath that conducts into the slate and keeps the floor warm," the owner says.

A geothermal system is an energy-efficient way to harness the more stable temperatures underground, heating and cooling a home via a system that pumps heat to or from the ground.

"It's fairly economical over time, and electricity costs are reasonable here," the owner says.

After the guests finish taking off their muddy boots, they look up ... and up to the open second floor.

"We were looking at rural and vernacular buildings in the area, not necessarily houses, when thinking of the design of the space," Heide says. "The vaulted ceilings, the timber construction and the sight lines down and through the building are like the hayloft in a barn."

Nothing in this compact, three-bedroom, two-bath lodge is just for show, though: Just off the kitchen, the wood-burning fireplace in the great room is beautifully crafted with fieldstones found on the owner's land. It also has a centralized chimney, a visual focal point that helps radiate heat in the open layout.

"This house is built to last, not to be changed and updated all the time," Heide

says. "I've said it before, nothing is greener than good design. You can go through a home builder store and fill up a grocery cart full of products labeled green, but if they're not assembled in a way that is useful and meaningful, if they're not going to serve you well into the future ... bamboo floors, for example. People were crazy about them. Then they found out they dent and they don't hold their finish. There's nothing green about shipping something halfway around the world, packaging it, selling it, installing it and, five years later, tearing it out and throwing it in the Dumpster."

This project used reclaimed materials, such as oak and alder, and it was kept as local as possible.

"A blacksmith from the area had done a lot of wonderful iron in the house, like iron railings for the staircase and the landings, the dining room light fixture and the fireplace doors," the owner says.

Holding on to those railings, guests proceed to the second floor, which is half bunkhouse — with built-in beds — and half game room.

"We have a game table where you can play cards or bumper pool," the owner says.

The lookout on the third floor represents both the owner's wishes and a designer's challenge.

"When we sat down and talked about the plan — bedrooms, bathrooms, foundation reuse — one idea was a place to go and view the property and see the property," Heide says.

"I wanted to be able to see farther, to look out on the lake and surroundings," the owner says.

That's how "the lantern" atop the house was born.

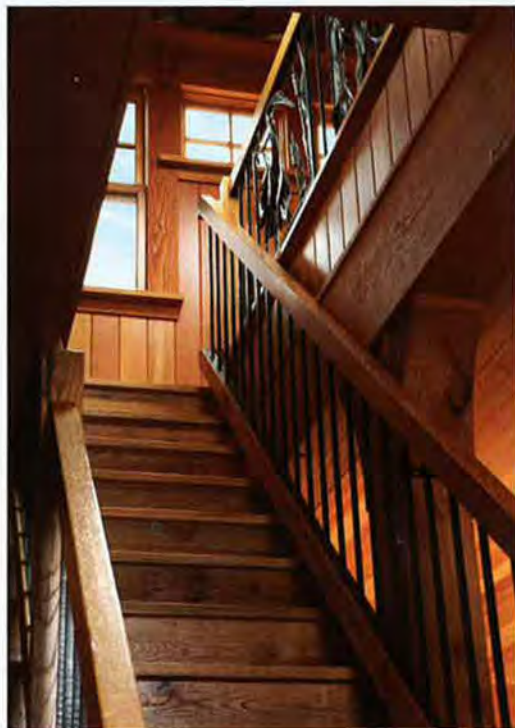
"It's an inspired view, designed to give you a 180-degree view of the sweeping vistas," Heide says.

"With windows all the way around, it's a sitting area where you can look out and see forever," the owner says.

"At the same time, it's more than just a



The owner wanted a lookout, but the hunting lodge's third floor — known as “the lantern” — was also designed to be a cozy living space with a gas stove, as well as a sleeping porch that is central to the ventilation of the open layout.



The hunting lodge is attired in wood and iron, with sight lines more reminiscent of a barn than a house.

cool spot to look out,” Heide says. “It has a gas stove and can be used as a sleeping porch, so it’s a continuation of the living space. It’s also a way to draw air in and through the house.”

In a way, the lantern is a symbol of what they were trying to accomplish with the design.

“I like that we found a way to make this lookout functional — it’s an integral part of the ventilation of the house,” Heide says.

After 17 years of roughing it, the lodge — outfitted with “all the comforts of home,” the owner says, like a kitchen with a Viking range and granite countertops — makes guys’ weekends more comfortable. The retired executive and his teenage son now have a place where up to 12 can bunk comfortably.

“It’s a great getaway for hunting and fishing or cross-country skiing or snowmobiling or just having fires and walking,” the owner says.

Walkers find peace among the pine trees, the wildflowers, the natural grasses. The shallow lake, almost empty of neighbors, adds to the feeling of escape.

“Sometimes, when you look at the lake, you feel like you’re in Canada,” the owner says. “Once you leave the driveway, you enter civilization. Once you enter the driveway, you leave it. I did have a very stressful job; this was my reward for it. It’s a great place to relax. It’s a wonderful place.” ■

*Molly Guthrey is a Pioneer Press columnist and staff writer.*