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# A PLACE FOR THE HEART

A Clemmons couple discovers a mountain paradise in their backyard

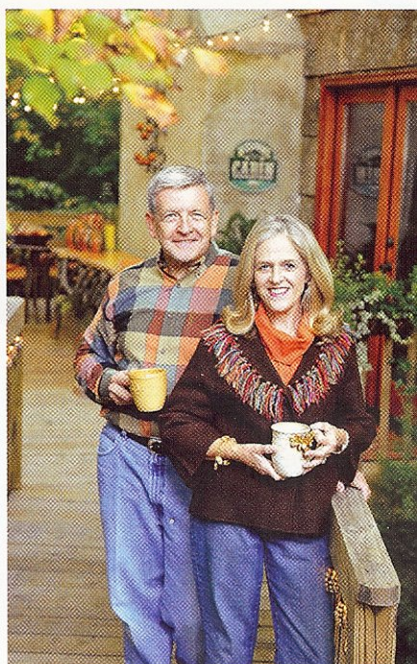
BY COY ARCHER / PHOTOS BY J. SINCLAIR







ABOVE: "Cabin fever" takes on new meaning in this cozy backyard retreat, which connects to the house by a short foot bridge. RIGHT: Clemmons Mayor John Bost and his wife, LaDonna.



**T**he quaint mountain village of Blowing Rock had always been a favorite destination of LaDonna and John

Bost. Like many North Carolinians, they were drawn to the peacefulness of a place known as the "Crown of the Blue Ridge Mountains" and the renewal of spirit they experienced there. Not surprisingly, the couple dreamed of buying some land one day and building a log cabin that would serve as a family retreat.

In the real world, though, a career change, relocation, and soaring housing prices promised that LaDonna's mountain paradise fantasy would remain just that — a fantasy.





## stepinside

Then one day, while walking through the woods in her new backyard, LaDonna noticed that there was an opening in an otherwise dense area of trees. She immediately had an epiphany: "Why not build the cabin here?"

With renewed enthusiasm, John went to work. For the next two years, he conducted a one-man feasibility study that included everything from design considerations and zoning requirements to easements, covenants, and negotiations with neighbors that resulted in parcel exchanges. On Mother's Day 2006, John and daughter Summer took LaDonna to dinner and presented her a card with a permit to build her cabin enclosed.

Soon after, the Bosts were confronted with perhaps the most difficult challenge in their bid to build their backyard cabin: access to the site. Because of their commitment to preserving the natural area behind the house, the couple discovered that massive logs would require a crane and materials would have to be

walked in — both expensive propositions. In the end, lack of access to the building site convinced the Bosts to "stick build," or construct the cabin on site, piece by piece.

Then, John happened to notice survey tapes in the woods. He approached his new neighbor and learned that he was about to remodel his kitchen and add a new garage to the house. John asked how he was bringing his materials in and ended up negotiating a beneficial deal for both homeowners. The Bosts would let their neighbor use their front yard to bring in materials in exchange for access to his back yard. John also offered the contract to build the cabin to his neighbor's builder in an effort to streamline the construction and keep both projects on schedule. The only caveat: John's neighbor requested that the cabin be finished in time for him to establish his lawn again before winter.

With permit in hand, LaDonna collaborated with architect and builder Mike Dixon of Dixon Builders to bring her dream cabin to





More than 250 first-time visitors signed the cabin guestbook the first year.  
BELOW: A spacious deck overlooks the woods.  
BOTTOM: Hand-crafted poplar bark shingles applied by Mayor Bost.







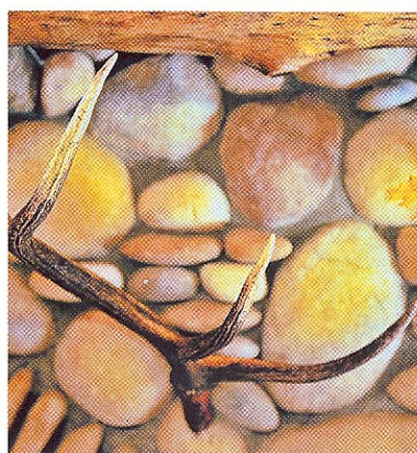
ABOVE: A quick trip to the Bosts' "mountains." LEFT: Two poplars, the only trees removed during construction, serve as portico posts at the cabin's back door.



life. Inspired by an article in *Southern Living*, she chose to cover the stick-built cabin in poplar bark shingles — an old mountain craft that was quickly becoming a green-building sensation. Dixon's sketches included a red tin roof and river rock chimneys that would complete the cabin's rustic look. This would be his first cabin as a builder, but not his last.

As the seasons passed from spring into summer, the cabin rose from the ground and began to take shape. While Dixon kept the work on schedule, LaDonna kept the workers fed. She baked homemade goodies almost daily for every crew that worked on site: pecan and walnut cookies for the foundation workers, baked caramel corn for the framers, and apple pies for the electricians. It was her way of expressing apprecia-





LaDonna Bost used classic decorative accents reminiscent of the Timberlake style to bring the mountains to the Piedmont and give a nod to the cabin's inspired beginnings.

tion for the craftsmanship that each of them brought, along with her thankfulness for a dream that was coming true.

"Can you get us in by Thanksgiving?" asked the Bosts. Dixon promised he would. There was seed to be sown in their neighbor's yard and a big crowd expected for the holiday.

On the evening before Thanksgiving 2006, the Bosts put the finishing touches on the cabin's holiday decorations. The following day they expected to receive 35 close friends and family for dinner, with plans to serve the pumpkin pie and coffee in the cabin.

When the last decoration was in place, John turned to LaDonna. "Is this what you saw?" he asked, referring to her mountain fantasy.

"This is exactly what I saw," replied LaDonna, "and so much more. It's a dream come true."

As they retired to the house moments later, John turned to LaDonna once more and asked, tongue in cheek, "Wasn't that a nice ride?" Playing along, LaDonna smiled and replied, "Yes, Blowing Rock is lovely this time of year."