

The front door of the Pitcher home meets the McKenzie River along 525 feet of frontage.

Pitcher Perfect

After a devastating loss, a tenacious log-home-loving couple rebuilt their idea of paradise.

By Mike Haskew
Photography by Allen Mowery

34



“The front deck is our favorite part of the home with the river so close. All of the material was provided with the Timberhaven kit, and it is all treated wood. There was a curved log that we salvaged from the fire that we had milled to turn into the bench by the fire pit, as well as enough cedar for an 8-foot-long picnic table that sits by the river,” says Betsy.

For 17 years, the setting was idyllic. Frank and Betsy Pitcher enjoyed the lifestyle of their getaway, a log home refuge nestled in the Willamette Valley of northwestern Oregon. The Cascade Mountains towered in the distance, and the McKenzie River quietly flowed past the serene setting.

Then, tragedy struck.

On Labor Day 2020, the Holiday Farm Fire raged. The home that the Pitchers had built on just over two acres of paradise was suddenly a charred remnant ... burned to the ground.

“The fire encompassed nearly 175,000 acres,” remembers Betsy, “It was thought to have started when 70-mile-per-hour winds blew a branch onto an energized power line about

The Pitcher home presents a wonderful getaway nestled among the mountains of the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Constructed of white pine, it features 8-inch D-shaped engineered logs.



4 miles east of our property. A high percentage of the damage was to forested and wilderness area with about 550 to 600 homes and other structures destroyed. Because of the wires and trees on the highway, we were not able to see our property for nine days but had been told it was destroyed.”

Out of the devastation, there was no other choice: The Pitchers were determined to recapture the pleasure and peace they had known before. They decided to rebuild and contacted Timberhaven Log Homes once again,

where Lynda Tompkins, owner of the company, was able to locate the original plans for the home the couple built back in 2003. This time, they just made a few simple changes.

“Frank and Betsy wanted to maintain their foundation footprint and were pleased with their existing plan as the home was originally constructed before the fire,” explains Lynda. “Other than the change from the original 6-by-8-inch traditional logs to our 8-by-8 premium engineered log product, the only modification made

to the new home was the addition of a gable porch over the left side entry door to the dining room.”

After a smooth planning process, the log kit was delivered on three flat-bed trucks, and the Pitchers stepped in as their own general contractors. The quest for renewal was underway.

“We started working on the fire cleanup in November 2020, planting over 100 trees from 6 to 8 feet tall, running irrigation to each one, as well as a lot of other bushes and plants,” Betsy recalls. “Also, during this time,



The massive wall of windows offers beautiful vistas of the surrounding countryside, making the 1,200-square-foot cabin feel spacious and majestic.



HOME DETAILS

SQUARE FOOTAGE
1,200

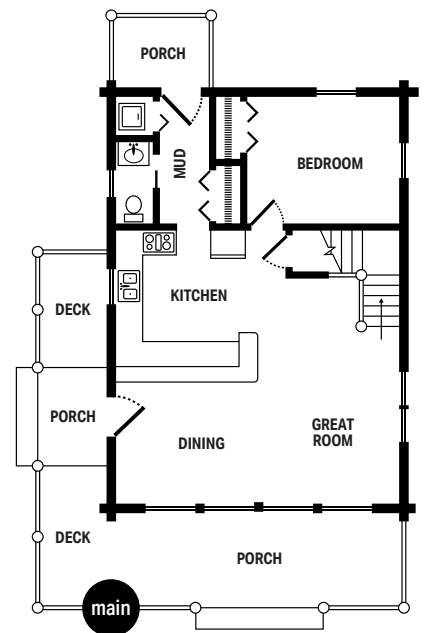
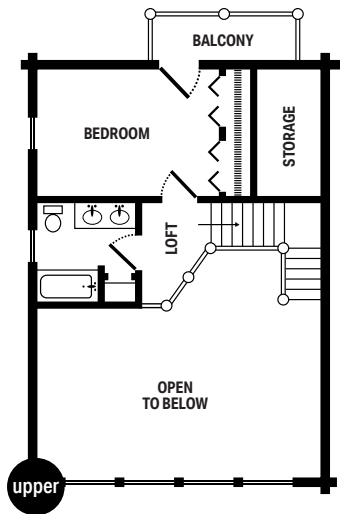
BEDROOMS BATHS
2 1 FULL, 1 HALF

LOG PROVIDER/DESIGNER
TIMBERHAVEN LOG & TIMBER HOMES
timberhavenloghomes.com

BUILDER
TODD & BRANDON MITCHELL



The Pitchers' great room is adjacent to their kitchen, so conversation flows seamlessly between the spaces. A small loft overhead also helps bring task lighting a little closer to the food prep areas.



we hired friends to help fence the property. By August, the foundation and most of the cleanup were completed, and then the kit arrived. Through many friends and plumbers and electricians and cabinetmakers, we were given an occupancy permit in March of 2022.”

The couple’s roots in the area run deep – Frank had farmed the Willamette Valley for 50 years, while Betsy had worked as a substitute teacher – so their sense of “home away from home” quickly returned with



The wood-burning stove creates a sense of cabin coziness in the great room where family and friends gather.

their new, 1,200-square-foot cabin and 400-square-foot outdoor deck. Situated a mere 70 feet from the McKenzie River, the home's design optimizes their enjoyment of the local bounty.

"There are two key features," explains Lynda. "The first is the large gable porch featuring a heavy timber truss system with steel gusset plates. The heavy timber truss system creates the framework for the large gable glass wall. The second key feature is the private rear balcony off the second level bedroom."

But the benefits are not enjoyed by

the Pitchers alone. Having previously offered up their haven as a rental, the couple gladly shares the comforts and views with visitors once more. "Our renters who have returned have been very pleased with the chance to enjoy it all again," Betsy says.

Whether curled up by the wood-burning stove in the main room or out observing the local wildlife (like the two geese who have taken up residency in a hollowed-out tree each spring), all who visit the property will experience for themselves the deep sense of recovery and renewal.