

Couple's beloved cabin in the stunning natural wonders of Oregon's central Cascades is better than ever after wildfire.

BY MIKE HASKEW 🌿 PHOTOGRAPHY BY ALLEN MOWERY
COURTESY OF TIMBERHAVEN LOG & TIMBER HOMES



OUT OF ASHES, *Paradise Rebuilt*

The setting was idyllic and familiar for Frank and Betsy Pitcher. Their log home in the Willamette Valley of northwestern Oregon was everything they had wanted—a getaway snug with the Cascade Mountains towering in the distance and the quiet, reassuring flow of the McKenzie River nearby. Frank's family had farmed the tract for half a century, and Betsy had worked for years as a substitute teacher. When time permitted, they slipped off to their two acres of serenity. They had no idea, but their situation was both tranquil and tenuous, idyllic and fragile. Everything changed in a moment on Labor Day 2020. The Holiday Farm fire struck with vengeance, ravaging the Pitcher home. The raging flames were indiscriminate, laying waste across the landscape.



THANKS TO A HEAVY TIMBER TRUSS SYSTEM, ONLY A LARGE GABLE GLASS WALL AND 70 FEET OF AIR SEPARATE THE PITCHER'S GREAT ROOM FROM THE MCKENZIE RIVER.



ABOVE: DURING THE REBUILD, A GABLED PORCH WAS ADDED OVER A SIDE DOOR, PROVIDING HANDY FIREWOOD STORAGE FOR THE GREAT ROOM'S WOOD-BURNING STOVE.

LEFT: HAVING THE KITCHEN NEXT THE GREAT ROOM KEEPS EVERYONE INVOLVED IN THE CONVERSATION. THE UNDERSIDE OF THE THE SMALL LOFT ALSO MAKES A PERFECT SPOT FOR LIGHT FIXTURES FOR THE KITCHEN.

"The fire eventually encompassed nearly 175,000 acres," Betsy remembered, "It was thought to have started when 70-mile per hour winds blew a branch onto an energized power line about four 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."

The utter devastation took the Pitchers aback. They paused and considered the future, then came to the only possible conclusion. They had to rebuild.

"We started working on the fire cleanup in November 2020," Betsy recalled. "We planted over 100 trees that were from six to eight feet tall, running irrigation to each one, as well as a lot of other bushes and plants. Also during this time, we hired friends to help fence the property."

As the ashes and debris were removed and the homesite reemerged, Frank and Betsy turned to Timberhaven Log Homes for consultation. Pres-



THE PITCHER'S MADE SURE TO MAXIMIZE THEIR 525 FEET OF FRONTAGE ON THE MCKENZIE RIVER WITH A DECK THAT'S ONE-THIRD THE SIZE OF THEIR CABIN—REWARDING THEM WITH UNOBSTRUCTED VIEWS OF THE SURROUNDING RUGGED BEAUTY OF THE WILLAMETTE NATIONAL FOREST AND THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS.

“The front deck is our favorite part of the home with the river so close,” she continued. “There was a curved log that we salvaged from the fire that we had milled to turn into the bench by the firepit, as well as enough cedar for an eight-foot picnic table that sits by the river.”



ABOVE: SHARING SPACE WITH THE GREAT ROOM, THE KITCHEN'S WIDE GRANITE COUNTERTOPS OFFER MORE SEATING FOR A VARIETY OF INDOOR ACTIVITIES.

ident Lynda Tompkins was fortunate to locate the original plans from the 2003 Kuhn Brothers home build. From there, only minimal tweaking was made, and the structure would come to life again much as the earlier home had been.

“The Pitchers wanted to maintain their foundation footprint and were pleased with their existing plan as the home was constructed originally before the fire,” Lynda explained. “Other than the change from the original 6X8 traditional logs to our 8X8 engineered log product, the only modification made to the new home was the addition of a gabled porch over the left side entry door to the dining room.”

By August 2021, the refreshed foundation was completed, and the log kit was delivered on three flatbed trucks. “Through many friends and plumbers, electricians, and cabinetmakers, we were given an occupancy permit in March 2022,” remarked Betsy. “Outside flower boxes, grass, furniture, and a bench and firepit were all made part of the rebuild.”

Serving as their own general contractors, the Pitchers supervised the restoration project that not only recreated their little slice of heaven but also lifted their spirits. The comfortable 1,200-square foot cabin with the addition of the spa-



LEFT: THE MASTER BEDROOM HAS ITS OWN PRIVATE BALCONY, OFFERING YET MORE VIEWS OF THE SURROUNDING PEAKS OF THE CASCADE MOUNTAINS IN THE WILLAMETTE NATIONAL FOREST.

BELOW: TRADITIONAL INTERIOR WALLS PAIRED WITH ENGINEERED LOGS OFFER MORE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CUSTOM DESIGNED DECOR AND PERSONALIZED DECORATIVE TOUCHES.



cious 400-square foot outdoor deck afforded more living space, capturing breathtaking vistas from the great room with a handsome vaulted ceiling and from outdoors with the river only 70 feet away. The galley kitchen is only steps from the great room for convenience, and two bedrooms, one on the main floor and the other a few steps up, accommodate guests.

"There are two key features," Tompkins explained. "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."

The partnership with Timberhaven paid dividends from the beginning, and the Pitchers were pleased with the exchange of information during construction. "We dealt with Lynda throughout the entire process from start to finish and had a very enjoyable, concerned, and quick-to-respond experience with her," related Betsy. "She answered all my 1,000 questions right away, and that made it all less stressful.

"The front deck is our favorite part of the home with the river so close," she continued. "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 firepit, as

well as enough cedar for an eight-foot picnic table that sits by the river."

To complete their revitalized homesite, the Pitchers built a woodshed and shop area along with a pump house on the property. Inside the cabin, they added a wood burning stove to make the main level even cozier. From there, plenty of options lay before them, simply soaking up the ambience, fly fishing, or quietly observing the abundant local wildlife.

"There are two geese who decided to take up spring residency in one of the hollowed out trees," smiled Betsy, "and they have returned to have another set of offspring. They are fun to watch. We redecorated as we wanted, and we had used the property as a vacation rental previously.

Our renters who have returned have been very pleased with the chance to enjoy it all again."

For the Pitchers, the journey from ruin to renewal began with a profound sense of loss which rapidly gave way to one of returned serenity. From the ashes, a reinterpretation of their lost paradise has emerged. 🌿

Log Home Producer: Timberhaven Log & Timber Homes
Log Home Builder: Todd & Brandon Mitchell
1-Story Home 🌿 Square Footage 1,200
1.5 Baths 🌿 2 Bedrooms