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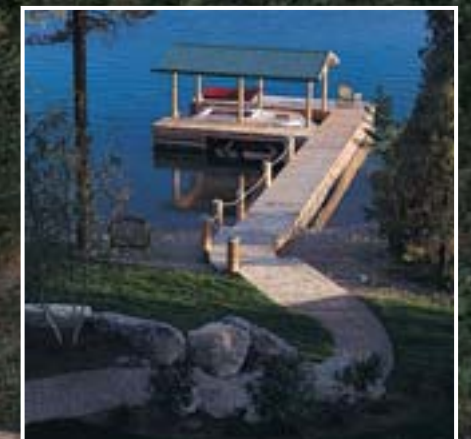
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ON SPEC & spectacular

WANTED: An unprecedented tech-savvy log home seeks right owner for good times and love. And a Montana man is all-too-happy to answer the call.

STORY BY CHERYL KENNY | PHOTOGRAPHY BY HEIDI LONG
HOME BY LINCOLN LOG HOMES/LANDMARK BUILDERS

NIGHT LIGHTS. When builder Orlan Sorensen designed the computer-controlled lighting system, which includes more than 100 copper lights from New Zealand, he sought to create a “nighttime experience” where the entire grounds are subtly lit and all the walkways and plants are visible.



WATER PLAY (inset). Owner Michael Coit, a water-sport enthusiast, keeps a speedboat, Jet Ski, fishing boat and small sailboat at his house, which has 606 feet of lake and bay waterfront. The docks, all wired for music and the Internet, are accessible via brick walkways from the home’s lower level or from the sides. Terraces make the 35-foot drop from the house to the lake passable.



Builder Orlan Sorensen's plan was bold: to construct the largest, most technologically sophisticated home ever marketed on Montana's Flathead Lake—and to do it on spec. "I was taking a chance—it was much more house than had ever been for sale on the lake before," Orlan admits. "But I had a feeling the market was ready for it." Orlan was right.

The project began in 1999, when Orlan, owner of Whitefish, Montana-based construction companies Lincoln Log Homes and Landmark Builders, purchased the 4 1/2-acre waterfront property that was once the summer residence of Charles Conrad, a Kalispell, Montana, founding father. Orlan planned an 8,580-square-foot alpine-style log home with amenities ranging from a 1,000-square-foot great room to an 800-bottle, temperature-controlled wine cellar. In 2002, Orlan placed the house for sale, posting photos of it on his web site. Then he waited.

Michael Coit, a retired real estate and energy investor and an avid boater, was looking for a vacation home. Michael's sister-in-law urged him to consider buying in the Flathead area. Michael had never heard of Flathead Lake, but his interest was piqued when he learned the 35-mile-long body of water is the largest natural freshwater lake west of the Mississippi. And when Michael saw photos of Orlan's striking log house, he was all but hooked. "I liked that it's large, because I knew I'd have a lot of guests," Michael says. "I also loved the open layout with its spectacular lake views." He put a preliminary contract on it before he saw it in person.

When Michael finally toured the house, he was delighted, and its log construction sealed the deal. "The logs give it a tremendous amount of warmth that you just don't get in a conventional home," he notes. "You get a terrific feeling with this house—it's like you go back in time."

The four-bedroom home's exterior is full log, as are many of its interior walls, though some are hand-troweled plaster with faux finishes. One of the most striking uses of wood is in the great room, which has a unique parallel-cord log truss system that peaks at 24 feet.

But Michael, his wife, Ellise, and their young son spend most of their family time in the intimate gathering room, which is open to the kitchen and includes an informal eating area and an inviting ledgestone fireplace, one of five in the house.

The home's high-tech features—vital elements as far as Michael's concerned—include CAT-5 digital wiring for the home theater and the Internet. A computer-controlled Vantage lighting system offers features ranging from sensors in the great room ceiling that increase light intensity when clouds pass by to pressure sensors under the master bedroom carpeting that trigger a softly lit path for nighttime visibility.

The home also has four exterior live cameras. Both the lighting and camera systems can be controlled from anywhere via the Internet. "While I was in Italy, I could log on to the Internet to see what was going on in Montana," says Michael.

He and Ellise hosted 200 guests for their niece's pre-wedding party last summer, but normally they

don't use their home for formal entertaining. As Michael notes, "Montana is a jeans-and-shorts type of place." They prefer intimate dinner parties and, despite its size, the home's warm character works well for such small gatherings. "You walk in and get such an at-home feeling," Michael says. "It's a big house, but it's comfortable." ▶

ENTRANCING ENTRY. Towering 20-foot larch logs atop stone pedestals direct the eye up to a trapezoid-shaped window that offers a taste of the great room's log truss system. To break up the straight lines of the house, the eaves are notched. The oversized front door is made of wood reclaimed from a Seagram's distillery; the wood still bears the holes used for washers, rods and screws.

HOMESPECS

Square footage: 8,580

Designer/builder:
Orlan Sorensen
Lincoln Log Homes/
Landmark Builders

FISH STORY. A school of fish swim around the overhead circular light fixture that illuminates the great room. Custom walnut leather and tapestry seating is grouped around an oversized coffee table of distressed alder wood. The furniture takes advantage of both the tremendous view and the fieldstone fireplace, highlighted by a mantel featuring a carved-wood bear.



DINING DELIGHT (above). The dining room serves as a connector between the great room and the family room and is constructed of larch logs with chinking. The room, which looks onto a deck accessible from the great and family rooms, is built like a separate cabin, with a 16-foot peaked roof and pine-plank ceiling. The distressed alder pedestal table is fitted with lead in the base to keep it balanced. Lighting designer Roc Corbett crafted the brass chandelier, which features a cantina of elk, deer and bear.

FROM LOG HOUSE TO WHITE HOUSE (above right). The comfy gathering room off the kitchen has a vertically planked pine vaulted ceiling and custom fir cabinets. The chestnut brown chairs with nail-head trim provide luxurious seating around the sofa tables of distressed alder and copper. Roc Corbett designed the wood-and-wrought-iron wagon-wheel chandelier. A photo of this fixture caught the eye of a White House staffer, who commissioned Corbett to make a similar light for Camp David.

NOT YOUR AVERAGE TELECOMMUTE (right). Off the master bedroom is a home office that's so warm and inviting, it evokes the feeling of a welcoming ski lodge more than a place to work. The large desk is hand-distressed alder (as is the shelf unit) with antiqued hardware from the Davis-Torres Furniture Collection. The desk's position takes full advantage of the room's ledgerstone fireplace.





MAKE A SPLASH. Two can enjoy the benefits of the UltraBath therapeutic jetted tub with heated headrests. Windows looking onto the bay are topped in cornice boards with draped sheers. The bath floors are travertine marble. The bath includes his-and-hers vanities of vertical-grain fir and are topped with granite. The vanity light is mica with leather-and-wrought-iron framing. Wondering what the antler-tower is for? Decoration only.

MASTER OF THE HOUSE (above). The master wing is a main-level retreat with a loft that serves as Ellise's exercise room. The 40-by-26-foot space has both log and plaster walls. The paneled, hand-carved bed and nightstand are alder wood and feature a pinecone motif that pops up throughout the house. A bronze sculpture of a mountain lion stands guard at the foot of the bed.

KITCHEN COMFORT (opposite). The kitchen boasts 23-foot-high vaulted ceilings, accented by windows that combine fixed trapezoid uppers with awning windows below for ventilation. The walls are hand-troweled plaster and floors are circular-sawn fir and larch. The kitchen cabinets are distressed vertical-grain fir with wood rope molding inlay. The granite countertops are offset by a terra cotta-tile backsplash.

