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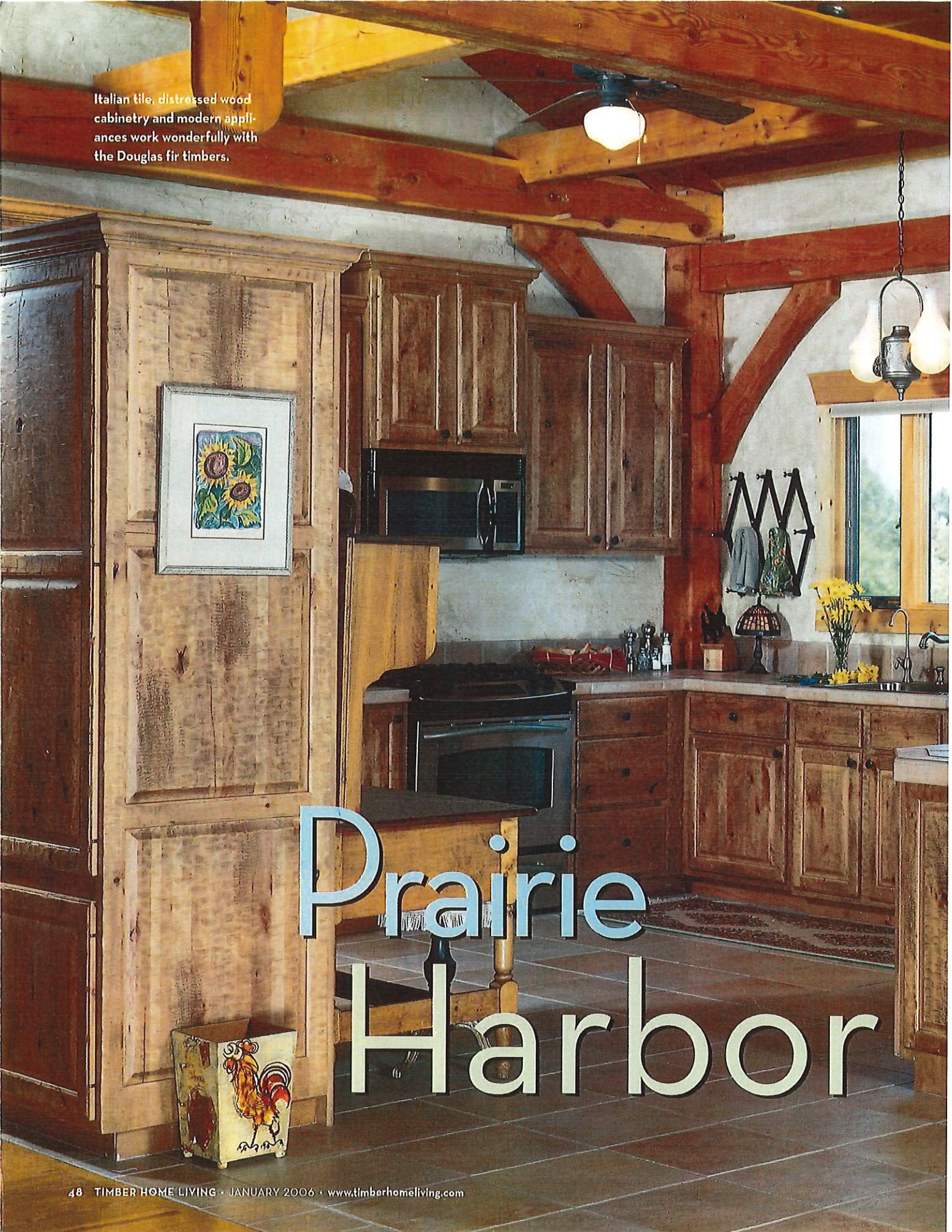
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Italian tile, distressed wood cabinetry and modern appliances work wonderfully with the Douglas fir timbers.

Prairie Harbor



A lakeside home in Kansas, with its Panamanian and Asian accents, proves how aesthetically rich a retreat can be.

STORY BY JENNIFER LECLAIRE

PHOTOGRAPHY BY JAMES RAY SPAHN

TWO decades is an eternity to keep an eye on a cherished piece of land. But patience bestows a dream or two along the way, which is especially true with Bill and Kris Davis. They had long coveted a secluded lot adjacent to Milford Lake, Kansas—but there was one problem: The owner wasn't selling.

When the owner finally relented, the couple pounced on the opportunity and began planning their masterpiece.

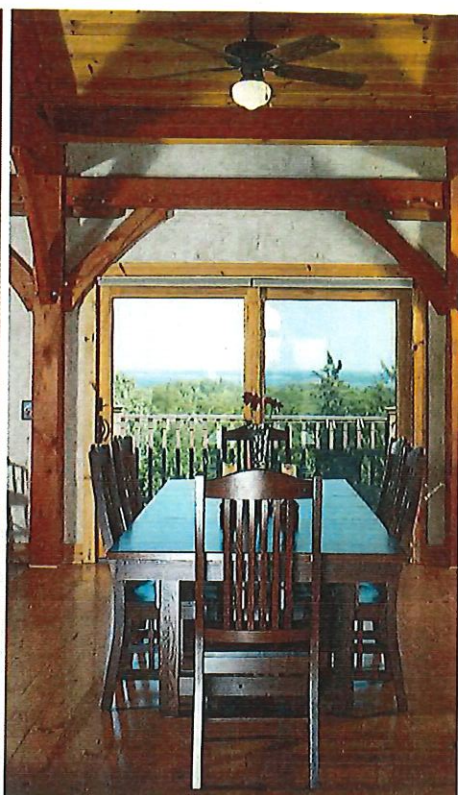
"There is absolutely no one near this lot," says Bill, who grew up in the lumber business. Both Bill and Kris had long admired the warm feeling, soaring ceilings and masterful carpentry of timber homes. So once they secured this out-of-the-way acreage, choosing a timber structure for this woodsy setting seemed like a natural choice.

Bill designed the floorplan of the two-story, 2,600-square-foot home with its three bedrooms and three baths. While the exterior is wonderfully unassuming, the interior boasts open space with timber trusses and craftsmanship that "takes your breath away," Kris says. The design called for post placements around exterior walls to ensure an open feel balanced with a low ceiling to maintain an intimate living space.

Clydesdale Frames Co., based in nearby Hutchinson, Kansas, supplied the timber package. When Bill, a physician, learned that one of his long-time patients had launched the business, choosing Clydesdale Frames was an easy decision. It all came down to trust. "The company offered us more than we expected," Bill says. "They came in on time and on budget and even threw in some nice extras, like the mantel piece."

Home owners Bill and Kris Davis spend most of their time in the living room, complete with a limestone fireplace.





Tranquility, Defined

Details truly make a difference in each room of the house. Kris adores how native limestone has been incorporated into several rooms—especially the two fireplaces that grace the living room and master bedroom. She also likes how the building team used chestnut shells to accent the low-maintenance planks that cover the home's exterior. But more than anything, Bill enjoys the serenity that seems to spill from the home's every corner. "It's extremely relaxing here," he says. "We just walk, read and work on landscaping."

Prairie grass and wildflowers ring the yard and conjure images of the Plain's bucolic heyday. While gardening near the stony ridge adjacent to their home, Bill and Kris have spotted bald eagles, wild turkeys and plenty of other indigenous birds serenading each other. When they need a break, the couple relaxes on the 40-foot-long deck or the patio below it. Sliding glass doors on both levels offer access from each bedroom and cool evening breezes.

Interior Splendor

Although Bill and Kris purposely kept the home's exterior architecturally muted, they more than made up for it inside. Pine floors line most of the home, with sandy-colored carpet down-

stairs and natural-colored Italian tile in the kitchen and bathrooms. The couple is especially fond of the reddish cork floor in the master bedroom for its warm feel and soft look. The kitchen features distressed alder wood cabinetry designed to complement the rich timber beams and posts.

"Our moms were both antique collectors," says Bill. "We've also collected accent pieces from many parts of the world, including Panama, China and Mexico." The interior design features a combination of Oriental area rugs, Mexican artwork and a chandelier that once illuminated a railroad station. Kris oversaw the decor after consulting with a close friend who just happens to be an interior designer.

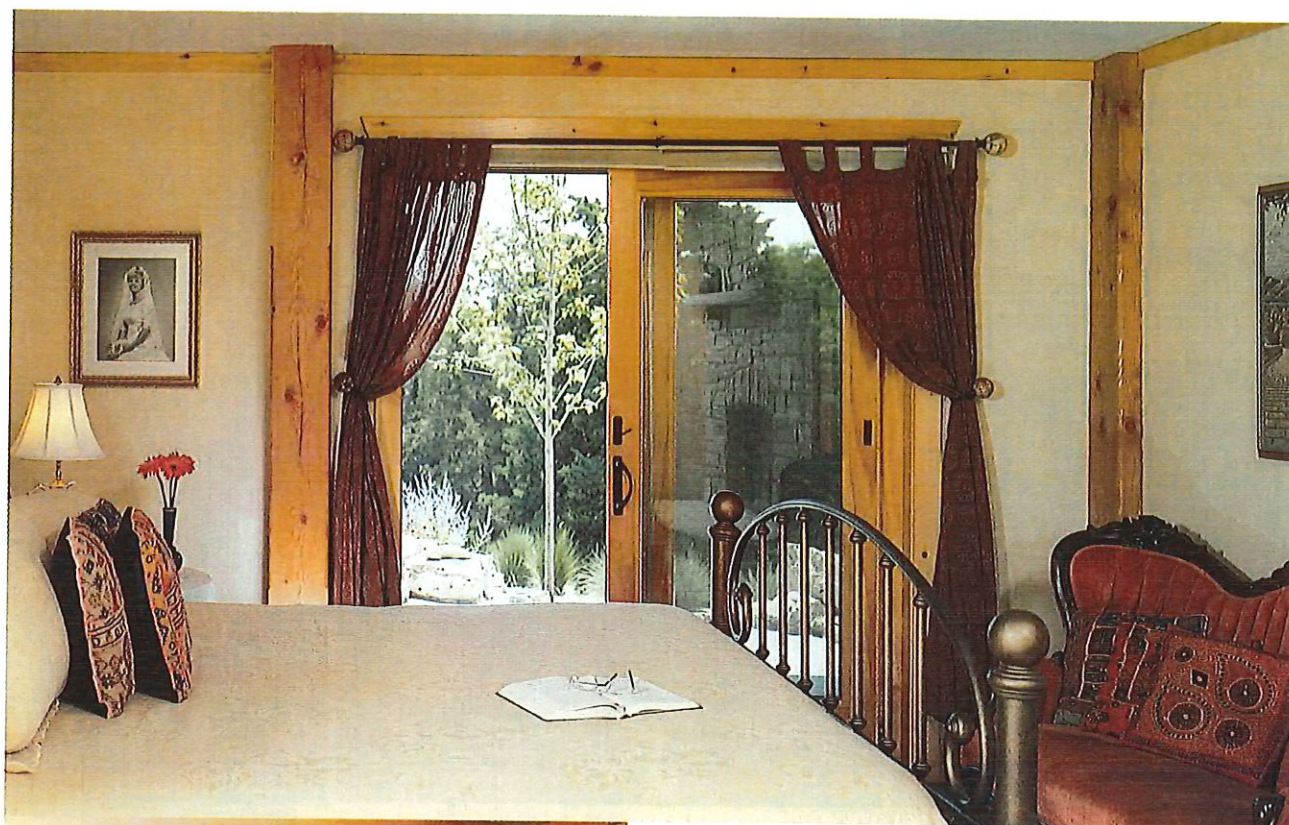
Bill and Kris spend most of their time in the living room, where they entertain up to 15 family members at once during vacation season. The living room and kitchen boast large windows that showcase Mother Nature. "The sun comes up on one side and sets on the other," Kris says. The couple saved money on windows using mostly clear glass panes that don't open. To enjoy the cross breeze, they simply open the sliding-glass doors and a few windows on the front of the home.

"The Davis' home is comfortable, and that's the purpose of this lake house," says John Van Brugger, principal of Clydesdale Frames Co.

ABOVE LEFT: A quiet nook, perfect for a spirited game of chess, benefits from natural light and inspiring prairie views.

ABOVE MIDDLE: Craftsmanship abounds in the home, where even the stairs provide a mix of function, warmth and design flair.

ABOVE RIGHT: A second-story dining area just off the 40-foot-long deck offers a relaxing sanctuary during mealtime.



ABOVE: Sliding glass doors in the master bedroom showcase the great outdoors and usher in natural light and cool breezes.



LEFT: The bathrooms feature antique-looking fixtures and fresh flowers for a rustic prairie look.

"The warmth of the wood makes the space inviting and relaxing, which is the whole idea of a vacation home. It also makes you feel safer in the tornado season because it's structurally the strongest house you can build with wood."

Bill designed a tornado-proof basement in the home to protect his family during those infamous Kansas twisters. For the same reason, the downstairs bathrooms are all located on the inner walls with no windows. The couple hired Butch Dawson, a close friend from their hometown, as the general contractor because they knew they could trust him. Butch initially was skeptical about timber homes. But Bill says when his buddy saw the

frame go up, he couldn't help but admit that it was among the most solid structures he'd seen during years of building.

Of course, there were some challenges with the lot. Over the years, heavy rains caused it to sink lower than the roadway. But a dedicated general contractor leveled the ground and completed the home in less than nine months.

Now, the couple makes the two-hour drive to their timber vacation home every weekend. "We really appreciate the beauty, craftsmanship and woodwork of our home," says Bill. "It cost us more to build with timber, but it's so aesthetically pleasing that it's worth every penny we spent and more." ■

The home sits alongside Millford Lake and is surrounded by prairie grass and myriad wildflowers.

Home Details

SQUARE FOOTAGE: 2,600
BUILDERS: Dawson Builders
TIMBER PRODUCER: Clydesdale Frame Co.
FOR MORE DETAILS, SEE FIND IT HERE ON PAGE 75

Creating a Lake View

You've heard the old saying, "They can't see the forest for the trees." Well, Bill and Kris Davis couldn't see the lake for the trees. Even though the couple's timber home faces the largest lake in Kansas, the woodlands block its view from the front porch. That's why the home's design includes a tower.

The ultimate lookout, which caused passersby during the construction to wonder if the couple was building a lakefront church, is part of Bill's original floorplan and has become his favorite part of the home. A winding staircase leads up to the tower, where Bill takes advantage of the bird's-eye view to inspire his watercolor paintings. "The tower is like a little getaway set apart from the normal traffic flow of the house," says Bill. "It has sleeping space and its own balcony. You can just sit quietly and look out at the lake." —J.L.

