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MOUNTAIN LIVING[®] Bringing the Spirit of the High Country Home

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Yellowstone Club vacation retreat connects family to its past and to nature

TAKING THE LONG VIEW



STORY SUZANNE S. BROWN PHOTOS DAVID O. MARLOW

ARCHITECTURE MILLER RODELL ARCHITECTS INTERIOR DESIGN VICTORIA HAGAN CONSTRUCTION NORTH FORK BUILDERS

OPPOSITE: A window-lined passageway.
THIS PAGE: A twig sculpture by Paul Schick hangs above the fireplace in the dining room. The table is from Hudson Furniture; chairs are custom Kaare Klint designs.





They have lived on both coasts, but for Bill and Karen Sonneborn, the place they always feel at home is in Montana. Bill grew up in Miles City and loves spending time in the state, so when it was time to build a vacation residence, the couple found the perfect location at the Yellowstone Club in Big Sky. "At the time, we were thinking we wanted our young son—who is now 17—to know more about where his dad grew up," says Karen. Montana was a way to counterbalance the urban places they have lived, including California, New York and Washington, D.C., with the rural. Since their early trips to Big Sky, the couple has had two additional children; their daughters are 11 and 14. Then, as now, they go west to escape the pressures of their high-profile lives. Bill is an executive in the private equity business, while Karen co-founded and is CEO of the education nonprofit Honored, which recognizes outstanding teachers.

The mountain location, proximity to ski slopes and amenities that come with a private club were perks, but above all, the uninterrupted views to Yellowstone National Park were what sold the couple on the Andesite Ridge property.

The first design priority when they met with Candace Tillotson-Miller, founder of Miller Roodell Architects in Bozeman, was siting the home to take advantage of the setting. Next, the architect (now retired) says, "they had a list of items they wanted to accomplish >>

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: The home was designed with hewn wood for the walls, reclaimed oak flooring and barn board for ceilings, accented with moss rock stone for the fireplaces and slate on some floors. The hallway to the kitchen is flanked by barn doors. The bar features a flag-painted wall. Gathering spaces by the fire for watching TV and playing games, were created to make the large space feel intimate.





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—HOMEOWNER KAREN SONNEBORN







The master bedroom has light plastered walls, a departure from the hewn wood elsewhere in the home, accented by windows with views of the Montana landscape. A painting by Theodore Waddell, "Iris Creek Angus," hangs over the bed, which has custom linens from E. Braun.

in the house, including making it something that would last and accommodate a growing family and all their different activities."

Constructed of locally quarried stone and hewn reclaimed wood for both the interior and exterior, the residence's gabled design embraces tradition but feels modern as well. Karen says Tillotson-Miller "helped us design a home that we felt fit well into the landscape and is appropriate for the setting." Also instrumental to the project was one of the firm's principals, Matt Miller (no relation to Candace). "The house had to adapt, whether there were 15 people and both sets of grandparents visiting, or just the two of them and the kids," Miller says. "They didn't want it to feel like a bunch of empty rooms."

The Sonneborns and the architects decided to put the bulk of the living space and two guest suites on the main floor, and family sleeping quarters on the upper level. "Most of the bedrooms have a view—you want to feel close to the outdoors and experience it even when you are indoors," Karen says.

With seven bedrooms plus a bunk room, and a slew of spaces for playing games, having conversations or just hanging out, "Once you have friends, family and a bunch of kids in there, it feels like the right size," Karen says. >>

LIVING LARGE Interior designer Victoria Hagan worked with the architects at Miller Roodell in Bozeman to make a big home feel intimate by using these techniques:

CREATE GATHERING SPACES within larger rooms. The great room ceiling soars to 24 feet, but the design team brought the space down to size by carving it into multiple relaxation zones. "We're responding to a more modern way of living," Hagan says, scaling and placing furniture to create "one area to gather by the fire, another for watching TV, a room with a game table." Just off the kitchen, two sheepskin-covered chairs cozy up to the fireplace. "There are always people in those chairs," says homeowner Karen Sonneborn. "It's a place to sit and take a minute." **USE A SIMPLE PALETTE AND INVITING UPHOLSTERY.** Neutral colors in a mountain setting are "calm and serene," Hagan says. "With all the beautiful wood and stone, you want pieces that are more clean-lined and comfortable, in textures and forms that complement the architecture." **CONNECT WITH NATURE** by creating furniture arrangements on balconies and patios as well as views from the interior of the home. Off the master bedroom is a covered porch with two rocking chairs and a small table. "It's a nice spot in the summer to have coffee or tea and enjoy the view," Sonneborn says. **INCORPORATE A BIT OF FANTASY.** "When you're designing a vacation home, it's so much about a getaway," Hagan explains. "It is an escape for families and a chance to be together." Adjacent to the house, a building inspired by a trapper's cabin is where the family stows ski gear and suits up before hitting the slopes. With a wood stove, rustic table and antique chairs, it feels like time travel.





Interior designer Victoria Hagan, based in New York City, describes her role as “not about the decorating. It’s about creating an environment with the architecture.” The home’s neutral palette was chosen for its calmness. “When you’re in such a beautiful setting, you don’t try to compete with the views. It was a conscious choice to use more earth tones,” the designer says. The home’s abundance of reclaimed wood in beams and on walls, floors and ceilings “adds a soulful, rustic quality,” Hagan says.

Mindful of Karen and Bill’s desire for the home to be rustic yet modern and, above all, comfortable, the furnishings were selected for their durability and function as well as a more ephemeral quality: “They also need to inspire and lift you up,” Hagan says.

The family uses the home in all seasons, enjoying the winter holidays for skiing and snowshoeing, and the summer for hiking and fishing. “August is wonderful because where we live (in D.C.), it gets really hot and humid. It’s a nice escape,” Karen says.

Vacations in Montana are a time when everyone can relax: the kids are out of school, and the parents aren’t working. Bill, especially, can breathe, Karen says. “When he steps off the plane, he’s so relaxed and comfortable. It’s going home.” ○

OPPOSITE: The owners wanted a spot where they could get ready for skiing, so the architects designed a building reminiscent of a trapper’s cabin. It is furnished with a rustic table and benches, wood stove, vintage cowhide armchairs and curtains made with Ralph Lauren fabric. **BELOW:** Outdoor patios overlook the ski area and resort.

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