



# *Marriage* ENRICHMENT

BY GLORIA GALE ■ PHOTOS BY BILL MATHEWS ■ STYLING BY GLORIA GALE

Acting as their own general contractors, the Critchlows made their vision of a ranch-style log home a reality. The couple did everything from framing to staining to stonework themselves. BELOW: Stunning stained glass welcomes visitors into the oak log home.



**T**IME AND CIRCUMSTANCE TEST VIRTUALLY EVERY marriage. One Colorado couple learned that their marriage was meant to endure both the tribulations of time and a few unforeseen circumstances.

Meet Judy Laux and her husband Bryan Critchlow, who were married in May 1987. Jumping right into the mix, they hardly waited for the dust to settle before deciding to build a home during their first year of marriage. Judy says, "There is nothing like a major project like building a house to test a new marriage. We couldn't wait to get started!" This "Us versus Them" situation, as Judy likes to refer to the building process, clearly strengthened their relationship.

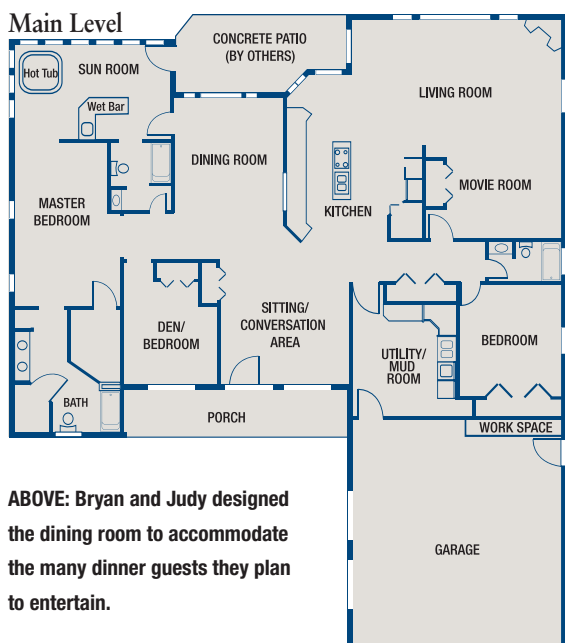
According to Judy, she's the "financial genius" of the twosome with a career as a professor of Economics and Business at Colorado College. Bryan pours his artistic, creative spirit into his work as Instrumental Music Director at Woodland Park Middle School.

After 13 years of living in their first home, this couple knew they worked so well together that they decided to start building another home.

As teachers and "DINKs" (double income, no kids), they were ready to commit to building a one-level ranch-style log home, knowing that they had their summers free and sufficient income to pursue the project.

*Relying on skill and good humor, a Colorado couple keeps the big picture in mind while designing and crafting their own log home.*





**ABOVE:** Bryan and Judy designed the dining room to accommodate the many dinner guests they plan to entertain.

Together they delved into locating the perfect four acres just outside Divide, Colo. “We think we bought the ideal lot. It has magnificent views of Pikes Peak, access to a major highway, and fantastic southern exposure.” Now, all the couple needed was their dream home to complement the site.

Judy and Bryan earnestly pursued their vision of building a custom ranch-style home. “Anticipating that this would be our place to retire, we figured building on one level would ultimately be a smart move,” comments Bryan. “We received information from various log home companies and had started designing our own floorplan,” says Judy.

Judy and Bryan liked everything about the look and feel of an oak log home and selected Gastineau Log Homes in New Bloomfield, Mo. as their log home company. They talked with a Gastineau sales representative and viewed the company’s model home. “We knew that we wanted the traditional 2-by-6 construction and round 7½-inch log siding on the exterior. This would be mirrored on the interior walls with flat tongue-and-groove, 5-inch paneling. Not only did we like Gastineau’s oak log product, but we wanted to take advantage of the company’s layaway plan, which Bryan claims was, ‘second to none,’” says Judy. The plan allowed the couple to lock in the price with just 10 percent down and 1 percent per month.

“The folks at Gastineau were adept at interpreting our ideas. For example, the architects designed a new roof plan and redesigned interior walls to give the home an enhanced open interior. We customized it further by adding a sunroom and making nearly the entire south side of the house a bank of windows,” says Judy.

Once the plan was adopted, Judy and Bryan dug in—literally. “Our initial task was to clear the land. We had to remove over 30 trees and create a 20-foot driveway,” recalls Bryan.

“Before we began building our house, we decided to build a detached garage, which we fondly refer to as ‘B & J’s Toy Chest’ (or a convenient storage area for our adult toys: the boat, camper, etc.).” This entire experience, aided by a variety of hearty friends, was a time-consuming but worthwhile introduction into oak log construction.

When the materials for the weathertight shell were delivered in the spring of 2002, the couple was ready to break ground.

They hit a snag when they found that they needed more fill dirt. “Our soil was primarily clay, which wasn’t stable enough to support pouring the cement footings. As a result, we had to bring in decomposed granite. This rock-laden soil mixture is quite common and essential for building a home in this area. Unfortunately, this added an extra \$10,000 to the cost,” says Bryan.

Although the couple had always planned on acting as their own general contractors, they enlisted the support of Judy’s father and brothers to help them lay the cinder-block foundation. “Once the foundation was completed, Bryan and I framed the 3,800-square-foot home from the subfloor to the 8-foot level. We hired professional framers to construct the roof system and install the metal roof, then we hired the essential subcontractors—electricians, carpenters, and sound system experts,” says Judy.

Bryan, with his innate handiness, installed doors and win-

**Bryan works his culinary magic in the well-equipped kitchen. He takes extra pride in the fact that he did all of the tiling on the floor and backsplash.**





dows and the drywall. Judy was assigned the interior painting and staining, which she accomplished unflappably. “I did all of the painting and stained and varnished over 10,000 linear feet. With occasional help from a few relatives, that took from May to December,” she recalls proudly.

**P**erpetually weary but nevertheless eager to complete the job that lay ahead, Bryan used skills developed when building their previous home to do the tiling and interior rock work.

Near the close of 2003, the couple finished installing all of the exterior logs and hired a crew for the high interior trimwork. Then, Judy applied the exterior treatment to the logs. The house was very near

completion when the couple moved in on Valentine’s Day, 2004.

Now the twosome is eager to share their home with friends and family. They delight in sitting in their sunny, open living room watching the eagles soar or marveling at the towering views of Pikes Peak at sunset.

Just off the bedroom, a bubbling hot tub soothes sore muscles and provides the extra TLC the couple finds deeply gratifying after a day’s work at school or home.

The elegant, well-designed kitchen is ideal for Bryan, who is an exceptional cook and routinely garners raves for his culinary skills. “It helps to work in a kitchen with all the modern conveniences,” he notes. “Since Bryan and I love to entertain,” notes Judy, “the dining room seats 10, which is exactly the way we envisioned it. We determined



**LEFT:** Judy and Bryan look forward to relaxing their sore muscles in the hot tub off the master bedroom.

**BELOW:** Judy's painting skills, Bryan's tilework, and the log frame around the tub combine to create an exceptional master bathroom.



early in the planning stages that having a pass-through from the dining room to the kitchen was a logical and efficient way to make dinner parties easy.”

After moving in, there was still work to be done, from additional trimming and landscaping to completing the stamped concrete driveway approach and paving the turnaround. Undaunted, Judy and Bryan have exceeded their expectations and continue to push forward.

What a lovely gift this couple has given to themselves. The fruits of their labor are definitely worth every drop of sweat equity they’ve poured into the home.

Judy admits, “The first few months of living in this house have been the best! We finally get to enjoy our work. The best thing about living

in a log home is the cozy, comfortable feeling it gives. Despite the high ceilings, it’s almost like being wrapped in a snug, blanket. The warm tones of the wood surround and comfort us, while the wilderness invites us through those big windows.”

Would they do it again? “Not in the foreseeable future,” the couple quickly responds. They enjoyed building this home, but now they want to take pleasure in living in it. “It’s wonderful that we were able to complete this home together,” Judy says. Judy and Bryan agree they both learned so much during this experience. They are convinced that this log home is definitely a “keeper.”

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**LOG HOME PRODUCER:** Gastineau Log Homes, New Bloomfield, Missouri.