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Home in Balsam Mountain Preserve is timber-framed and surrounded by woods

By Paul Clark

Having spent a life in furniture, Dave Walters appreciates craftsmanship. And he loves beautiful wood.

Even more, he loves it when the two come together, as they do in his timber frame home at Balsam Mountain Preserve near Sylva.

The N.C. HealthyBuilt Mountain Rustic house, sided in local stack stone and reclaimed Sinker Cypress, is LEED certified, meaning that it was designed and built using strategies aimed at improving performance in energy savings, water efficiency, CO2 emissions reduction, improved indoor environmental quality and stewardship of resources and sensitivity to their impacts.



Vaulted as many timber frame homes are, the house soars not just in livability but also in breathability. Visitors breathe easy not just because of the mountain air but also because nothing in the house gives off toxic fumes.

Dave, whose business helps others build certified green residences, loves everything about the house – the views, the outdoor kitchen, the putting green. But what he loves most about it, it seems, is talking about it.

“I’m quite a talker,” he said half an hour into a home tour. “But there’s a lot to talk about in this house.

“This home is a showcase.”

Perfect pitch

Jean and Dave Walters live in Atlanta and wanted a second home/retirement home in their native North Carolina. They looked at more than 40 homesteads at Balsam Mountain Preserve before they found this one, which had a small level spot amid its steep slope. They loved the western views and the “enormous amount of privacy,” Dave said. Selecting the site in March 2006 was far easier than building the driveway. That took eight months.

Tight fit

Because of his 30-year association with furniture companies Ethan Allen and La-Z-Boy, Dave appreciates good joinery. He loves the cuts and fits made by the timber framers who built his house, New Energy Works in Farmington, N.Y. The house is full of century-old heart pine wood that came from an old International Harvester plant in the south of Chicago. The Douglas fir in the baseboard came from a circa-1880s gymnasium in upstate New York. The trim is knotty alder, as are the doors downstairs, where Jean and Dave wanted a more casual look. The siding, porches and outside doors are made from cypress reclaimed from the bottom of the Apalachicola and Choctawhatchee rivers.



Energy naturally

The south face of the garage has 28 195-watt photovoltaic solar panels, which heat the house and the water for washing (the house generates so much power that the Walters sell electricity back to Duke Power). The house is cooled by three geothermal wells in the yard that go about 500 feet down. Dave likes the look of a shake roof, but he didn't want virgin cedar shakes for his. So he bought roofing material from a Louisiana company that makes shakes from cellulose fiber scraps created during the manufacture of disposable diapers. "It is more expensive to make this kind of investment, but there is a real value in the process," Dave said.



Thick-skinned

Structural insulated panels in the walls are 4-inch-thick and in the ceiling are 6-inches thick, which keeps the house cool in summer and warm in winter. The house has ducts for air conditioning, but Dave doesn't believe he needs it. At 4,328-foot elevation, he can just open the doors. The walls aren't drywall; they're plaster, which "adds a dimension and depth that complement the wood," Dave said. "Besides that, my wife wanted to do it, which is more important."

Additional Facts

Nuts and bolts:

The home: A 5,860-square-foot, four-suite timber frame house in Balsam Mountain Preserve. Solar panels on the garage heat the house and provide hot water. A geothermal system cools the house.

The team:

The homeowners: Jean and Dave Walters. He is managing partner of D&J Properties of Atlanta and Sylva, a green consulting company specializing in the development and management of residential and commercial properties.



Defining aspect: This house is so green, you could put it on a cone and eat it for dessert. Full of glowing, oiled wood, the house is as luscious as it is luminescent.

Architect: New Energy Works, Farmington, N.Y.

Timber framers: New Energy Works, Farmington, N.Y.

Construction management: Clark & Leatherwood, Inc., Waynesville

Landscape architect: Broadbooks Associates, P.A., Asheville