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Back Out West

A FUN-LOVING COUPLE CHOOSES A SPRAWLING MONTANA RANCH OVER A RETIREMENT COMMUNITY, AND RESTORES A STRETCH OF THE YELLOWSTONE RIVER TO ITS NATURAL SPLendor.

BY DEBORAH DONOHUE

IMAGES BY HEIDI A. LONG





“Happy up!” is a phrase that could’ve come straight from the mouth of Clark Griswold, AKA “Sparky,” the character played by Chevy Chase in the now classic *Vacation* movies of the 1980s. Instead, it’s a slogan of the beloved patriarch of the Legacy Ranch, whose off duty, goofball sense of humor and penchant for shenanigans earned him the nickname “Sparky.” One of the smaller homes on the Legacy Ranch is fondly called, “Clark’s Cabin.”

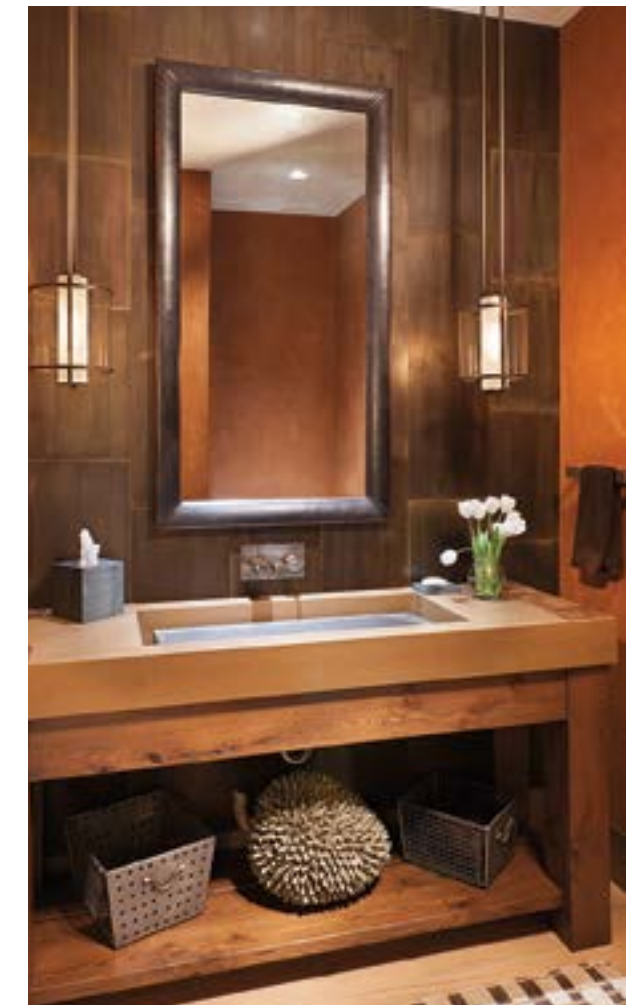
The Legacy Ranch adventure began when Sparky and the matriarch of his lively clan decided to “get back out west” where his grandfather had once settled. The couple began a search that took them through the wilds of New Mexico, Colorado, Oregon and Montana. After four years they discovered their dream spot in Montana, along the Yellowstone River in the aptly named Paradise Valley. When their kids discovered they were planning to spend six months of the year on their newly acquired ranch of nearly 1,000 acres rather than some docile retirement community in a more populated area, they thought Clark and their mother had “gone ‘round the bend.” It took a trip

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ENTRY HALL DARIO CONSOLE WITH HAND-PLANED DISTRESSED TOP AND HAND-FORGED HAMMERED IRON BASES IS BY GREGORIOUS/PINEO. CUSTOM BENCH WITH HEWN ARMS, GARRETT JASCINSKI. FABRIC, BRUNSCHWIG & FILS. TABLE LAMP, MONTAUK, BROAD BEACH DESIGN. ATMOSPHERIC PAINTING ABOVE BENCH IS BY RUSSELL CHATHAM AND WAS SELECTED BY THE HOMEOWNERS.



A SOFT SECTIONAL SOFA AND KILIM-COVERED CLUB CHAIR BY A. RUDIN NICELY BALANCE THE DRAMATIC LIMESTONE TOPPED COFFEE TABLE, CUSTOM MADE BY GARRETT JASCINSKI.



THIS PAGE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

THE BAR'S ANCIENT FOSSIL STONE, MINED FROM THE GREEN RIVER FORMATION IN KEMMERER, WYOMING, EVOKES A TIMELESS AUTHENTICITY.

A SERENE POWDER ROOM SPORTS A VANITY OF STAINED FIR, SCRAPED TO CREATE A HEAVY TEXTURE. THE PATINA OF BRANDNER DESIGNS' BURNISHED METAL TILES, THE DEEP APRICOT WALL, AND PENDANT LAMPS CREATE A LUSTROUS GLOW.

GATES AT THE WINE CELLAR ENTRANCE CAST DECORATIVE SHADOWS.



The homeowners' request was for "a farmhouse with a modern twist. Clean and uncluttered, but cozy."



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out west and a first-hand look at the land itself to realize the possibilities for fun (think trout fishing and swimmin' holes), and the opportunity to design a family compound that today sleeps 40 in its various structures. Among them are a bunkhouse and a recreation barn complete with basketball court—plenty of room for nine grandchildren and counting.

When the couple first acquired the property it was in need of some serious TLC. Pasture land extended right down to the Yellowstone, encroaching upon the river itself. Cattle and horse grazing had significantly eroded the banks. Along with restoring the river bordering their property, the couple wanted to establish a wildlife sanctuary for deer, elk, bobcat, skunk, fox, grouse and magpie, as well as a wetland area for both local waterfowl and migrating birds. Six ponds and numerous interconnected streams were created. Cottonwoods, willows, aspens and evergreens were planted. Bee colonies were established. The venture

has developed into an educational opportunity as well as an environmentally friendly blueprint for responsible husbandry of the land. Students from Montana State University participate in an ongoing study, observing and documenting the wetland restoration project that has been put in place. All but thirty acres of the ranch (where the various dwellings are located) have been designated a conservation area in perpetuity—that cannot be commercially developed—overseen by the Gallatin Land Trust in Bozeman, Montana.

The house that Sparky built is equally impressive. A multitude of expansive windows afford panoramic vistas of the Absarokee Mountains and the Gallatin Range. According to Interior Designer, Elizabeth Schultz, the homeowners "definitely wanted the spectacular views to serve as the 'window treatments.' Nothing was permitted to 'obstruct the views or take away from the style and elegant simplicity of the windows themselves.'" The

THIS PAGE: THE MASTER BEDROOM IS AN OASIS OF TRANQUILITY. CHOCOLATE STRIPED DUVET COVER, PINDLER. KING COVERLET, KRAVAT, BARBARA BARRY FABRIC. EURO PILLOWS, KRAVAT, BARCLAY BUTERA FABRIC. GUILLESS WALNUT BENCH, BERMAN ROSETTI. CLUB CHAIRS AND OTTOMAN, A. RUDIN.

OPPOSITE: DAVID ALEXANDER PENDANT LIGHTING (SOURCED THROUGH PHILLIPS & CO.) AND CABINET HARDWARE BY SUN VALLEY BRONZE ENHANCE THE CONTEMPORARY FEEL OF THE KITCHEN. DUSTY MINT SMOKER BARSTOOLS BY HOLLY HUNT AND A METALLIC GLAZED BACKSPLASH ADD SOPHISTICATION AND A SUBTLE SHIMMER.



THIS PAGE CLOCKWISE FROM TOP:

THE WELCOMING TOTEM POLE IS EMBLEMATIC OF THE CURRENT CLAN'S RESPECT FOR THE LAND, AND ITS EARLIER NATIVE AMERICAN HISTORY.

A PORTION OF THE DINING ROOM (THAT ACTUALLY SEATS 24) HAS THE FEEL OF A SCREENED IN PORCH, ENCOMPASSED BY THE SURROUNDING TERRAIN. VASSARO CHANDELIER, GREGORIOUS/PINEO. TABLE AND CHAIRS, HOLLY HUNT.

LOCAL RESIDENTS WANDER THE PROPERTY. ANTLERS, NATURE'S VELVET.



MONTANA'S FAMOUS BLUE SKIES ARE REFLECTED IN THE POND NEAREST THE MAIN RESIDENCE.

homeowners' request to architect Janet Jarvis was for "a farmhouse, but not too rustic...one with a modern twist that was clean and uncluttered, but still cozy." Utilizing a variety of reclaimed timber, beams and barn wood, native fieldstone and other sensual elements such as hand-trowelled plaster walls, Jarvis delivered, and the couple got their wish.

Jarvis brought in specific craftsmen to add various artistic touches to the project. The iron gates at the wine room entrance are by Bill Moore of Bar Mill Iron Forge. David Fjeld of Big Sky Stained Glass did the glasswork within them. Artist Chester Armstrong was enlisted to carve the whimsical foxes at the bottom of the hallway stairs. Shawn Green of Mountain High Woodworks crafted custom made doors and cabinets. On an environmental level,

Mike Foran of Energy 1 LL designed a geothermal heat system that is both green and energy efficient. Linda Iverson was the landscape architect, whose skilled eye has ensured that trees strategically planted near the house enable it to blend seamlessly into its surroundings without compromising what the eye can behold.

Perhaps one of the most dramatic elements of the ranch is the eye-catching and vibrant totem pole. Crafted by an artist in Vancouver, British Columbia, it was two years in the making. The totem was placed on the property during a sacred and authentic ceremony performed by Native Americans, who gifted the family with a personal dedication and celebratory Native American dancing. Getting back out west, indeed.

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