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A Lake House

Built by

Heart

In Poland Springs, Ron Kaufman creates a lake house that's all about family

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BUILDER
John Langelier

INTERIOR DESIGNER
Hurlbutt Designs

CABINETS & BUILT-INS
Derek Preble Fine Cabinetry

TILE
Distinctive Tile

FIREPLACE MASONRY
Deshon's Masonry

In the cozy living room of Kaufman's new lake house, favorite features have been thoughtfully reproduced. The fieldstone fireplace by Deshon's Masonry is an artful redesign of the "friendship fireplace" the family loves in the original house. Likewise, a round light fixture by Visual Comfort echoes the shape of a wagon wheel chandelier in the previous living room. The rattan wing chairs are by Palecek. The sofa is from MGBW, and the floor lamps are from Currey & Co.



The couple who built the house in 1920 were world travelers. When they married, they asked their friends from all over the world to send rocks to build the hearth. They called it a “friendship fireplace,” and this design, down to the stones of various colors and sizes, has been artfully reproduced.”

left A picture of the original lake house provides a glimpse of the unique “friendship fireplace” built with stones from all over the world. In the new lake house, Kaufman wanted to reproduce as many beloved details as possible, allowing for stylistic updates to keep things familiar but fresh.

He wasn't seeking pizzazz or polish, rather something cozy and timeless. The palette of the house, light blues and earth tones, is "the softer colors of Maine," Kaufman says. "This is lake, not ocean; it's got a different feeling to it, more L.L. Bean than nautical."



above In the master bedroom, an antique-style iron bedstead from Four Hands blends nicely with the vintage feel of the home, as does the bedding from Pine Cone Hill. The walls here and throughout were stained cherry by E.D. Bessey to match the interior of the first house. Kaufman found the portrait of the woman in Kennebunkport.

Although from away, Ron Kaufman has spent many a summer in Poland Springs, in a historic 1920s camp on the lip of Tripp Lake, that he and his former wife bought and enjoyed with their two daughters.

"It's a lovely home, beautifully done, but it's a camp," says Kaufman. "You have to buckle it up and close it down and put sheets on the furniture. I always say the saddest part of every year is when we have to close it up and the happiest day is opening it up again."

Kaufman, a Republican committeeman for Massachusetts and former White House political director under George H.W. Bush, is a senior adviser for multinational law firm Dentons and was recently appointed treasurer of the national Republican Party. While his work keeps him volleying

between Boston and D.C., he professes that his favorite part of the year is spent lakeside in the woods of Maine. "It's the place that gives me the most joy and feeling of comfort," he says.

In 2017, Kaufman decided to build a four-season home on Tripp Lake that would capture the spirit of the original camp. The endeavor was a success. The homes, just yards away from each other, share so many similarities that it is hard to believe they were built nearly 100 years apart. This was Kaufman's intention. In creating a companion cottage, he hoped to evoke the familiarity and ease of the original.

Kaufman built the 950-square-foot Shaker-inspired house for his now-grown daughters and their families, and with a spe-

cial aim in mind—to accommodate the wheelchair of his son-in-law, Will Coffman, who is paraplegic.

"Forty-one, as we call President Bush, was the father of what's called the ADA, Americans with Disabilities Act," Kaufman explains. "The ADA changed America in such a great way. My son-in-law became close to President Bush because of it. It's very important to me that when he comes up to Maine that everything in the house is made to help him get around easily."

It was the first such project for interior designer Louise Hurlbutt of Hurlbutt Designs in Kennebunkport, who was inspired by the way things turned out. "It was a great experience to be able to do," she says.

In the kitchen, cabinets and granite countertops were installed 34 inches high, two inches shorter than standard height, and the custom slate sink features a slanted panel to make it wheelchair accessible.

"I wanted him to do the dishes," Kaufman jokes.

Doorways are wider, and the shower can be rolled into directly, all features, Kaufman notes, that are "friendly for everyone."

The one-bedroom, two-and-a-half-bath house features a sleep loft with bunks put in especially for his grandsons, who are 10 and 8. Likewise, the finished basement has a shuffleboard and pinball machine, while outdoors, a tennis court, hot tub, trampoline, and a variety of water-worthy vessels, including a sailboat, paddleboards, and canoes, provide plenty of ways to experience the water.

Kaufman's former wife and siblings have homes surrounding the lake, so the summertime is full of family. "It's about the cousins now," says Kaufman. "They're all best friends." In the last decade, there have been nine lakeside weddings, Kaufman counts, including those of daughters Kathryn and Carlin. "Unfortunately, they both married Democrats!" he laughs.

Kaufman, who calls himself sentimental, wanted the second cottage to replicate many beloved features of the first, most notably, the unique fieldstone fireplace.

Hurlbutt worked with Kaufman to match other favorite details, such as the round light fixture in the living room, which is a contemporary take on the previous home's wagon wheel chandelier. Likewise, the V-groove pine paneling was stained a warm cherry to emulate the interior of the first cottage. The kitchen's pendant lights were chosen because they remind Kaufman fondly of the lamps in his elementary school in Quincy, Massachusetts.

In a whimsical nod to Kaufman's political career, Hurlbutt chose stars and stripes to decorate the sleep loft. The bedding and carpet recall the colors of the flag, while the bunk bed drawers even feature rotating red, white, and blue lights on the interior, Kaufman reveals. "The kids love it."

Between the bunk beds is a built-in bookshelf and reading nook—a spot that Kaufman and his grandsons, all avid readers, make good use of.

"I didn't want it to be a designer house," Kaufman says, a fact that probably made Hurlbutt's job "harder to do," he admits with a laugh. He wasn't seeking pizzazz or polish, rather something cozy and timeless. The palette of the house, light blues and earth tones, is "the softer colors of Maine," Kaufman says. "This is lake, not ocean; it's got a different feeling to it, more L.L. Bean than nautical."

With a prestigious career that spans from Capitol Hill to Beacon Hill, Kaufman seems to treasure most the moments when he can get away from it all, to the woods and the lake and his family. In this place surrounded by loved ones and steeped in memories, he's built a haven with room to make plenty more.

"I tell people," says Kaufman, "when they ask me where I live: 'Well, I have a home in Boston, I have a house in D.C., but my heart is on a small lake in Poland Springs, Maine.'" ■

The loft space features built-in bunk beds by Derek Preble Fine Cabinetry and is bedecked in stars and stripes. Not only is the decor a playful nod to Kaufman's political career, but it is also a rendition of a favorite "red, white, and blue" bedroom of the original house.



In the kitchen, the counters and sink are brass blue leathered granite, by Dustin Boucher of Maine Marble & Granite. The cabinetry, including the custom panel below the sink, allowing access for all, is by Derek Preble. The pendant lamps, by Visual Comfort, remind Kaufman of ones that hung in his elementary school. The flooring and V-groove paneling on the walls and ceiling are by E.D. Bessey Lumber Company.



above The bathroom features a custom tile shower from Distinctive Tile & Stoneworks, designed by Sarah Welch of Hurlbutt Designs.



left An outdoor shot of the lake house provides a look at its Hardiplank exterior and fieldstone pillars and foundation. The glassed-in porch ensures that the tranquil lake view can be enjoyed in all weather.



Remember the Wrigley's Doublemint Gum commercial jingle, "Double your pleasure, double your fun"? It came to mind as I wrote this piece, since, in building a companion cottage to his historic camp, Ron Kaufman has done just that. Although they are "sisters, not twins," to borrow another expression, the houses share many similarities and beloved details. In creating a cozy, year-round cottage for his whole family to enjoy, Ron has indeed doubled the fun and pleasure for everyone—perhaps himself, most of all.

Allison Paige is a writer based in Maine. She writes fiction and poetry and resides in Portland's East End with her husband, son, and rescue dog, Barnabus.