



THE DREAM:
A SKIERS' HAVEN

HIGH IN MONTANA'S YELLOWSTONE CLUB, A SKI GETAWAY FOR FAMILY AND FRIENDS PUTS A MODERN SPIN ON 19TH-CENTURY INDUSTRIAL STYLE

STORY BY **NORMAN KOLPAS** PHOTOGRAPHY BY **GIBEON PHOTOGRAPHY**

Viewed from the west, the home's great room extends outdoors through lift-and-slide window-doors. The covered deck is made habitable year-round by an outdoor fireplace and sandstone floor with radiant snowmelt system. Along the deck's northern side are an asymmetrical hot tub and a built-in barbecue center.



Massive Douglas fir timbers support the great room's 27-foot-high gabled roof. The stone fireplace features a stepped hearth that curves along the room's north side to become informal seating. **FACING PAGE, LEFT:** A southern vantage point showcases the home's three separate gabled guest suites, each of which sleeps four. A ski locker room and ski-tuning room are also located in the guest wing. **FACING PAGE, RIGHT:** The massive 8-by-5-foot entry door, made of steel and vertical-grain fir, pivots open on a steel rod.

BARRY GEHL OF KRANNITZ GEHL ARCHITECTS AND ROBERT McRAE OF HIGHLINE PARTNERS EXPLAIN THE EVOLUTION OF A RETREAT FOR SERIOUS SKIERS.

MOUNTAIN LIVING: WHAT WAS YOUR CLIENTS' DREAM FOR THIS HOUSE?

BARRY GEHL: Our clients and their children are all avid skiers, and that goes for all of their friends, too. They wanted to be able to use the house for family getaways and corporate retreats, so it needed to sleep as many as 30 people. At the same time, they wanted it to feel comfortable when just the two of them were there.

ML: HOW DID YOU RECONCILE THE NEED FOR BOTH SPACIOUSNESS AND INTIMACY?

BG: The solution was to break down the house into distinctive wings, structures and levels. The owners have a master suite that feels like their own cabin; it's a separate structure connected to the great room by a heated, glassed-in bridge.

ROBERT McRAE: It feels like their own little world. And on the opposite side of the house, three gabled guest suites also feel like separate little buildings. When the owners are there alone, they can lock off the guest wing.

ML: THE HOUSE LOOKS FAIRLY MODERN FOR THE YELLOWSTONE CLUB, WHICH IS KNOWN FOR MORE TRADITIONAL HOMES. HOW DID YOU ARRIVE AT THIS STYLE—AND GET IT APPROVED?

BG: We achieved this look by harking back to Montana's industrial past. We researched local 19th-century mining structures, shaft towers, ore-processing buildings and so on, and made sure to include sepia-tone vignettes of those buildings in our presentations for the design review.

ML: ONE OF THE HOME'S MOST SPECTACULAR FEATURES IS ITS FOUR-STORY GLASS-WALLED STAIRCASE, COMPLETE WITH A ROCK-CLIMBING WALL. TELL US ITS STORY.

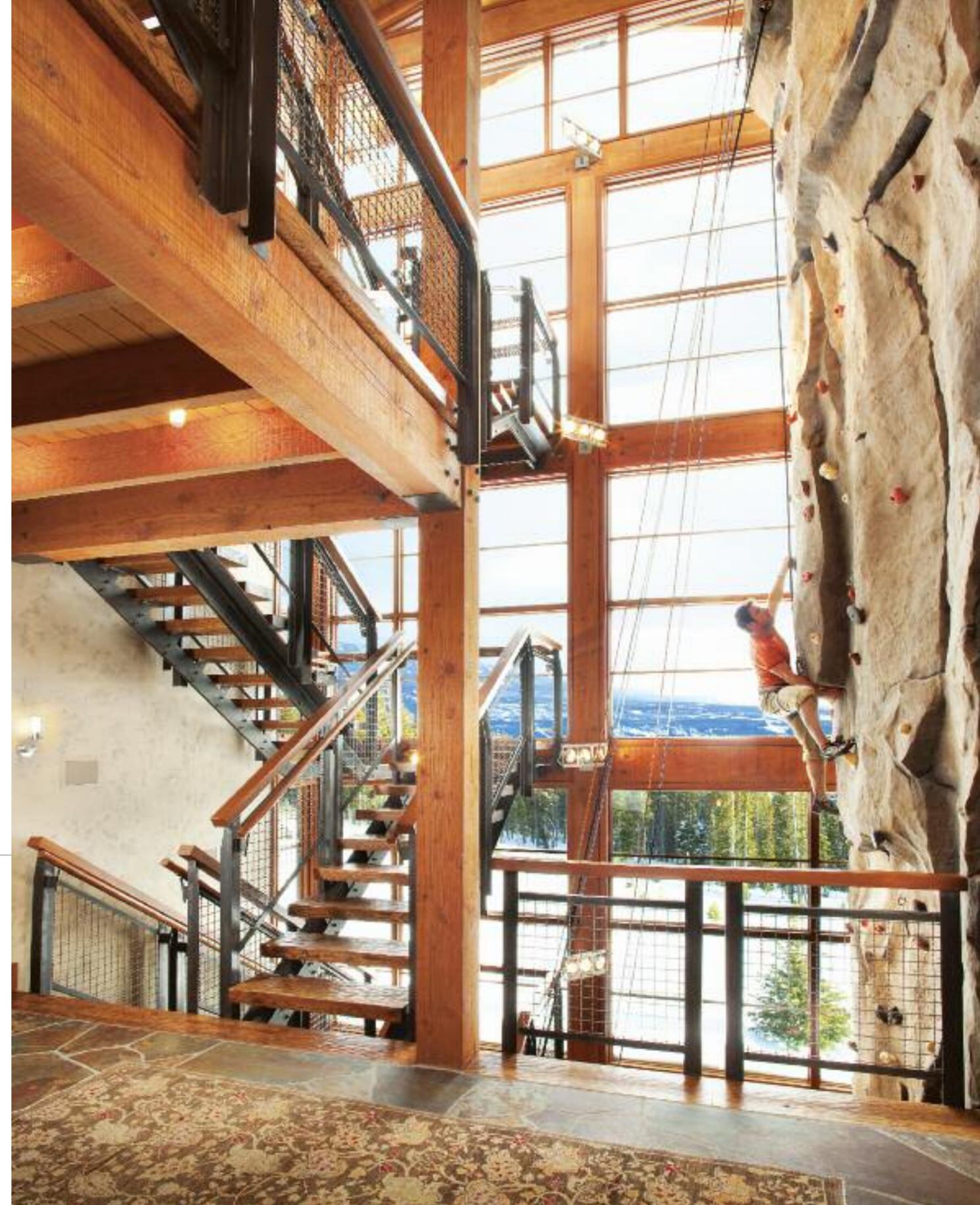
BG: That tower was originally going to be L-shaped, with windows on three sides. But one day, the client said to me, "How about squaring it off to a rectangle, which would give me space for a climbing wall?"

RM: We brought in a company from Bend, Oregon, called Entre Prises that specializes in building climbing walls. They worked with us through a series of drawings and >>



ARCHITECTURE BY **KRANNITZ GEHL ARCHITECTS** CONSTRUCTION BY **HIGHLINE PARTNERS**

BELOW, LEFT: Adjoining the great room, the kitchen combines up-to-date cooking amenities with a 19th-century industrial aesthetic, including welded-steel panels that frame the cabinetry, crafted out of natural fir and red-lacquered clear alder. Along the bar counter to the right of the built-in microwave is a sand-cast bronze trough through which water continually flows. BELOW, RIGHT: Set in its own south-facing bay, the dining area features a table custom made from a 15-foot-long slab of walnut. FACING PAGE: The climbing wall, with two side-by-side belaying stations, rises 38 feet along one wall of the four-story staircase tower.



Sustainability For these homeowners, integrating unseen design elements that help their home conserve resources and cut heating and air-conditioning costs proved just as important as recreational amenities and views.

Passive solar design During the design stage, architect Barry Gehl and his team carefully considered the home's solar orientation and roof forms. "We generated studies to make sure very little direct sunlight entered the house in the summertime, keeping it cooler, and that the sunlight went deeply into the house in winter," he says.

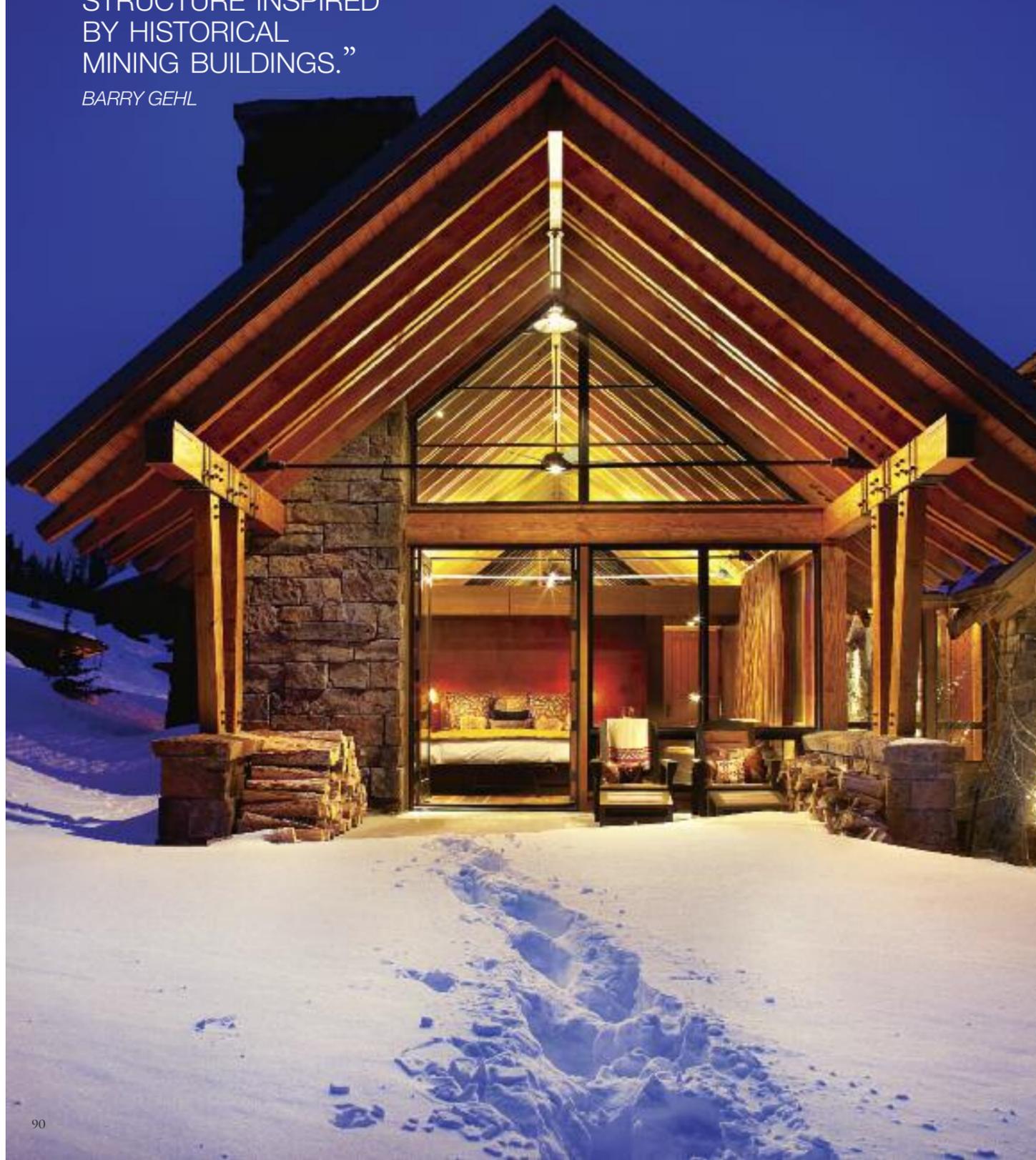
Ground-source heating Despite these efforts, in the first few years after construction the large-scale house "was burning through propane" to keep up with heating demands," Gehl says. That led the owners, architect and contractors to decide to add a large-scale geothermal system. They installed it in two mechanical rooms at the back of the house, drilling 15 wells, each 6 inches wide and 250 feet deep, through which

fluid is circulated to extract heat from the ground—which, below a depth of 6 feet, remains fairly constant in temperature year round. That extracted heat is used to warm the house.

The results were instantaneous and dramatic. Propane usage dropped by approximately 75 percent, and the system paid for itself in about four-and-a-half years.

“WE PUSHED THE BOUNDARIES ON TRADITIONAL WESTERN STYLE WITH AN UNADORNED STRUCTURE INSPIRED BY HISTORICAL MINING BUILDINGS.”

BARRY GEHL



Countertops and paneling of wenge wood combine with translucent basins and iridescent-glass mosaic wall tiles to give the master bath a sleek yet rustic look. Beyond the sliding door, which is made of willow branches embedded in epoxy resin, a glassed-in bridge connects the master suite to the great room. FACING PAGE: The gabled master suite beholds west-facing views through a wall of glass beside its corner stone fireplace. A window at the peak of the matching gable welcomes morning sunlight.

built the wall—in one piece that was 38 feet long and 25 feet wide—from fiberglass resin. Then they cut it into sections and shipped them all to Montana, where we bolted them into the wall in steel channels that are welded into place. An artist came in after studying the rock formations in nearby Gallatin Canyon, and he grouted all the seams and painted the wall to look like local geological formations.

ML: THE HOME'S EXPANSIVE WALLS OF GLASS ALSO MAKE A BIG STATEMENT. WERE THOSE ON THE OWNERS' WISH LIST TOO?
BG: Early on in the design process, the client showed me the views he wanted to capture: Pioneer Mountain to the west, the Sphinx and Eglise Mountain to the southwest, and the Spanish Peaks to the east. So, being a sailor, I brought my hand-held bearing compass to the site and actually took bearings in order to align the house with those views.

RM: The goal, especially with the big lift-and-slide window-doors next to the fireplace in the great room, was to create a seamless interface between the indoors and outdoors.

ML: SOUNDS LIKE YOU'VE REALLY BROUGHT YOUR CLIENTS' DREAMS TO LIFE IN THIS HOME.

BG: They love it. They love bringing their friends here, and their friends love it too. I don't care how great a house is architecturally; it's only good architecture if it's working for the owners. ○

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