



SHELTER

## Barn Chic

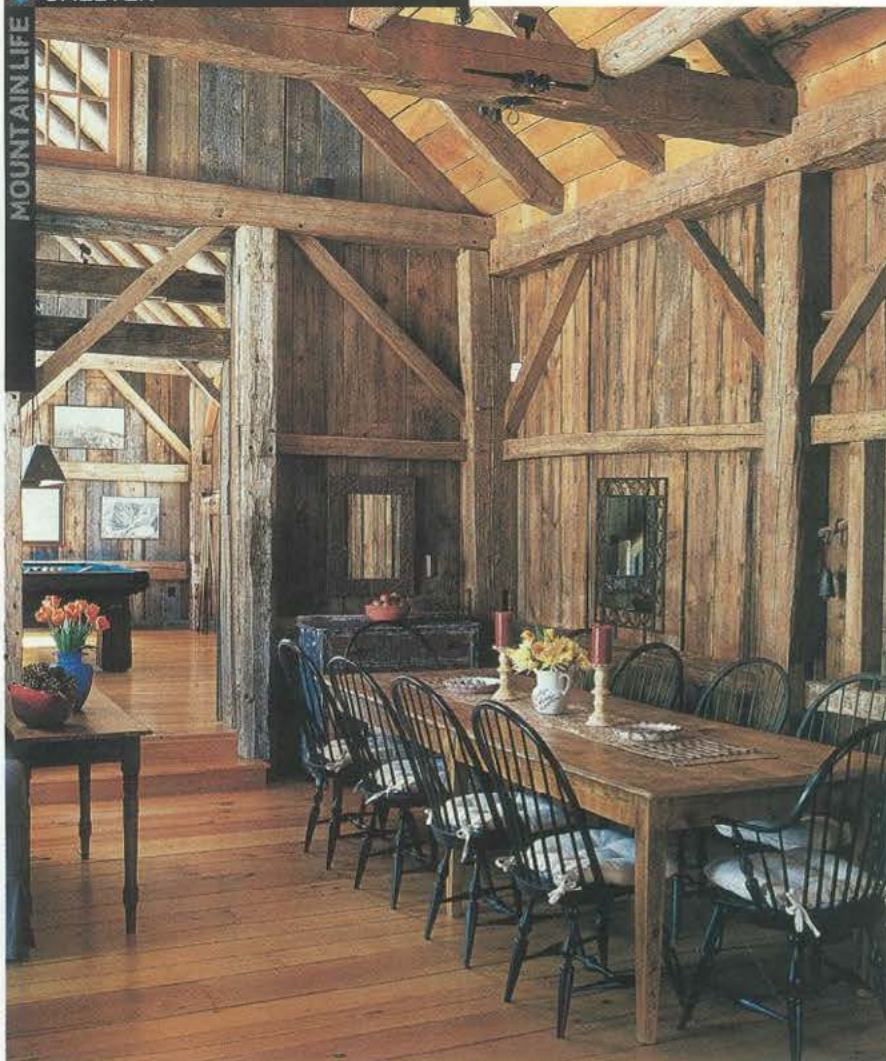
Want to transform the ultimate bachelor ski pad into the perfect family ski house? All you need is a few old barns, a grand vision and a creative architect.

❖ By Mindy Pantiel

**T'S EARLY MONDAY MORNING, AND AS HE PREPARES TO LEAVE**

the house, Barry Lyden turns to his 2-year-old daughter, Shea, and asks, "What's Daddy going to do today?" Without hesitation, the toddler replies with delight, "Ski! Ski! Ski!" Unlike many daddies who, on a typical weekday morning, throw back one last jolt of java, straighten their ties and brace for the dawn commute, Lyden pulls on his gloves, grabs his poles and heads out the door to cut some fresh tracks on nearby Mt. Mansfield. A private investor who resides in Stowe, Vt., with his wife and two children, Lyden will be back home—tired but happy—in time for lunch. For at least one dad, this is a typical weekday morning.

**Milford Cushman is a design professional with over 30 years of practice committed to creative and thoughtful design solutions. He is not a registered architect as inferred in this article.**



**BARN BEAUTIFUL** Clockwise, from top: The Lydens love to entertain—so a sizable section of the open living/dining room floor plan was carved out to accommodate sit-down seating for 10. Adjacent is a sumptuous seating arrangement (not shown) gathered around a wood-burning stove that heats the cavernous space. Kelly and Barry prepare lunch on the butcher-block topped island in the renovated kitchen, which mixes authentic touches like light fixtures fashioned from antique dairy creamers with state-of-the-art conveniences like a commercial stove. The stucco and tile fireplace is the focal point of the round master bedroom located at the top of the recent silo addition. The sunny butterscotch walls and white trim are an intentional departure from the dominant wood theme.

Until six years ago, Lyden, now 43, lived his life by the bell—the one that clangs twice a day on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange. When it rang at the close of trading on Friday, Lyden, then single, would catch a train to Stratford, Conn., where he'd jump in his car and drive four hours north to a Stowe condo that he shared with friends. In 1998, he upgraded the routine, exchanging his drive for a commuter flight into Burlington and his condo life for a refurbished \$295,000, 1860s barn on six wooded acres.

As a successful trader with a seat on the exchange, Lyden put in long work weeks, but he also made time to unwind. He found the rustic lifestyle appealing: weekends in the Vermont countryside amid giant hand-hewn beams carved from single slabs of spruce and hemlock. But his bachelor barn was hardly perfect. The 30-by-40-foot building—relocated a few miles to its current site in the 1970s—had a badly chopped-up floor plan, and its rooms were dark and cramped. “The kitchen was too small, there wasn't much light and, even though I loved to have lots of friends over, there wasn't a real place for me to get away from it all,” Lyden says.

So Lyden hired Milford Cushman, a well-known Stowe architect with a penchant for barns, to solve those problems. “It's the straightforward, practical, unpretentious design of barns that appeals to so many people,” Cushman says about the attraction of farm living. “There's also a sense of loftiness and celebration of vertical space that makes them good living areas.”

Cushman made Lyden's barn more livable by combining a bedroom, bathroom and kitchen to open up one large common room that melds farmhouse charm with modern conveniences. “I love that there are these state-of-the-art appliances thrown into a 145-year-old backdrop,” says the owner, who opted for a griddle and six-burner range, painted wooden cabinets, a copper sink and lighting fixtures crafted from antique dairy creamers.

Deciding that the noisy, open loft master bedroom wasn't worth the effort and cost to fix, the architect designed a lower-level master-suite addition where

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**Location** Stowe, Vt. **Closest Skiing** Stowe Mountain Resort, 20 minutes away **Square Footage** 7,000 **Lot Size** 6 acres **Architect** Milford Cushman **Original Purchase Price** \$295,000 **First Renovation Cost** \$300,000 **Second Renovation Cost** \$300,000 **Effective Reuse** Despite its folksy Americana appeal,

the insulation value of old barn wood is about zero. The architect's solution: Use the recycled barn wood on the interior walls to add quirkiness, warmth and historic charm to the living spaces, and sheathe the home's exterior in new wood to keep out the cold and create a more unified, planned look.

BLUEPRINT

Lyden could have privacy and quiet spaces. But the house still lacked the quintessential après-ski room, with the requisite roaring fire, pool table and wet bar. Solution: another barn.

"I found one of similar vintage that would make the perfect game room," explains Cushman, who disassembled the antique structure, numbering the pieces

## 'WE NEEDED TO CHANGE THE HOUSE FROM A WEEKEND SKI RETREAT INTO A FUNCTIONAL FAMILY HOUSE.'

for reassembly, then integrated it with Lyden's original barn. (The cost to buy, deconstruct, transport and reassemble an old barn isn't cheap, coming in at approximately \$135,000.)

"Similar to our approach with the first barn, we used the old weathered wood on the interior walls and covered the exterior with new, better-insulated wood siding," Cushman says.

The centerpiece of the recreation room is a soaring, double-sided fieldstone fireplace that took a mason three months to build. On the great-room side, where the older construction is less heat efficient, a wood stove is set into the stone wall. Light pine floors offset the darker barn-board walls in both rooms and, thanks to the addition of a circular window plus a large diamond-shaped one, the new game room is bathed in sunlight. "It's possible to have intimacy in a room with 21-foot ceilings when you have warm elements like stone and wood and lots of light," says Cushman, who transformed the original 1,200-square-foot barn into the ultimate 4,500-square-foot single-guy ski pad, at a cost of approximately \$300,000.

But no sooner had Lyden dialed in the weekend party scene when Kelly Shea showed up at one of his bashes. A lawyer with a Boston technology firm, Kelly had been vacationing in Stowe most of her life and shared Lyden's passion for skiing. After a short courtship, they married in

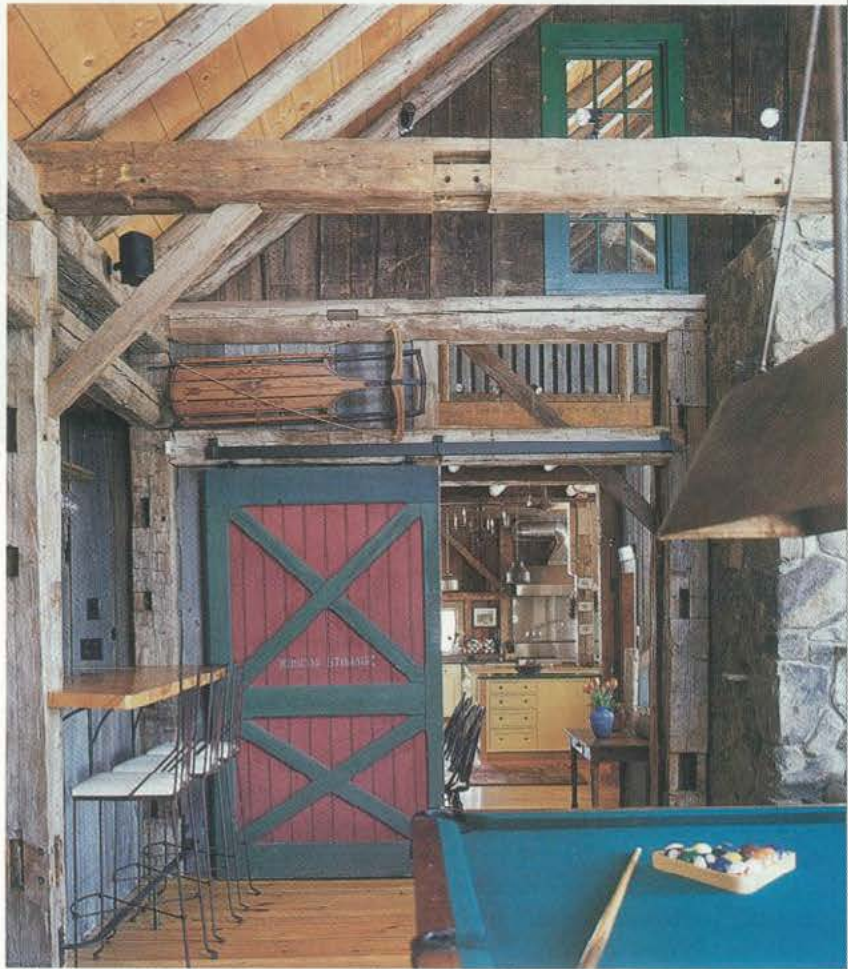
2001; Lyden sold his securities business and baby Shea was born the following year. The young couple soon found themselves at a critical if also enviable juncture. "We were in the unique position of being able to live anywhere we wanted to live and not have to work," says Lyden, who knew it would be difficult for his wife to step away from her successful law career and live in Stowe full-time. "Kelly agreed to try it for one year, and ultimately we decided a sane lifestyle was more important than hitting the pavement in the city everyday."

The only problem: Lyden's deluxe ski-bum barn made for a poor family home. "We needed to change the character of the house from a weekend ski retreat into a functional family farmhouse," he says. "It was a little like trying

to turn a Porsche into a minivan." The couple went back to Cushman for a design that would integrate two children—Daniel had since arrived—and allow Kelly to put some of her personality into her new home.

"She requested a space for herself that was close to the soul of the house, so whatever we added was going to have to be near the kitchen," notes the architect, who initially proposed a three-story turret addition. "But the form didn't appeal to Barry because it was too angular and didn't feel authentic to the site."

Taking another run at it, Cushman smoothed out the corners until the pointy turret transmuted into a circular silo-like structure. "For me it was the perfect answer," says Lyden, who gave the farm-evoking addition immediate approval.



**GAMES PEOPLE PLAY** After the first renovation, a second vintage Vermont barn was taken down, relocated, reassembled and attached to the existing house to make space for the mandatory après-ski room, complete with pool table, wet bar and soaring double-sided stone fireplace. Appropriately, a sliding barn door was added to separate the adult playroom—a throwback to Lyden's bachelor days—from the great room that houses the living room, dining room and kitchen beyond.

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## THE OWNERS CAN CHECK THE SNOW CONDITIONS ON MT. MANSFIELD FROM THEIR BEDROOM WINDOWS.

The three-level silo, sheathed in the same siding as the two barns, houses three circular rooms. Kelly says the main-floor office/library has become her sanctuary and includes personal touches such as window seats, which remind her of her childhood. "I also like that I can close the doors and be sealed off from the rest of the house," she says, referring to a pair of salvaged eight-foot-high antique Victorian doors.

On the upper level, the Lydens can check snow conditions on Mt. Mansfield from the windows in their bedroom, where the painted, curved butterscotch walls were an intentional departure from old barn wood. "I wanted some relief from all that wood, and I wanted our bedroom to have a lighter, Nantucket quality," Kelly explains.

Someday, Lyden, who played keyboards with a Boston band, hopes to use the round room on the lower level as a music room. But for now, the former weekend ski bum has happily turned it over to his progeny's trove of books and blocks. Down the hall, the bedroom suite where the former bachelor once headed for privacy now serves as a master guest suite, and the kids have rooms of their own over the new garage on the same level as their parents.

The homeowners are the first to concede that it would have been easier and less costly to build a new house (they estimate the most recent renovation cost approximately \$300,000), but they agree that the final product was worth the hassles. "We love the openness, the light and the fact that we can have so many people in the house and never feel crowded," says Kelly about their now 7,000-square-foot mountain home. "It perfectly marries the part of us that loves to entertain with the part that needs privacy." To which Lyden adds, "Besides, you can't create a 150-year-old building, and you can't buy charm." ♦

**SILO SANCTUARY** A circular library/office provides escape from the buzz of family life. The entrance to the space, located in the new silo, was designed around a pair of antique doors stripped of lead paint and left unfinished.