

Great Space

Cottage Life

Monique Goudreau and John Brown spend two decades designing and building a spectacular retreat filled with rich memories from Goudreau's overseas postings in Africa and Asia

BY MICHAEL PRENTICE

THEIR IDEA OF "THE COTTAGE" has been transformed since Monique Goudreau and John Brown bought a modest property for \$26,000 on a lake in West Quebec 25 years ago. Back then the cottage was a simple home away from home that they would escape to on weekends or for brief vacations. Today it is a jewel — filled with artifacts and memorabilia from Monique's career living overseas and working for non-profit organizations in Africa and Asia. In recent years after retiring as a master corporal in the military police, John accompanied Monique on her travels. She, too, is now retired. The original cottage, on Lac de l'Argile near Val-des-Bois, burned down more than 20 years ago. Since then the couple have gradually replaced it with a spectacular six-bedroom, four-season home designed by John. While the couple occasionally rent out the three-storey "cottage" for \$3,000 a week, it's now primarily their home — filled with rich memories of places such as Botswana, South Africa, Zimbabwe, and Sri Lanka and with a great room that boasts unbeatable views of the surrounding nature. The cottage is also a great example of what can be achieved by a couple with relatively modest means if they work hard enough and long enough — and have enough imagination.



1. The **view** out over the lake. There is not a neighbouring cottage in sight and the far shore is a wildlife reserve.

2. Many of the home's **windows** were bought at deep-discount prices from Sears. "There is also a lot of second-hand stuff" in

the construction, says John Brown. That includes old stained-glass windows (not shown) salvaged from a nearby chapel when it was demolished.

3. The **wading birds** were handmade in Zimbabwe from scrap metal.

4. A pair of life-sized **crocodiles** are less menacing when you know they're woven from coconut-tree bows. They were bought from a vendor in Sri Lanka.

5. "The colourful heated Indian **stone floor** is beautiful, yet you really don't

instinctively feel compelled to remove your shoes at the door," says Brown.

6. Western cedar makes the great room's **cathedral ceiling** a thing of beauty. Brown says it took him months to sand and finish the wood to perfection.

7. The main floor has a wood-burning **fireplace** at each end, as well as an old **wood-burning stove** in the middle (not shown) that the owners bought second-hand for \$125.

8. Rattan **furniture** seats up to 20 people. The cost? Just





\$3,000, including cushions. "We watched it being made in Sri Lanka," says Monique Goudreau.

9. The Sri Lankan rug is handmade from reeds.

10. Elaborate ornamental masks are ritually impor-

tant in African culture. Made of copper and wood, the large mask over the fireplace on the left-hand side is believed to be very old and is of Congolese origin. "We bought it in a bustling market in South Africa for \$200 or \$300," says Monique.

11. The mother and baby wooden giraffes were handmade in Botswana.

12. The wet bar in the great room is made to resemble a mud hut of the type used by tourists on an upscale safari. It has a thatched "roof" and lots of bamboo.

13. The zebra skin, which gives authenticity to the great room's African decor, is one of five animal skins displayed in the cottage. The owners are quick to explain that the animals were not shot as trophies, but came from a game farm. They bought them

from friends, who had stored the skins for 20 years.

14. The balcony overlooking the great room leads to three of the home's six bedrooms. (Two others are on the ground floor, while the sixth is off the great room.)