

## MANSION

## Coral Gables, Fla.



Alberto Romeu (2)



**NEWLYWEDS' PARADISE**  
The main residence got a fresh look at the start of a new marriage. The \$2.7 million renovation included a saltwater fish tank with living reef.

## Key Largo, Fla.



Kerry Whitaker (2)

## SHOES OPTIONAL

A \$125,000 remodeling is done in lime green, fuchsia, salmon pink and canary yellow around beach and ocean art.



## Black Mountain, N.C.



**LOGGED IN**  
Allen Morris built a log cabin in the mountains for a total of about \$5 million, making use of natural materials. The 11,000-square-foot home sleeps 22 and has big rooms to accommodate holiday parties and visitors.



## PORTFOLIO

## Return to Black Mountain

Fond memories of his family's vacation compound in North Carolina prompt a Miami real-estate executive to build an 11,000-square-foot dream cabin with a whimsical name; inside, rustic touches belie luxury amenities

BY SANETTE TANAKA

W. Allen Morris was in college when he first went to Black Mountain, N.C., in the 1970s. There, his parents bought a cottage in the woods and named it Out a Sight. As the family grew, they built three additional cottages: Out a Mind, Out a Bounds and Out a Town.

In 2009, Mr. Morris—by then the head of the family's commercial-real-estate company—finished work on an 11,000-square-foot, three-story luxury log cabin that cost about \$5 million to build and furnish. Its name: Out a Space.

It is one of three homes Mr. Morris, 61-years-old, owns. His primary residence—renovated in 2012 to welcome his new wife—is a Colonial-style home in Coral Gables, Fla. About an hour south is his seven-bedroom Key Largo retreat. The house has been done in lime green, fuchsia, salmon pink and canary yellow—"a real Bohemian island-style house," he says.

But it is the log cabin in Black Mountain, a town 16 miles east of Asheville, N.C., that takes Mr. Morris far from his regular routine. "Some people really like to go to North Carolina, and go to country clubs and cocktail parties," he says. "We come to get away from all of that. We want to wear bluejeans and flannel shirts, and hike."

The house conforms to the rustic flavor of the small town, but it is no run-of-the-mill log cabin. The house has surround-sound televisions, a hot tub, a sauna, an 800-bottle wine room, a game center and a Big Buck Hunter arcade game. "I had a little fun going overboard with it," he says.

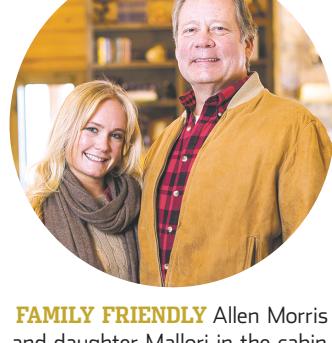
At age 28, Mr. Morris, a native of Miami, took the helm of the real-estate company his father founded in 1958. Now, Allen Morris Co. is one of the largest commercial real-estate firms in southeast U.S. and has developed 79 buildings in the area. His company is set to break ground this year on two new residential buildings: in St. Petersburg, Fla., and in the Brickell area of Miami.

His log cabin, set on just over 21 acres, is the only home he owns that he built from the ground up—the realization of a lifelong dream. "I researched

everything," he says. "I bought every magazine. I went to a log-cabin convention. I created design ideas."

He flew back and forth every few weekends to check on the construction and made changes along the way, like adding more windows to bring in more light.

The house is LEED-certified, a recognized standard by the U.S. Green Building Council, which is a challenge given that log cabins are notorious for leaking, as natural wood shrinks, says Rob Wrightman, president and CEO of True North Log Homes. The Brace-



**FAMILY FRIENDLY** Allen Morris and daughter Mallori in the cabin.

walls to create an open floor plan. The décor is more mature, with finishes that include adding mahogany wood and terrazzo floors to the existing black and white marble tiles. Renovations cost \$2.7 million.

He renovated the Key Largo home in 2009 for \$125,000. It has a wraparound deck on two floors, two hot tubs, a boat dock, private beach and a fire pit. "We wanted to have a place in the Keys where you'd be comfortable walking through barefoot," he says.

Interior designer Kerry Whitaker worked on all three homes. She kept Mr. Morris's work station consistent in every home (two screens, same setup), but styled the décor so each home reflected the local culture.

In his Black Mountain log cabin, Mr. Morris displays 14 lithograph prints of Norman Rockwell illustrations. He used natural materials as much as he could, like oak bark on the stairwell walls and a piece of birch for the fireplace mantle.

"You think—what would you have in a lodge? I tried to keep to that theme, but with a crisp look," says Ms. Whitaker, president of Lifestyle Design Inc., based in Key Largo, Fla.

The Coral Gables house has Florida art and photos taken by Mr. Morris. The Key Largo house is decorated around beach and ocean art.

Mr. Morris also likes to match parties to a home's ambience. For Christmas at the Coral Gables house, he hosted 85 people and hired four opera singers to sing carols. In Key Largo, he grills on the beach or goes boating. Black Mountain is where he likes to spend Thanksgiving and Fourth of July.

There, a life-size plush bear with a serving tray greets guests. The great room has mounted heads of deer and antelope. Downstairs, the heads of toy animals are mounted on the walls. "We don't take ourselves too seriously," Mr. Morris says.

Mr. Morris loans or rents his Key Largo and Black Mountain homes to church and professional groups for retreats. His own favorite retreat is the log home. "Everything changes on a daily basis in Miami. Things don't change much here," he says. "And that's what we love about it."

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