



# A DREAM COME TRUE

Building their family cottage meant logging a lot of hours

by **Fred Hiltz**, *Holland Landing, Ont.*

**B**ack in 1974, I purchased a small island on Nine Mile Lake near Parry Sound, Ont. The island had a small, one-bedroom cottage on it but, as my wife, Doreen, and I had three young children, I knew we'd need additional living space. I'd always dreamed of building a log cabin and now I had the opportunity to do so. I was teaching at Saint Andrew's College in Aurora, Ont., so, over the next several years, during our two-week March break every spring, I used that time to further my project.

I'd make the 120-mile drive north, leave my car with friends outside of town and walk six miles over the frozen lake to the cottage. I'd pull a toboggan behind me loaded with supplies, including food, some gas and a chainsaw.

I'd spend several days in the small cottage, getting up each morning and walking back across the lake to the mainland, where I'd wander through the forest searching for suitable trees to cut down.

With the township's permission, I cut about 25 to 30 pine trees each year, and de-limbed them. I'd re-

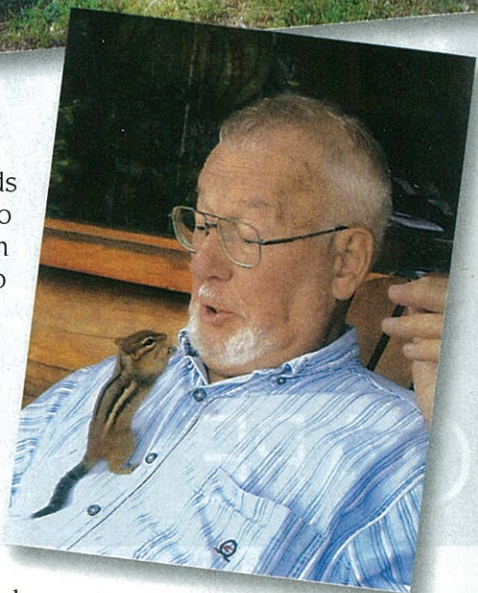
turn in May with several friends who helped me drag the trees to the lake, where we boomed them up and towed them by boat to the island.

After school ended each June, I'd return to the lake, drag the logs from the water, peel them and stack them to dry. To construct the walls, I'd cut and form each log to fit the irregularities of the one installed below it, then lay it in place.

I did all the construction work myself; I dug the supportive stone pillars in 1977, the roof went on in 1983 and the installation of floors, doors, windows, cupboards and bunks was completed by 1988. Along with everything else, we transported the furniture and propane fridge and stove—there is no electricity—in a small boat. It was a lot of work but well worth it in the end.

One of the benefits of the cottage to my children, and now my grandchildren, is the proximity to wildlife it affords. They've experienced loons, deer, owls, fish, whip-poorwills and chipmunks.

On one memorable occasion, one



of my grandsons had given a chipmunk a peanut. The cute, little critter decided that while there were no more being offered by the boy, he might get one from me, seated on the deck. He was determined, and climbed up my chest to make his appeal face-to-face. Lucky for him, I did have a couple left from my own snack. With one nut already in his mouth, he stuffed one more into each cheek and, face bulging, took off, only to return later for more.

Building our log cabin was a wonderful project of which I, and my family, are very proud and cottage life remains special to us all, regardless of age. ■