



Standing Up to the Storm of Storms

Hurricane Irma was no match for the Florida cypress log home in its path.

story and photography by **Joseph Hilliard**



Designed and built in 2006, Kelley and Alida Fore's log home has seen more than its share of severe weather roll through its central Florida site. But thanks to strong, resilient cypress wood and solid construction, it has stared every storm down and won.



LEFT: For her dream kitchen, Alida chose handcrafted cherry cabinetry and two sinks – one, a large black farmhouse style and the other, a copper prep sink. Uba Tuba granite tops the counters.

BELOW: Orchids grow on a deep shelf in the charming bay window. To emphasize the home's trimwork, the Fores chose a rich walnut stain to pop against the caramel-toned interior walls.



When Hurricane Irma started to zero in on Alida and Kelley Fore's 2,321-square-foot log home near Orlando last September, they weren't too concerned. They had been through this same scenario less than a year before, when Hurricane Matthew's high winds and driving rain ripped through their area. Their log home and outbuildings withstood the severe weather with no issues whatsoever.

With Matthew, the only damage to their property consisted of a few dead trees and limbs that fell during the highest winds. Nothing came near their home or any of their outbuildings. They didn't even bother to evacuate.

So, when Irma turned its fury toward land, they felt confident. However, when they realized that this massive Cat-4 storm was bearing

directly down on them, with the strongest part of the storm getting ready to hit them with a force far greater than Matthew, they decided to batten down the hatches and get out of its way.

Back in 2006, when Kelley and Alida were planning their three-bedroom, two-bath log home, they chose a company that specialized

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Yes, it can get chilly in Florida! And when it does, a fireplace faced with Tennessee fieldstone keeps the great room cozy. While the hearth is currently stoked with gas logs for convenience, it's fully equipped to burn wood.



The wide-open porch ensures the house harmonizes with its rural surroundings. Wooden rocking chairs provide a perfect perch to watch the neighbors' Black Angus cattle as they graze in a nearby pasture.

RIGHT: Kelley and Alida's house may have pulled through with minimal damage, but the trees that surround their home didn't fare so well. The couple spent weeks clearing downed limbs and debris from their property.

BOTTOM: Windows are the most defenseless part of any home during a storm, and the Fores' bay window was particularly vulnerable. They took care to board it up as the threat of Irma's force grew stronger.

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in logs milled from bald cypress, a native species that naturally resists insects, mold and rot and performs perfectly in Florida's hot, humid climate. They also insisted that the home be built to specifications that would enable it to withstand the severe weather that is common in Florida. They used double-pane windows and reinforced framing, as well as a thicker, low-gauge metal roof built to withstand high winds. They knew that these choices would pay off one day, and they have. According to Kelley, their house is "built sturdy as a rock."

The also couple knew the windows were the most vulnerable part of their home, so as they braced for Irma's wrath, they fastened tarps over the glass on the main part of the house and boarded up the bay window, since it jutted out from the house and was relatively unprotected. As the storm barreled closer, they decided it was time to head out of its path. They stayed at their son's house until everything blew over.

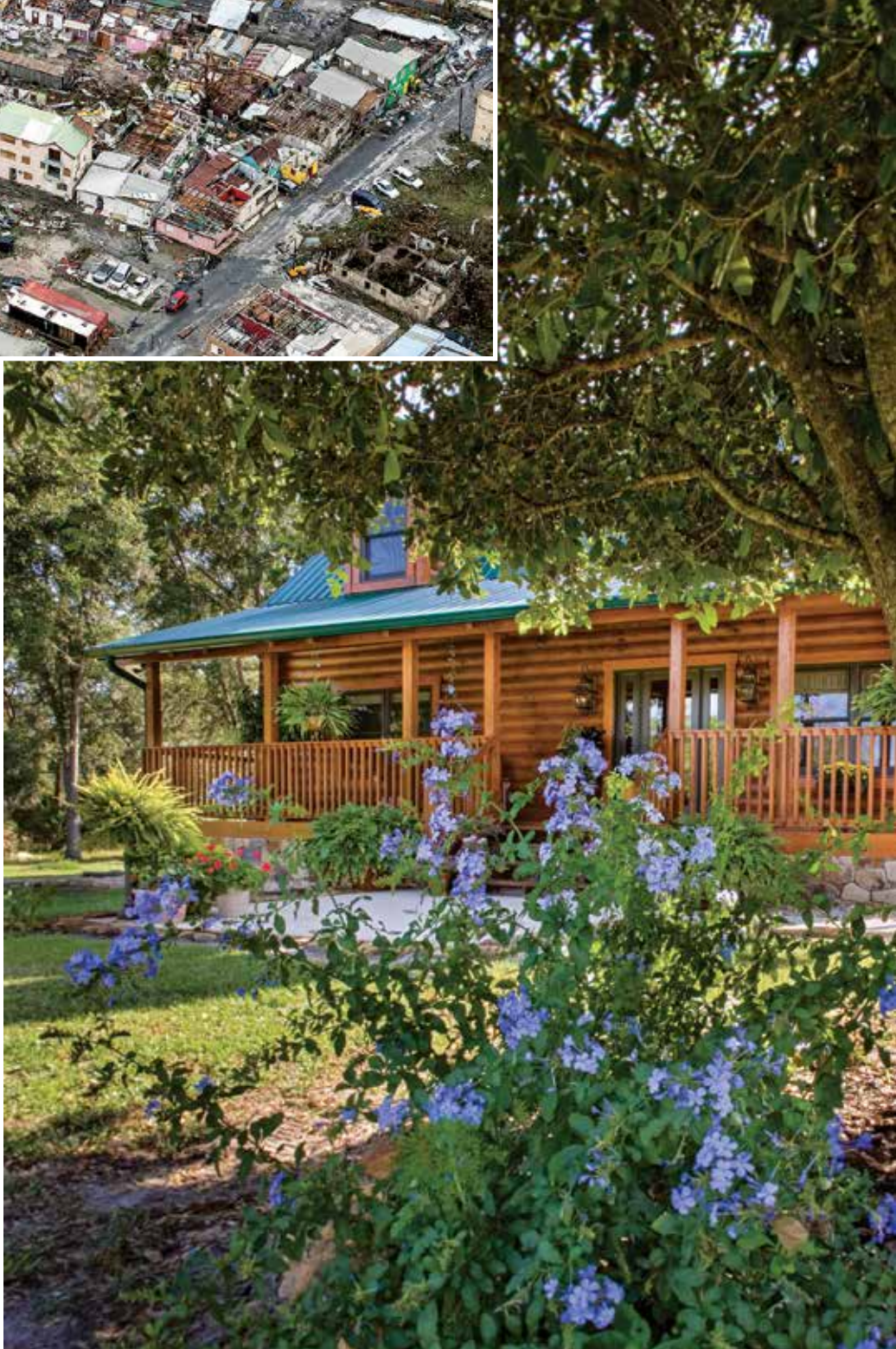
After two days, the worst was finally over, and with a little trepidation, Kelley and Alida returned home to see what, if any, destruction they might be facing. The property had no electricity, so they moved into the tiny log bunkhouse on the property that had a generator. There were trees and limbs down everywhere on the property, but the only damage to their home was a small water leak that had come from rain being driven horizontally into a seam between the roof and the walls.

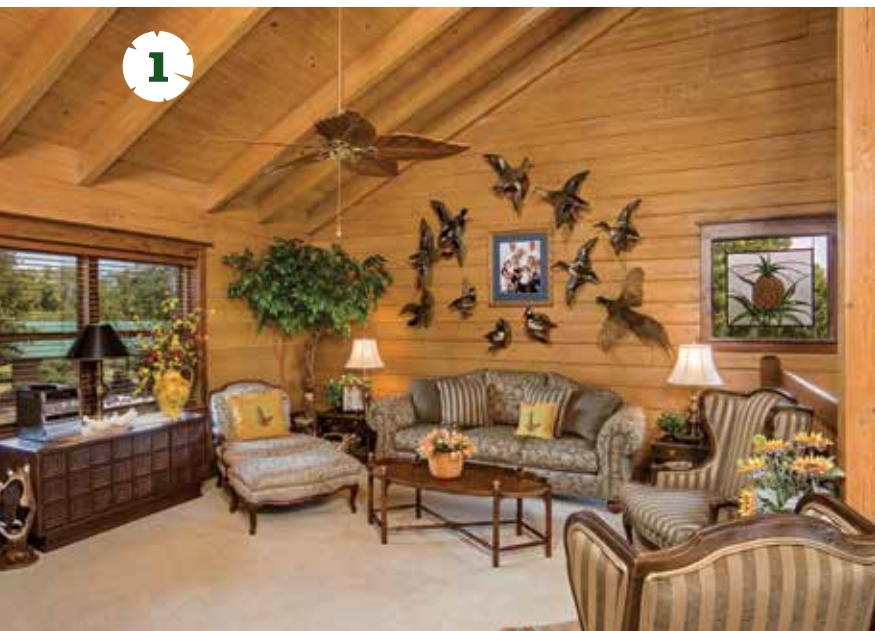
Six weeks after Irma receded and the sun shined on Florida once again, the Fores were



ABOVE: Irma's sustained winds of 130 to 156 mph leveled hundreds of houses and buildings throughout Florida, the neighboring states and the Carribean.

BELOW: In calmer weather, the house exudes Southern charm, log home style. The oak-shaded front yard includes stately trees native to the property and vibrant blooms.

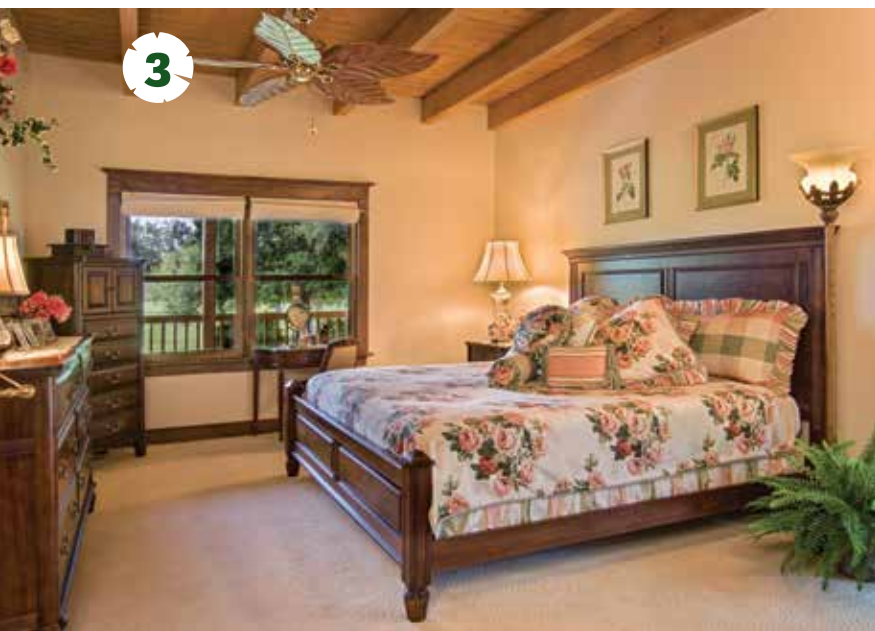




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still removing debris from the downed trees, but their efforts were hampered by the huge amount of rain that fell during the storm, saturating the ground to the point where they couldn't bring in the heavy equipment needed to help with cleanup. According to Kelley, the St. John's River that passes near their home "looked like an ocean!" But with all of the houses that were completely lost to Irma, the Fores considered themselves incredibly fortunate.

"We're happy to be alive and back in the house we love," Alida says. "We just had to let nature take its course." 1

1: Kelley, an avid hunter, proudly displays his collection of mounted pheasants, mallards, hooded macanzas and wood ducks in the expansive loft.

2: The conveniently located mudroom is between the kitchen and master bath.

3: Log walls take a break in the master bedroom, but the exposed ceiling beams and tongue-and-groove remind you that you're in an exceptional log home.

4: A streamlined design in the master bedroom's en suite allows the couple to have a larger walk-in closet. The room is conveniently positioned near the laundry.

HOME DETAILS

Square Footage: 2,321

Bedrooms: 3

Bathrooms: 2 full

Log Provider:

Original Log Cabin Homes

(formerly Suwannee River Log Homes)

BELOW: Kelley Fore always dreamed of having a log home on his family's ranch. The 6-by-8-inch D-shaped logs with saddle-notched corners fits the bill perfectly – and performs flawlessly.

