

THE EDITOR

The Best of the Season

**COZY RETREATS AND COOL,
CLASSIC GETAWAYS**





HOUSE TOUR: KEN FULK CREATES A MONTANA GUESTHOUSE THAT'S THE ULTIMATE WINTER GETAWAY

For favorite clients, Ken Fulk not only crafts a cozy guesthouse in the Montana mountains, but also oversees an array of holiday festivities—proving he is as much impresario as decorator.

By Peter Terzian © NOV 17, 2016

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Growing up in rural Virginia and enchanted by visions of snowy wonderlands and snug hearthsides, [Ken Fulk](#) appointed himself master of ceremonies for his family's holiday celebrations. "From the age of six, I orchestrated Christmas like a Cecil B. DeMille production," he says. "I had a timetable for when everything should unfold, from finding the perfect tree to caroling for the neighbors to the viewing of 'It's a Wonderful Life,' and down to the opening of the smallest present on Christmas Eve."



Turtle, a golden retriever, at the front door.

Now a well-known interior designer headquartered in San Francisco, Fulk spends every [Christmas](#) and New Year's in Montana with Bay Area clients who have become close friends. For this couple, who have three grown children, he has tailored more than a dozen homes over the past 15 years, including two [ski lodges](#) of roughly equal size at the Yellowstone Club, an exclusive residential community nestled in the Rockies.

Considering that the husband owns a movie production company and that Fulk is known for his cinematic style, it's no surprise that the [Montana](#) houses have names, albeit cheeky ones. Sky High, at the top of a mountain, is where the family stays during their frequent [ski retreats](#). Clad in salvaged blond wood, it's airy and serene. Halfway House, situated downslope, is where the family accommodates its many [guests](#). It's also the party house, where Fulk once again gets the chance to play ringleader



Douglas Friedman

The leather club chairs in the Willie Nelson suite are 1920s English, the love seat is by Cisco Home, the cabinet is 19th-century Moorish, the cocktail table is a custom design, and the footstools are by Oly; the crystal chandelier is antique, the wallcovering is from Sloan Miyasato, the carpet by Mark Nelson Designs is topped with a buffalo-hide rug, and the artworks are from the 19th century.

"We stay in Montana for two weeks, and I program the entire time," Fulk says. When guests arrive, he hands them a schedule—"like when you go to camp," he explains. "We have taco Tuesdays, movie nights, and raging dance parties. A few years ago, we had a wig party. Last New Year's Eve, we rode Sno-Cats to the summit and ate dinner in the dark, then watched fireworks over the mountains and finally came back to Halfway House, where we danced to a bluegrass band and a DJ." Of course, no visit is complete without hitting the "private powder" ski trails. "You can ski from the top of the mountain to the bottom without seeing another person," he says.



Douglas Friedman

In the dining area, the table, stool, ceiling light, and chairs (each of which is stenciled with the name of a famous partyer) are by Christian Liaigre; the flooring is reclaimed oak.

Halfway House's boutique hotel-meets-tree house interiors contribute to the air of festivity. Each of Fulk's projects corresponds to a movie he creates in his mind. The guest lodge is "'White Christmas' with a little rock and roll thrown in," he says. The bedrooms are christened after famous partyers, including Steve McQueen, Janis Joplin, and Elvis Presley, whose names are also inscribed on the director's chairs that surround the dining table. Given their reputations for excess, those historic imbibers serve as gentle cautionary tales against too much [holiday cheer](#)—but just in case, each room comes with a playful "survival kit" that includes hangover remedies.



In a guest room, the built-in bunk beds are dressed in Ralph Lauren Home linens, the steer-horn chair is upholstered in leather from a vintage motorcycle jacket, and the rug is goat hair.

Throughout the house's three stories, coziness is the order of the day. "I want you to be able to walk in and immediately sink into a chair, curl up by the fire, or jump into the most comfortable bed," he says. The rooms are a tapestry of textures, with leather seating, sheepskin-and-horn chairs, and [furry hides](#) on the beds and floors. One room is outfitted with eight built-in [bunk beds](#)—they're ostensibly for children, though adults frequently take them over. To conjure the days of clandestine undercover reading, each bunk is outfitted with a miner's-cap lamp as well as a stash of candy.



In a ski house designed by Ken Fulk at Montana's Yellowstone Club, the living area's sectional sofa and cable-knit rug are by Ralph Lauren Home, the barnwood cocktail table is a custom design, the side table is by Arteriors, and the pair of ottomans were found at Costco; the pendant lights are by Moooi, and the curtains are of a Sandra Jordan alpaca.

There are a handful of intelligently chosen midcentury pieces: a semicircular Milo Baughman sofa in the downstairs lounge, Le Corbusier chairs in the living area, and what Fulk calls "a Christian Liaigre explosion" in the [dining area](#). Still, the atmosphere is decidedly unfussy. The owners rescue dogs, "sometimes six or seven at a time, ranging from 12 pounds to 120 pounds," and "often there are as many dogs as the houses as people," Fulk says. "They run out into the snow and drag it back in— and to my mind, that's how it should be."



A steel bed by Room & Board is paired with a 1920s leather sofa in the Elvis suite; the bed linens and side tables are by Ralph Lauren Home, the ceiling light is by Maarten Baas, and the wallpaper is by Phillip Jeffries.

It's typical for Fulk's clients to ask him to preside over important events —"everything from dinner parties to bar mitzvahs to helping a kid move to college," he says. Not all are as lucky as these homeowners, who count him among their nearest and dearest and benefit from his round-the-clock attention. "There's no one else we would trust to design not only our home, but also so many parts of our lives," the wife says. "We're wholly dependent on Ken, and it feels good."

Fulk's holiday agenda may sound strenuous, but he allows time for quieter moments —decorating the enormous tree at Sky High, the annual reading of "A Visit from St. Nicholas." "For most of my clients, time is a luxury," he says. "I make sure things aren't left to happenstance. I build a framework so great memories can be made."



An outdoor fireplace is flanked by a pair of sheepskin-covered moose-antler chairs; the table is made from an antique snowshoe, and the rug is buffalo hide.

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