

# SEARAY

L I V I N G<sup>®</sup>



WINTER 2009

\$5.95



*story by Randy Hess photos by Kenneth Boone*

# ALABAMA GETAWAY

**BOB AND JAN HARRIS FIND  
LAKE MARTIN HAS LOTS OF  
WAYS TO PLEASE THEM**

WHEN IS A SECOND HOUSE NOT A  
SECOND HOUSE? WHEN YOU  
FIND YOU START SPENDING  
MORE TIME THERE THAN  
AT HOME. IT'S A SLIPPERY  
SLOPE, OF COURSE.  
EVERYONE WANTS  
TO SPEND MORE TIME  
AT THE LAKE OR THE SHORE.





**MENTALLY, YOU BUY IN EARLY, DAYDREAMING ALL WEEK AT WORK AND PLANNING EARLY ESCAPES ON FRIDAY AFTERNOONS... AND THEN THURSDAY AFTERNOONS... BEFORE LONG YOU FIND YOUR MONDAYS GET OFF TO A SLOW START BECAUSE YOU'RE RUSHING BACK INTO TOWN THAT MORNING. HECK, WITH TODAY'S VIRTUAL OFFICES, A WEDNESDAY AT THE LAKE ISN'T A STRETCH.**

"Oh yeah, we've rounded that corner," says Bob Harris, who keeps a Sea Ray 240 Sundeck at his lake house on Alabama's beautiful Lake Martin. "We really consider it our primary residence now, especially in the last several years since our son, Hunter, has gone off to college."

Bob and his wife, Jan, still live in their primary residence in Birmingham, where Bob runs his CPA firm and they develop residential real estate on the side. Birmingham is where they raised their two kids, and where daughter Allison and newlywed husband Stephen live. But when Bob and Jan built a house for themselves on Lake Martin four years ago and developed a spec house on an

adjacent property at the same time, the die was cast. They've since built another 13 houses at the lake for friends or as spec houses.

"Jan grew up coming to her family's cottage on Lake Martin, so we knew we'd probably end up here," Bob explains. "It's not remotely overbuilt or crowded and it's easy to ski or tube any weekend that isn't a huge holiday. You can comfortably swim into October and boat until December. And now with the houses we're building and selling here, I actually have more business and spend more time at the lake than I do in Birmingham."

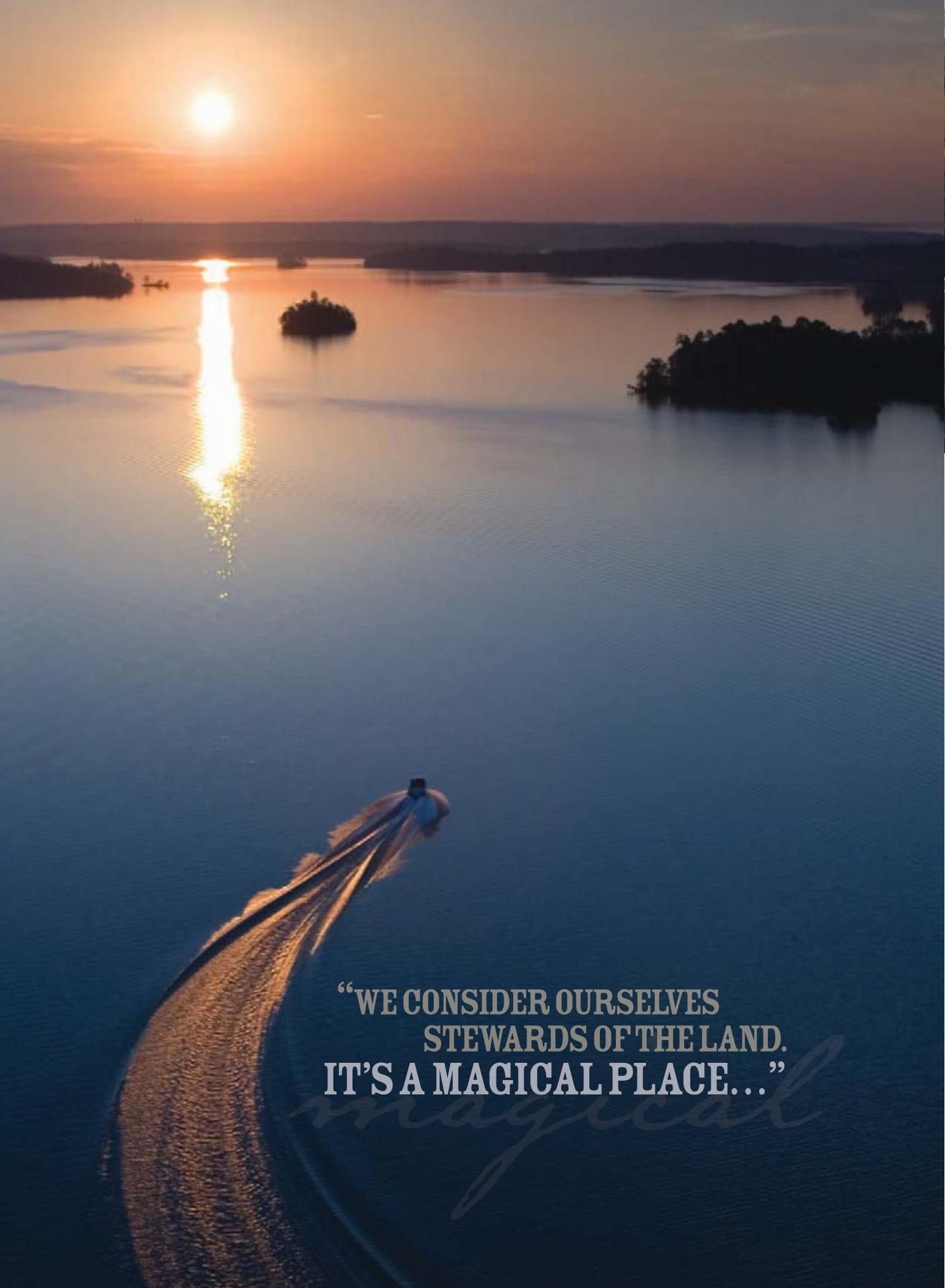
Dave Commander, general manager of Russell Marine and vice president of marketing for Russell Lands Inc., knows the lake is the true draw. "Everything we do here is all about the lake life," Dave says. "Everything is focused around using, seeing or enjoying Lake Martin. Why wouldn't you want to build your life around that?"

Russell Lands has been developing residential real estate for three decades, and is now the largest recreational developer in Alabama. With ownership of more than 25,000 acres and 250 miles of shoreline on Lake Martin, Russell Lands is more than a real estate developer,



Bob and Jan Harris know that home is where the heart is, and theirs is on Alabama's Lake Martin. Son Hunter comes for weekends from nearby Auburn University. Area charms include the beautiful lakeside course at Willow Point Golf & Country Club.





**“WE CONSIDER OURSELVES  
STEWARDS OF THE LAND.  
IT’S A MAGICAL PLACE...”**

*magical*



it is a *community* developer. Russell Lands' master plan for its low density development will eventually create a community as large as Hilton Head. Russell Crossroads, the commercial hub currently under construction, includes Catherine's Market, Springhouse Restaurant and the Discovery Center. Future phases will include a hardware store, medical clinic, pharmacy, gift shop and office space. Willow Point Golf & Country Club, with one of America's most beautiful lakeside golf courses, and the Lake Martin Amphitheater, featuring national entertainment acts, are an easy five minute drive from Crossroads. A unique riding and walking trail system offers 80 miles of paths that all seem to end with views of the lake. And Russell Marine, with four Lake Martin locations, has a nice selection of Sea Rays, any of which would look great tied to the pier outside your new house. "Our company history with Lake Martin goes all the way back to when the lake was made," Dave says. "We are known as responsible developers and we consider ourselves stewards of the land. It's a magical place and we really want to share this lake with other Sea Ray owners. Heck, we might even throw in a Sea Ray if you buy the right property."

It's inevitable that you'll want that boat once you buy in, according to Bob. He mentally ticks back through the buyers of his 14 houses. "Yep, nearly every one owns a Sea Ray now," he concludes. "A majority have gotten 240 Sundecks like us. It's our first boat and we love it. Buyers in this range seem ideally suited for that boat and it's perfect for this lake. Having a top-10 dealer like Russell Marine and the marina right here for repairs and storage, it's just so easy."

The 240 also helps bait the hook to keep the kids coming around. "Hunter, Allison and Stephen come to the lake most every weekend," Bob says. "It's our family gathering place, and everyone brings guests. Hunter will throw pledge parties for his fraternity. Allison and Stephen bring their friends. It's not uncommon to have 30 people here. We'll go to bed on Friday night before everyone arrives and wake up Saturday morning to find out how many we're having for breakfast. Jan tells them, 'Just leave a note telling how many to cook for.' Truly, it's why we built the lake house."

The primary thing the boat has to compete with here in Alabama is college football. Hunter is a junior at Auburn, and the lake is a lot

Between the amenities of Russell Crossroads, their neighborhood activity center, the shopping in nearby Alexander City and that glorious lake, the Harrises know they've found the right place to lay their hat.

closer to school than Birmingham is. "We definitely spend every football weekend at the lake," Bob laughs, even when the Tigers have sorry seasons like this one. "There's really easy access from the lake over to the games and back. And the boating is great here late into the fall, so with games on Saturday, we hit the water on Sunday."

One of the reasons Lake Martin draws so many second home buyers is that it sits conveniently in the triangle formed by Birmingham, Montgomery and Atlanta. Bob has built houses for people from all three, a trend he expects to only grow stronger. "Even in a downturn, real estate activity at the lake continues to be stronger than in Birmingham," he explains. "People are always looking for a quality product, and this is a good time to be a buyer. Russell Lands is such a big player in this part of the lake, and it really makes a difference all the things they have here for residents. They have a lot more riding on it than I do, and everything they do is first class."

One more first-class thing the company plans this coming summer is to host Sea Ray's global AquaPalooza signature event. Dave says they're anticipating boaters visiting from all over the southeast, and are working hard with Sea Ray to ensure the 2009 event lives up to the expectations set by the previous three AquaPaloozas. When all those visiting boaters splash their boats on this beautiful lake, surely there are going to be a lot of people imagining spending their weekends—and then their weeks—enjoying the magic of Lake Martin. 

For more information or to register for the 2009 AquaPalooza, go to [www.aquapalooza.com](http://www.aquapalooza.com). For more info about Russell Lands, visit [www.russellands.com](http://www.russellands.com). And to ensure you keep receiving *Sea Ray Living* at no cost, go to [www.searay.com](http://www.searay.com) and click on the "Subscribe to *Sea Ray Living*" tab.