

FACE-TO-FACE WITH A 500-POUND BEAR, PAGE 70

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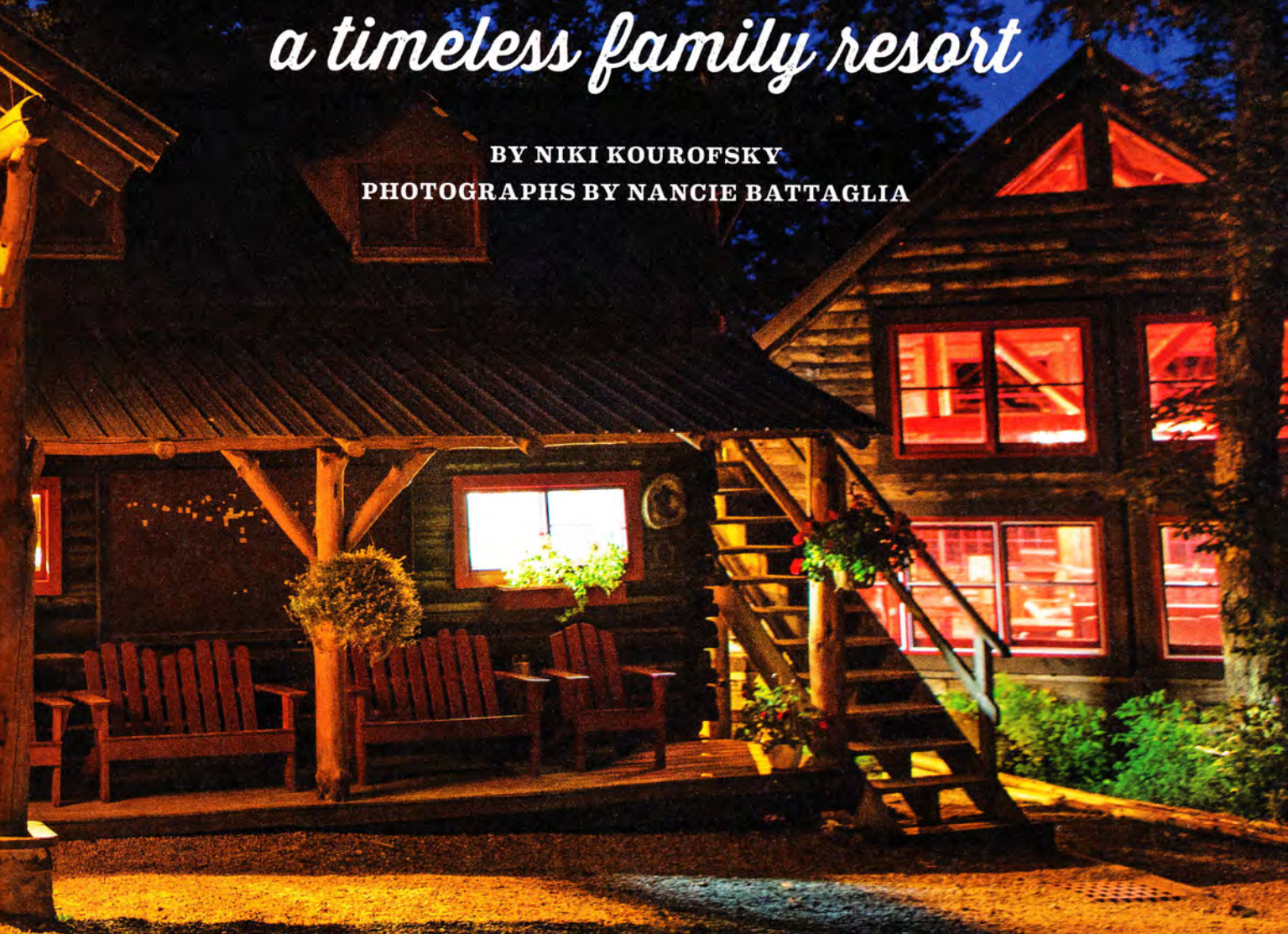
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GOOD OLD-FASHIONED FARM

*Unplugged at Timberlock,
a timeless family resort*

BY NIKI KOUROFSKY
PHOTOGRAPHS BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA



"Your dad's here!"

YOUR DAD'S HERE! Hearing the shouts, eight-year-old Peyton races to the gravel drive, spots her father rolling up in an SUV, then scampers off to notify the rest of the Norman/Brown clan. In an eyeblink the newcomer—arriving fashionably late from California—is surrounded by smiling faces and swamped with hugs.

Welcome to Timberlock, an unassuming collection of cottages on Indian

Lake that has welcomed families—such as Peyton's, here for a reunion—for generations. When the world-weary come calling, this oldfangled wilderness retreat answers with campfires and sing-alongs, community meals and fast friendships. It's an authentic summer camp experience for all ages, but it comes at a price: no cell phone reception, no wireless Internet and no electricity in the guest quarters.

If the idea of detaching your brood from their contemporary comforts has you feeling skittish, that's understandable. Even the most amenity-cushioned family vacations have the potential to turn into dysfunctional disasters, especially if you add in a teenager or two. But cutting the cords can't be much of a hardship at this place, since devotees come back year after year—often for decades.

"Even people who are nervous about [being unplugged] take to it," says Bruce Catlin, who runs Timberlock with his wife, Holly. "And the kids don't have a problem with it," he adds. Maybe that's because the campus boasts every summer-camp staple:

basketball, tennis, volleyball, archery, horseshoes and horses. There's a woodshop for the creatively inclined, Ping-Pong and board games in the children's lodge, plus a rugrat-free adults' lodge. (Bruce says it's a big deal when a 13-year-old can finally saunter into that adult sanctum.) There are a couple of trailheads on the 63-acre tract and countless more nearby; the property is literally timber locked, bounded by the Jessup River Wild Forest and West Canada Lake Wilderness Area. Down at the sandy swimming area, the wet and wild can take a bounce on the water trampoline, plunge off the rope swing or hone their lumberjack skills on the log roll. A fleet of sailboats, canoes, kayaks and rowboats stands ready to float explorers around the 4,365-acre lake.

"It's a pretty active place," Bruce says.

Timberlock, a 63-acre playground on Indian Lake, has been welcoming vacationers for more than a century. Almost two dozen guest quarters—from family cottages to two-person tentlets—are tucked away on wooded footpaths.









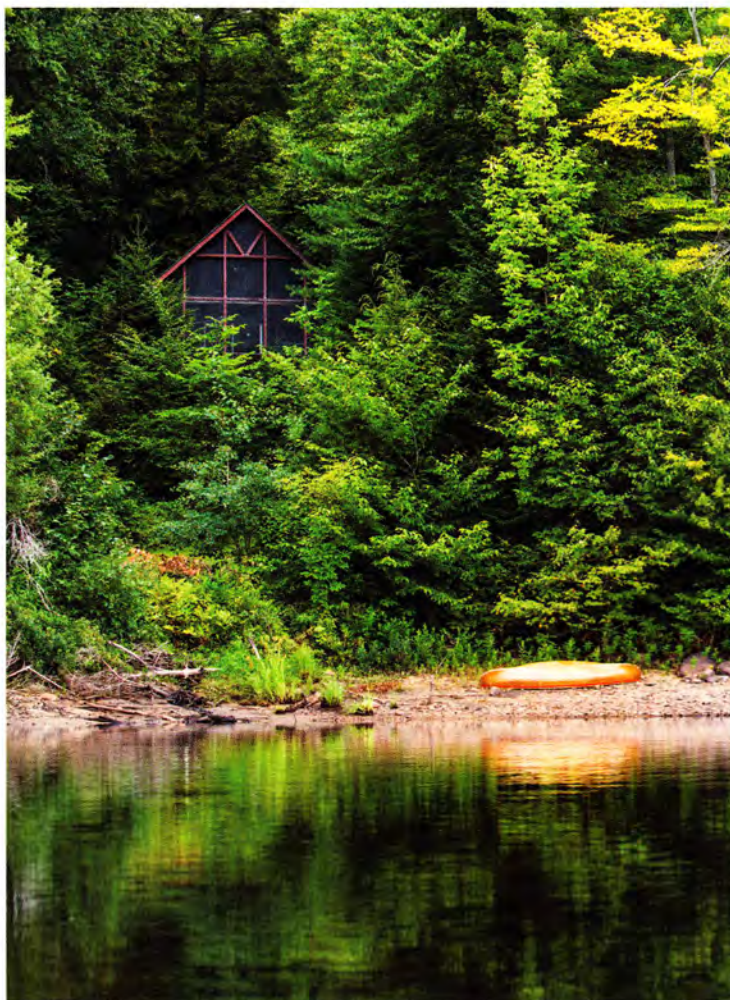
"Every day people are tackling some new adventure."

His parents, Dick and Barb Catlin, started on their own adventure back in 1963, when they went scouting for a property on a shoestring budget. They'd been running a YMCA boys' camp in Troy and were looking to break into the rustic-resort business. On their Northeast tour, they stopped for a Sunday dinner with their friends the Gavetts, who owned a beloved retreat on Indian Lake. In 1922, Ted Gavett had purchased a simple log hotel known as Far-ington's that had been operating since 1899. He expanded the accommodations to include cabins and platform tents and added a boys' camp on a portion of the property.

Dick Catlin knew the place well; he'd stayed there as a boy, when "Coach" Burns Beach was leasing and running the hideaway. Dick recalls that the Gavett camp was "the setting and place by which we judged everything else" when he and Barb were shopping around—though with little but lint in their pockets, the young couple never expected to own it. But the Gavetts were ready for a change of scenery by the time Dick and Barb sat down at their Sunday dinner table; they offered the spread—at generous terms—and the Catlins accepted. Dick says that they figured "the location on Indian Lake was so special that it couldn't fail." Even so, he adds, "it was 10 years



Timberlock offers classic Adirondack entertainment—from sing-alongs and campfires to paddling excursions and pick-up ball games.





before we got out of the red ink."

Updating and rehabbing the newly christened Timberlock was a huge job, so improvements happened gradually. The Catlins did the work themselves, adding new buildings and a few of the perks of modern life, such as plumbing in many of the cabins. But their modernization only went so far—until the early '70s, they were

using an icehouse. These days the kitchen, office, adults' lodge and woodshop have power, but guests still rely on propane lights and woodstoves in their lodgings.

Bruce and Holly took over ownership in 2000 and continue long-standing traditions like weekly sing-alongs and a send-off dinner on Fridays, where milestones or moments of silliness are recognized with "paper-plate awards." And they've revived a kids' camp—a two-week program for teens called Voyageurs—on the north side of the property.

There are now 23 homes-away-from-home scattered along Timberlock's foot trails. (In a nod to modernity, one of the staff of 15 delivers luggage with a motorized cart; bags used to be dragged in on a metal litter.) Lodging choices range from cottages that sleep up to seven with baths and screened porches to "tentlets" sporting a couple of bunks and a privy down the path. A cozy tentlet is just right for



Stacy Hubbard, who's been returning for almost 30 years. "I'm not a camper," she says. "I'm not that competent. Here you can do your hiking all day long and have a clean bed and somebody else is cooking."

When the mealtime bell rings, guests come running—or paddling—to tuck into the popular fare. Three meals a day are served up family- or buffet-style on the covered dining porch, from pizza and handmade ice cream to London broil grilled over charcoal and turkey dinners with all the trimmings. Folks mix and mingle at tables, forming lasting relationships. Amy Shuman, an eight-year veteran, says that the kindred spirits she meets here keep her coming back. "They're the kind of people I want my kids hanging around," she says. "I think [my teenage son] learns a whole new measure of cool here. It's not what you have, it's how many mountains you climb or doing a backflip off the rope swing."

MARION. MATRIARCH OF THE Norman/Brown tribe, has had a half-century-plus love affair with this place. And now she's managed to gather a couple dozen of her far-flung family here—from South Carolina, Virginia, California—including eight-year-old Peyton, a fifth-generation Timberlocker who's visiting for the first time. Peyton munches on a cheese-wrapped hot dog on the beach and declares the spot "fun," though her older cousin Riley razzes her about her rope-swing phobia. "It took a lot of peer-pressure," Riley

Timberlock's 2015 season runs June 27–September 26. One- to three-bedroom cabins and one-room tentlets are available by the week or day (three-night minimum); rates include three meals daily. Prime dates may have to be booked a year in advance. Call (518) 648-5494 or visit www.timberlock.com for details.

says, to get Peyton to take the plunge. After lunch, Riley and another teenage cousin, Erin, plan to paddle to the cliffs at a "secret beach" to do some diving of their own. Riley says her favorite thing about the retreat is that "we're all here together." And, Erin adds, without distracting devices, "we're forced to talk to each other."

It's that family-centric spirit that's made running Timberlock a pleasure for both generations of Catlins. Eighty-two-year-old Dick, who still lends a hand in the operation, says the biggest reward is when "people come to us over and over again and say thank you for letting us stay here, to raise our children in this atmosphere you've created. It's everything to them, to have their families enjoy this experience year after year." 🌿