

Green Country  
**Living**  
SEPT/OCT 2007

**Settled  
in the old  
home place**



**Also in this issue:  
A modern marvel  
Relax, rejuvenate at retreat**



Story by Vicky Holland

Photos by Jerry Willis

This outdoor eating area is just off of the gourmet kitchen at The Canebrake on Fort Gibson Lake.

## The Canebrake

# *A sophisticated adventure out*

When the Bracken family decided to develop 190 acres and open it to the public, they knew what they didn't want to be — no dude ranch, no Disneyland.

Instead, the Brackens chose to be somewhat of a "worlds of fun" for adults, a place to relax in topnotch accommodations, rejuvenate at The Yoga Barn, walk or bike on the spectacular grounds, fish in one of numerous ponds and dine on the best in gourmet cuisine.

At the same time, the family chose to be stewards of the earth, or eco-friendly

every step of the way.

On June 8 of this year, The Canebrake was born.

"We wanted to do what was not being done, an adult environment with one-on-one personal service where you can be treated like an adult," said Sam Bracken. "It's time for Oklahomans to not have to leave the state for a nice meal, a nice room."

Barth and Linda Bracken purchased the 400-acre Neosho River Ranch 20 years ago. Barth, an Okmulgee native, and Linda raised their children, Sam, Wally, Lynne and Pam, in

Oklahoma City. But they spent summers on Fort Gibson Lake and fell in love with the area.

After their children were raised, Barth and Linda settled in the Wagoner area and ran a Tennessee Walking Horse operation on the ranch for several years. Lynne continues to run the Neosho River Ranch. The rest of the children are in some way involved in The Canebrake.

Sam and his wife, Lisa, owned a restaurant in Colorado for four years. Today, Sam is affectionately referred to as the "visionary

CEO" by wife, Lisa. He does a bit of everything, including designing the building and grounds of The Canebrake and greeting guests at the restaurant. Lisa teaches at least one yoga class in the Yoga Barn seven days a week and manages the eco-chic boutique.

Wally is the controller and his wife, Laura, is a pilates instructor. Barth deals with inground infrastructure, government-oriented details and he and Johnny Wells are building the cottages. Linda

Continued on Page 20

# Services abundant at Canebrake

Continued from Page 19

is the decorator of both The Canebrake Guest Services Building and the cottages.

Pam and husband, Larry, live in Oklahoma City, but they contribute, too. For example, Larry came up with the name, which is a species of bamboo used by Native Americans for making baskets, blowguns and flutes. Canebrake also acted as a filtering system for water. On the downstream side of canebrake, the water was calm, clear and clean.

And that, in a nutshell, is the feeling the Brackens hope you'll take away from The Canebrake.

## Guest services

With its clay walls, the former horse barn-turned-Guest Services Building is reminiscent of structures in Sante Fe, N.M. The building houses offices, boutique, restaurant and conference rooms. More is planned.

A former horse arena will one day be an aquatic center. A private room with Endless Pool (where you swim against a current) now is available for guests.

The Canebrake seeks to be all things to all people. For example, if you have a physical disability and are in need of some type of therapy, the Brackens have physical therapists and others on call.

One area of the Guest Services Building is "the gallery," where you can pick up take-out from the restaurant, meet for a bird-watching tour, fishing clinic, yoga class, ROPES course, etc.



Yoga classes, taught by Lisa Bracken, began more than a year ago. Today, at least one class is offered seven days a week.

The elaborate restrooms in the Guest Services Building were former tack rooms in the old barn. Wood in the building has been reused. Concrete floors were stained and scored. Countertops are of recycled concrete, shined until you can see yourself in the luster.

The bio-chic boutique features 100 percent organic cotton clothing, recycled glassware, biodegradable yoga mats, and purses made of discontinued labels, like Coca-Cola, candy bars and chewing gum.

Conference rooms have state-of-the-art technology and accommodate 40 to 45 people. You can rent one of two conference rooms for your annual corporate retreat or for a relaxing place to host a couple dozen fans for the annual bedlam game.

## Yoga Barn

At the Yoga Barn, all you need is your bare feet and imagination, said Sam Bracken. His wife, Lisa, teaches yoga and his sister-in-law, Laura, teaches pilates there.

An unseen but interesting feature of the barn is the insulation made out of recycled denim. The building also

features low-wattage lighting, radiant heating under the cork floor and bolsters stuffed with kapok from the kapok tree.

The Yoga Barn can hold 45 to 50 and is open for business seven days a week. Yoga was the Brackens first venture beginning in July of 2006.

The view from The Yoga Barn is peaceful and green.

"The location is beautiful. We're blessed with this piece of land," Lisa said.

## Fine dining

The executive chef and his staff work in an open air kitchen. You can sit at the bar and watch them work their magic on fare like:

- Grilled elk tenderloin with poblano mash, roasted corn salsa, asparagus and Zinfandel demi-glace.
- Fresh Alaskan halibut and garden vegetables in banana-coconut curry served with lemon risotto.
- Smoked babyback ribs with Asian barbecue sauce.
- Wild salmon with lemon risotto and asparagus.
- Triple mocha mousse torte.
- Fruit and herb sorbet cocktail.

And if a menu like that doesn't whet your appetite,

consider Sunday brunch, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., with omelets and eggs to order and a buffet of Belgian waffles, roast pork tenderloin and home-smoked wild salmon, assorted salads, grits, home fries and much more.

The Canebrake grows its own herbs and uses them in drinks like the Mimosa, made with pomegranate, orange juice, Cointreau and Champagne 7, or Cream Punch, a southern-style drink with a vanilla liqueur and bourbon 7.

Many of the fruits and vegetables served at The Canebrake are grown locally.

Reservations are recommended in the 65-seat restaurant. Dining also is available on the patio. Live music Wednesdays feature local talent like Travis Fite and Friends.

Dinner is served from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesdays through Saturdays.

## Woody lodging

Beginning in December, you can extend your Canebrake experience to overnight. Accommodations for 40 are opening in the woods at The Canebrake.

Five cottages hold 16 rooms, from deluxe suites for four to retreat rooms sleeping up to 16. Most of the cottages are built a few feet off of the ground to give you more of a treehouse feel. Cottages will feature amenities like Jacuzzi tubs and flat-screen televisions. Rates range from \$129 to \$249.

Eventually more cottages will be built with a goal of accommodating 100.

"That's as big as it gets," Sam Bracken said.

A New Year's Eve package is in the works, so call now to reserve a room and pamper yourself with a stay at The Canebrake.



The entrance to The Canebrake bar and restaurant is flanked by etched glass and potted plants.

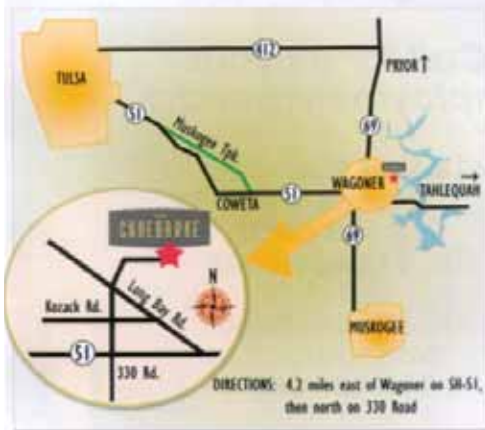


Five cottages, opening in December, hold 16 rooms. You can reserve a deluxe suite for four or a retreat sleeping room for up to 16.

The restrooms in the Guest Services Building offer a glimpse of the unique decorating done by Linda Bracken at The Canebrake.



## How to get there



The gourmet kitchen at The Canebrake, above, is open for dinner from 5:30 to 9 p.m. Wednesday through Saturday and for Sunday brunch from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Above left, Sam and Lisa Bracken ran a restaurant for several years in Colorado before moving home to open The Canebrake on the family's Neosho River Ranch.