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editor's note



PHOTO BY DEB SCHWAB

CHOOSING PAINT COLOURS tortures both me and the people around me. I've spent the last few months tacking swatches to every available surface, comparing light and colour schemes and whether it plays nicely with my floors. I've purchased enough sample pots to play colour by numbers on my walls. (A great no-risk tip is to paint foam boards you can buy at the dollar store. Voila! You have a fairly large sample that you can move around the room!)

With the help of a colour consultant, I finally decided on Stone Hearth by Benjamin Moore. It's a deep hazy grey with a strong beige undertone that complements my flooring, window treatments, and current furnishings. I was in love. Problem solved, right? Wrong.

Even after my decision, I worried that the colour would be too dark, too flat, too beige, and too grey. Then, during a recent visit with a local homeowner, the newly painted walls immediately caught my eye and drew me in. This was the colour. The colour I'd been looking for, the pinnacle, the icing, the perfect hue. The colour was Smoky Taupe.

I hightailed it back to the store with the name clenched in my fist and triumphantly relayed my victorious find. The colour consultant smirked and laughingly informed me that Smoky Taupe is Stone Hearth. It's just the name they call it in the United States. Sometimes, you just have to trust your instincts and put yourself in the hands of the experts!

Our feature homeowners put their trust in the design team at Elizabeth Interiors with stunning results.

The pros in our Shop Spot feature are veterans in their fields. You'll want them on board, whether you're making changes or embarking on a renovation.

In our Home and Builder feature, David Small Designs is proof positive that a professional can do anything well.

As you embark on your next project, remember to trust your instincts. You may already know what you want, and if you don't, the experts are here to help. Happy spring everyone!

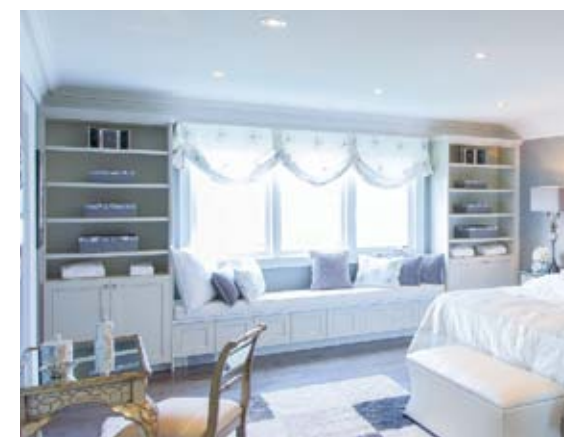
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Owners Peter & Tricia Raimondi have been helping customers with colour selection at Colour Land Paint & Decor for over 12 years in Burlington Ontario. Surveying their customers, they found the view that Benjamin Moore is a top quality paint, with the best colour options in the business, but customers are also looking for the best service and pricing.

So we **reduced our prices** but noticed the extra volume was very difficult to process

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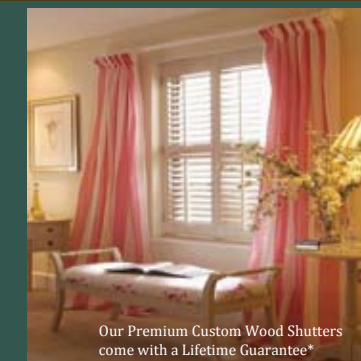
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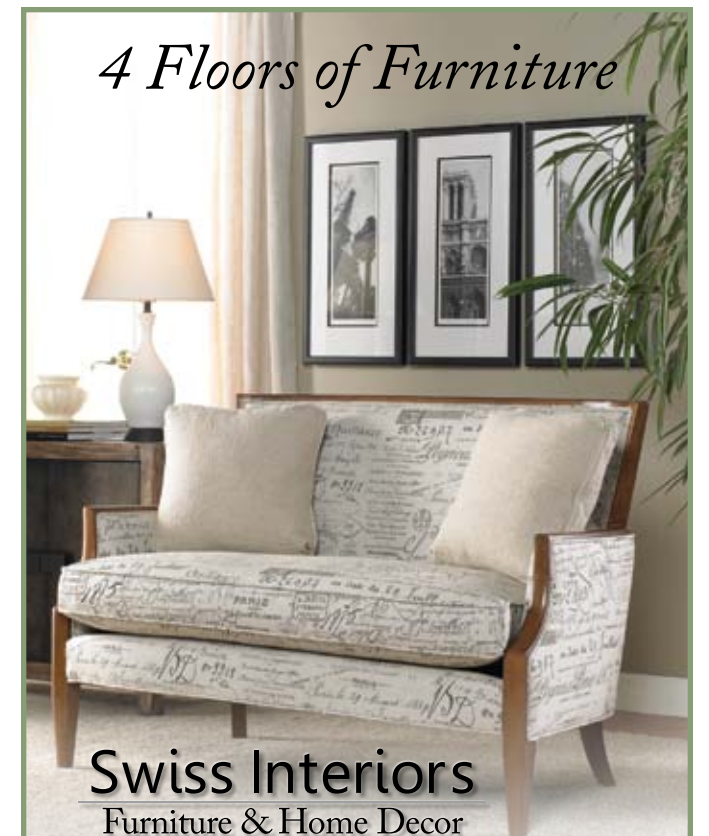
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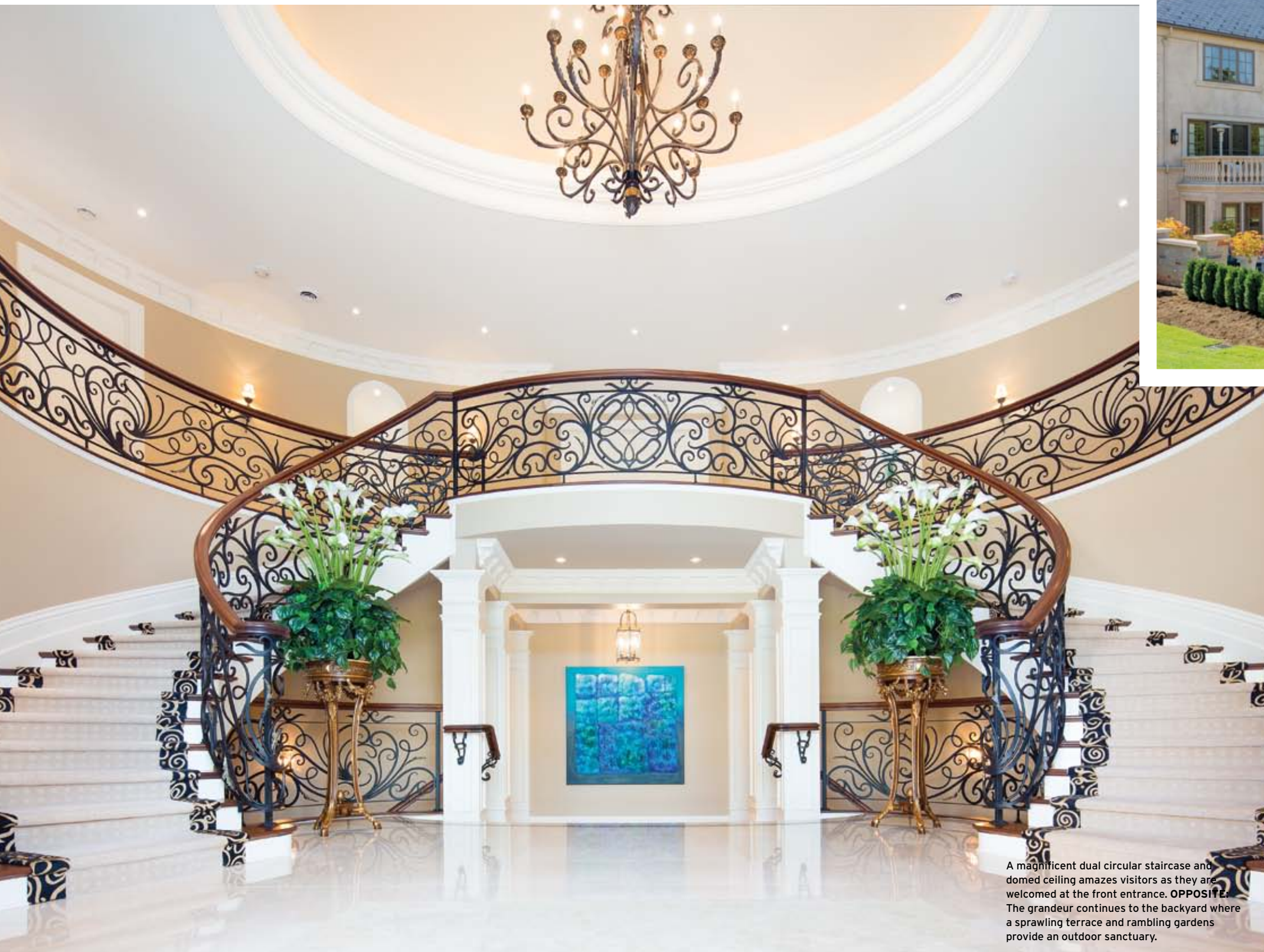
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A magnificent dual circular staircase and domed ceiling amazes visitors as they are welcomed at the front entrance. **OPPOSITE:** The grandeur continues to the backyard where a sprawling terrace and rambling gardens provide an outdoor sanctuary.



A MODERN SPIN ON OLD-WORLD *elegance*

BY NANCY FORNASIERO
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

From the moment the dramatic, wrought iron gates widen to welcome you onto the property, there's no doubt you've arrived somewhere special.

Continued on page 22



BELOW: Intricate mouldings, a ceiling medallion and a candelabra-style light fixture add to the formal feel of the dining room. A stunning arrangement of white hydrangeas from Brant Florist provides a fresh and lovely centrepiece.

RIGHT: Oversized sofas and a large rug create a cosy great room just off the kitchen. **OPPOSITE:** Dramatic architectural details continue with the mouldings and cabinetry in the large culinary kitchen. Ornate embellishments add to the traditional atmosphere.



Its first impression suggests a stately European country house passed down through generations with stone façades, classically symmetrical proportions and elegant gardens. Upon closer inspection, the home reveals its true character. Despite its old-world aesthetic, the recently built beauty is a functional and modern family home.

At 13,000 sq. ft., this luxury home was conceived with enough space to accommodate everything the imaginative homeowner desired. The one-of-a-kind abode boasts extras such as an opulent two-storey foyer, gracious guest suites, a butler's pantry, home gym and massive stone terrace on the rear façade. The lower level is an entertainer's delight, complete with a recreation room, pub and – the pièce de résistance – an indoor 45-foot pool and hot tub.

A well-travelled aficionado of European style, the discriminating homeowner had a particular vision of what his home should feel like. He credits custom home designer **David Small** of **David Small Designs** with parlaying his traditional tastes and eclectic wish list into an actual plan. "David listened well and the resulting design reflects that."

David stressed that the spectacular outcome was due to a team approach, one that involved not only his own contributions and the client's input, but also the skills of fourth-generation builder **Jay Robinson** of **Jay Robinson Custom Homes Inc.** Steven Nechacov of Showcase Interiors Inc. is acknowledged for his significant role in the design and development of many of the key spaces of the home.



One of those key spaces is definitely the foyer, which David accurately refers to as "jaw-dropping" and the owner names a favourite feature. "This is one of those homes," remarks David, "where you drive up, you see the formality, you see the grandeur, you open the front door and you're not let down."

A glance upward reveals a soaring 18-foot ceiling punctuated by a grand chandelier. A glance downward reveals polished Crema Marfil flooring accented by a marble mosaic inlay border. A spiraling dual staircase boasts handcrafted wrought-iron railings custom-made by Maks Iron Works. The design motif repeats on the exterior gates. An imported stair runner, composed of a silk tapestry border on a background of the finest English wool, leads the eye up to the mezzanine. All the details – original artwork, carefully-sourced materials, toasty heated floors – announce "welcome to an extraordinary place."

As expected, nothing is overlooked in the gourmet kitchen, designed by Showcase Interiors. The focal point is a 19-foot-long island. Hand-carved, glass-fronted cabinetry separates it from the breakfast area and family room, allowing light to filter through while creating a necessary barrier. The dining room is adorned with intricate plaster mouldings – including a huge baroque medallion on the ceiling.

When conceptualizing his dream home, it was important to the homeowner that there was a formality to everything and, most importantly, continuity. Not a fan of homes with "dual-personalities"

(like traditional exteriors with modern interiors), he challenged David to create something with "formal, stately architecture that was to go top-to-bottom, and inside out."

Ironically, although they did achieve style continuity, the house nonetheless has a dual personality. Discreetly tucked behind wall panels, above coved ceilings, and beneath stone floors are cameras, speakers, wiring for lighting and climate control, and a myriad of other technological marvels that allow this seemingly traditional home to function in the most modern of ways. Burlington's **Clinton Howell** of **H2 Systems Inc.** installed over 20,000 ft. of cable to power the state-of-the-art home theatre, automation and integration systems.

The luxurious master suite is an ideal example of high-tech-meets-neoclassical-style. French doors overlook manicured gardens, an exquisite barreled ceiling is embellished with moulding, and millwork decorates a two-sided fireplace that also warms the adjoining en suite. At the same time, the room boasts surround-sound, a lighting system, touchscreen security and heated floors. The icing on the cake is the wardrobe suite outfitted in solid wood cabinetry. It features a vestibule, his-and-hers areas and a tiny but well-equipped kitchenette.

On the lower level of the home, David is especially proud of the pool enclosure. "That whole wing at the back of the house is something that you wouldn't be expecting to see." It's also a favourite of the man of the house who enjoys sneaking down for a swim before the sun or the family

Continued on page 24

RIGHT: A year-round escape is tucked away in the lower level of the house. Rustic stone, wall-to-wall windows and beams along the ceiling lend to the feeling of a tropical oasis. French doors lead to a lush backyard terrace. **BELOW LEFT:** His-and-hers vanities and a built-in armoire blend seamlessly like fine pieces of furniture. **BELOW RIGHT:** The master en suite provides plenty of wow-factor. A soaker tub surrounded by pillars and a domed ceiling adorned with mouldings create a grand escape.

is up. "It's great when all the other lights are turned off and only the pool is lit. The effect is so cool. I feel I am in a bit of an oasis."

If you're thinking there's no new detail this discerning gentleman can dream up for his home, you'd be wrong. He recently commissioned **Mary Ellen Farrow** of **Abbozzo Gallery** to create a one-of-a-kind garden sculpture. He's also refurnishing the dining room. Is he tiring of all the design decisions? "No! This process was not at all stressful. I'd love to do it again. I don't plan to move... don't get me wrong! But I would be happy to do a project like this again."

Despite the success here, David Small Designs has focused lately on homes with contemporary lines. When asked if he is over designing traditional homes, David emphatically disagrees. "I love that this house is different. Diversity and creativity are the things we celebrate, and I want our portfolio to show the full gamut of what we can do." After touring this Burlington Bluffs marvel, it's clear that whether modern, traditional, or a mix of both, David can breathe life to anyone's idea of a dream home. **OH**




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BE *prepared*

BY TERRY SMITH
ILLUSTRATION BY SHEILA BRITTON



I was spring skiing recently and having the usual small talk on the chairlift. Being in real estate, I might have been the one who brought up home. My chairlift partner made an interesting comment about his home of the last 25 years. "Our previous home sold in two days so we were forced to find a new home faster than we expected," he said. "We didn't really get exactly what we wanted." When I asked him what he meant he said that if they had taken more time they would have, among other things, bought a home with a west facing backyard so they could put in a pool and enjoy long sunny days.

Interesting that someone would stay in a home for 25 years when they are aware that the home is not exactly right. Sometimes this is because a more preferred home is not affordable. But often, it is just because once you are settled in a home, the hassle of moving is more than you want to bear.

I have had many clients who do not want to start looking at properties until they know they are in a position to buy. Some don't want to waste the agent's time. Others don't want to waste the seller's time if they are not yet serious.

You may think you have it all figured out by constantly trolling MLS listings, but the on-line search is really just an abstract guessing game. The problem with staying in the abstract until you list your home is that you could be caught in the same position as my chairlift partner. If you sell quickly and end up in a rush, all of the abstract thinking will have to suddenly convert to the concrete. This sudden conversion can lead to hasty decisions that turn out to be a misread of your real interests.

This is where the Boy Scout's credo comes in – Be prepared! In my experience, the only way to really get to know the market and to test your wants is to go look at homes. This process can take some time. You may have multiple areas in mind that have some appeal. You may have different styles of homes that appeal to you. You may also have a flexible perspective on price where you might pay more or less depending on the location, features and benefits of a home.

So I encourage clients who are vaguely thinking about a future move to get involved in the market early. Spend time with your agent discussing wants and needs and go out and kick some tires in real homes. Push the boundaries. Look at different areas and types of homes. Test your real interest. Discover the pitfalls of certain homes and locations for you and find out what your sweet spot really is. You don't have to look at an enormous number of homes, but you do have to get out there and look at a bunch!

This way, when the time comes to really make a buying decision, you will trust yourself. You will know what good value looks like. You will know the types of homes to avoid. You will be in a position to make a fully informed decision and purchase a home that will satisfy your needs for many years to come. With no regrets! Be prepared! **OH**

Terry Smith is a builder and real estate agent.

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BY GINA MAKKAR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG



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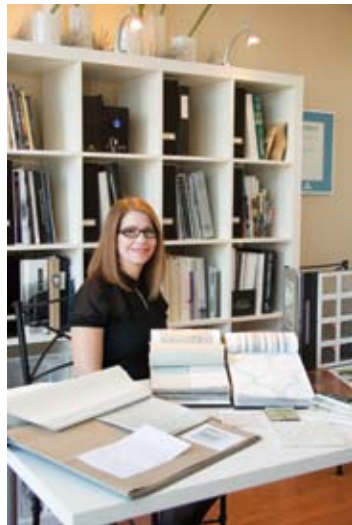
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form AND FUNCTION

BY GINA MAKKAR
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG

A space that feels like home marries form and function and creates a beautiful space that accommodates how you live. From a comfy new sofa and home storage solutions to a tranquil outside oasis, our local experts can help renew or reorganize your space both inside and out.



Joe Levine, Jim Hobbs, Linda Johnston, Lisa Vljakov Joshua Creek Furniture and Home Decor

WHAT IS POPULAR IN FURNITURE THESE DAYS? It's an exciting time in furniture and home décor! The comfortable look is back. Large sofas and chairs, down-filled slipcovers with deeper seating and washed earth tones accented with vibrant toss cushions. We also have a great selection of condo size furniture. Dining and bedrooms are more casual. Tastefully distressed woods are back, too. Add vibrant colours to accents to bring a room to life. Citrus adds a pop and transforms a room.

HOW DO I KNOW I'M BUYING A QUALITY PIECE OF FURNITURE? You know you are getting quality if it's made in Canada. Imports are always cheaper quality but believe it or not, if you're not careful you can end up paying more. In dining and bedrooms, look for solid wood construction and English dovetailed drawers. In leather or upholstery, Canadian-made means quality. I would estimate that 95 per cent of what is in our store is Canadian made. If it's an import, it's typically because we can't get it here so we seek out pieces that are a unique, better quality import. Ask the salesperson, "Where is this made?" If it's wood ask, "Is it solid wood or veneers?"

WHY DO CUSTOMERS COME TO JOSHUA CREEK? People come to Joshua Creek for many reasons. Most of our business comes from referrals. We have amazing staff that cares about customers. We have an incredible selection of furniture.

Gregory Rymaszewski InsideOut Patio Furniture

WHAT IS YOUR SPECIALTY? Our specialty is outdoor patio furniture with a focus on cast aluminum and resin wicker furnishings and outdoor fabrics such as Sunbrella. **WHAT IS POPULAR THESE DAYS?** Cast aluminum is popular because it requires zero maintenance. It's an investment that you make once in a lifetime. Resin wicker has increased in popularity over the last 10 years. Also popular are propane or natural gas firepits and vibrant cushion colours.

HOW DO I KNOW I'M BUYING A QUALITY PIECE OF FURNITURE? All of our furniture is aluminum, so it won't rust! Many pieces are welded in a one-piece frame. Avoid rusty hardware or wobbly furniture. We stand behind our products with a 3-5-10-year warranty. **WHY DO CUSTOMERS COME TO INSIDE OUT?** We'll help you choose furniture you are happy with. Our consultants can also come to your home and help you plan the perfect space. We have a wide range of choices and options! We have deep seating sets small enough to fit comfortably on a balcony and large enough to furnish a roof-top terrace.



Holly Ohri and David McKim Space Age Shelving

WHAT IS YOUR SPECIALTY? We design custom adjustable wire and melamine closets and storage for all areas of homes, garages, offices and businesses. For over 25 years, we've worked with clients to clear clutter by providing free in-home consultations and designs to create maximum storage solutions tailored to fit requirements and budgets.

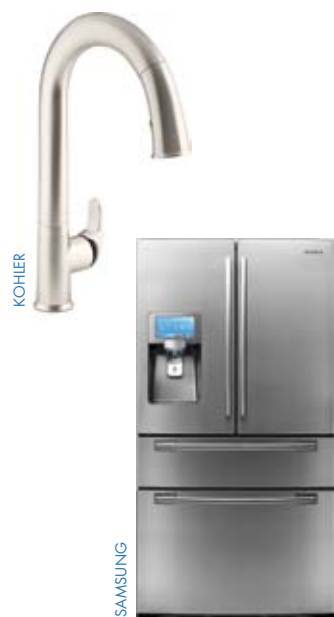
WHAT'S IMPORTANT WHEN ORGANIZING YOUR CLOSET? Determine how much short and long hanging is desired and what items will be stored on shelves. Consider additions like belt and scarf hooks or jewelry storage. For linen closets, remember that items such as ironing boards or vacuum hoses may be stored in that space.

WHAT'S A MUST-HAVE ITEM IN ORGANIZATION? A functional plan and proper installation is important. We take accurate measurements and take note of factors like door swings, bulkheads and attic access. **OH**



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Dear OH,
I'm building a new
home and giving a
lot of thought to my
kitchen. Can you
help me with some
current ideas for
new appliances and
generally modernizing
my space? – Donna



MODERN kitchens

THE MODERN KITCHEN

A kitchen has a lot of moving parts and when discussing technology we tend to focus on appliances. However, there are a few other ways to make your kitchen look modern and benefit from progress or changes in design.

Here is my Top 10 List of Kitchen Advances (including appliances) that will help you cook and entertain with ease:

1. Refrigeration. One new development is to make our fridges "smart" so to speak. LCD screens on the outside are compatible with apps for note taking, scheduling and viewing recipes. Say goodbye to sticky notes and magnets, and hello to a built-in information station. Some of the more mainstream brands are also including higher end options like LED lights, which really jazz up the interior.
2. In oven technology, one of the biggest changes is the rise in popularity of steam ovens. Injecting moisture into cooking will certainly keep meats moist, but these ovens also claim to reduce cooking time significantly. One drawback is the lack of browning you get with a traditional oven. However with that added time you can pop your chicken into your traditional oven for a quick broil.
3. With virtually no waiting time and absolute control, induction technology has changed the world of electric cooktops. The energy savings alone make up for the minor inconvenience of a glass surface (which is not resistant to scratching) and the need for magnetic pots. This is a small price to pay. Imagine, when your pasta starts to boil over you don't have to pick up that heavy pot to avoid a nasty mess, you simply turn the heat down and it instantly reacts.
4. A popular item that has become more affordable is the microwave drawer. With an open kitchen design, you tend to sacrifice upper cabinets. Instead, items are placed lower down, like in an island. With a microwave, this always posed a challenge. Using a drawer makes it easier as you access your food from above. This idea is brilliant.
5. Using a sensor (like in a public washroom), a touchless faucet is just that – you don't have to touch it. They are sanitary and convenient for little ones. This is ideal for hand washing (because they mix hot and cold water) but as your main kitchen faucet, you still have to adjust the temperature the old fashioned way.
6. A really luxe cabinetry option is the electronic drawer slide. You lightly touch the face of your drawer and it will electronically push itself out. To close, simply touch the face again and in it will

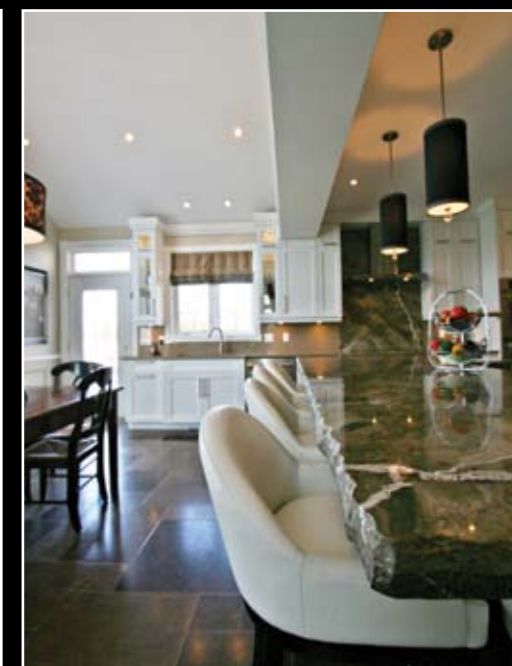


go. No more slamming and no more half closed drawers, but beware of the cost!

7. LED lighting technology has developed in leaps and bounds. If you were hesitant due to the inability to dim your lights and the cold stark tone, those problems have been solved. Warm light and dimmable bulbs make LED lighting the next generation in all things lit. The bulbs are pricey, but you will save big in the long run – they last for years and are energy efficient... and fully recyclable too!
8. Stainless steel and glass are not exactly new to the world, but their use in a modern setting can be remarkable. A glass or stainless backsplash is sleek and seamless (depending on size) making it a clean option compared to porous grout lines. Stainless toe kicks (the base of the cabinet) create a nice modern detail and glass walls make an otherwise dull space reflective and bright.
9. One of my favourite uses for an iPad is as a never-ending recipe book, however to use it properly you need a great stand. Try the P2 by Elago for a simple and affordable solution. Next time you have a question about cooking a roast, the answer will be right in front of you.
10. Whether cooking for yourself or a group, music is definitely important. So for the kitchen, try the Sonos wireless music system. This can be loaded onto your iPad (or maybe your fridge!) and connect you with any music, radio show or station you can access online. Limitless listening. I consider this a must-have (it's easy to use too).

The key to modernizing your space is to make it work for you. Think about how you live in your kitchen and what tools are important to you. For myself, it had to be sparse, clean, quick and easy. Translation: My appliances have glass fronts for easy cleaning; I installed big, long stainless pulls on my drawers for easy access; and the iPad became a permanent kitchen fixture. The only trouble is keeping it on the counter, and not in the hands of the kids! **OH**

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BY KELLY MENGELD
PHOTOGRAPHY BY JASON HARTOG



REMARKABLE REDESIGN

For some, finding their forever home is only a dream, but for Sandra and Sharn, their dreams have finally come true.

After falling in love with the family-friendly Roseland neighbourhood in Burlington, it was only a matter of time before they found the house that, together with designers from **Elizabeth Interiors** they turned into their home. “Sharn instantly fell in love with the house, but it took a little more convincing for me,” Sandra recalls. After looking past the white, uncharacteristic walls and considering what a designer could do to the spacious 3,700 sq. ft. home, she was convinced.

The Burlington-based design specialists at Elizabeth Interiors bring talent and imagination to transforming homes into a perfect reflection of the owner’s individual taste, personality, lifestyle and vision. After meeting with the designers and taking a couple of walks through the home, Sandra was confident that **Pamela Lahey** and **Michelle Mazzilli**

were a perfect fit for their redesign. “We felt that that they really knew what we wanted, which made the process that much more simple and relaxing. They turned something that could have been a trying experience into one that was effortless and enjoyable.”

“We were able to achieve an immediate wow factor effect upon entering the home, an opportunity we recognized from the initial walkthrough, and we went with it,” says Michelle.

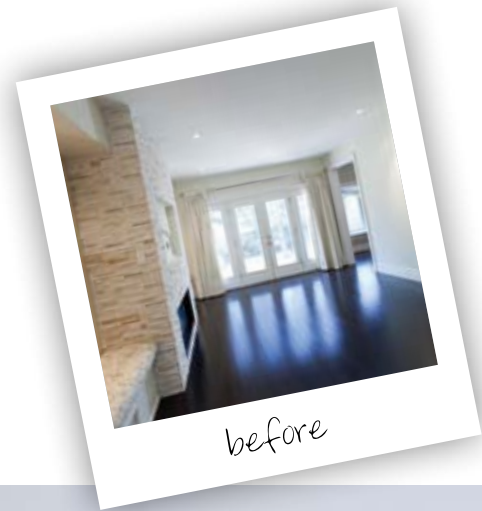
The couple chose to leave behind the décor from their previous home and began work on the redesign with a blank slate. Sandra first gathered inspiration by flipping through the pages of magazines in search of a classic design that would not easily become outdated.

With a strong sense of what the couple wanted, Pamela and Michelle stepped in and made their visions a reality. “We put together a room-by-room floor plan and presented our ideas to Sandra,” says Pamela. “It

Continued on page 39



A lighter wall colour brightened the walls and strategically placed furniture and an area rug defined and transformed the space. **OPPOSITE LEFT:** A pint-sized table by the window creates a space for the girls to play or have a snack. **OPPOSITE RIGHT:** Stools at the island provide additional seating.



A deeper wall colour allows the character of the stone fireplace to become a focal point. **ABOVE:** Gold accents in the entry provide a glimmer of sophistication. **OPPOSITE:** Splashes of colour in the family room create the perfect backdrop for the family of five to cuddle or relax on the custom sofa. **BELOW RIGHT:** The chandelier and mirror add a hint of sparkle and drama in the dining room.



was such an easy process since Sandra and Sharn loved almost all of our ideas, allowing us to get to work with little issue." Access to a wide array of furniture, accessories and textiles allowed Pamela and Michelle to hand-pick and custom-order items for a truly unique look.

With three young girls in the family, it was important for the house to not only be designed to their personal style, but be child-friendly as well. "We wanted to make sure that our kids feel at home in the house and that they are free to play," Sandra explains.

Walking through the newly-stained, dark-brown front door and

into the foyer and elegant living area, your mind is opened to endless possibilities. Tall windows encompass the entry and staircase, allowing sunlight to flow naturally into the home. The open risers that once adorned the staircase were enclosed and a plush runner was added for both beauty and the safety of the girls. A gold side table and intricately crafted mirror provide sparkle.

Just steps away from the front entrance, the main living room sets the stage for the home. Not only is it an elegant space in which to unwind and relax, a custom bookcase allows the family to incorporate their love

Continued on page 40



The dated and barren walls were replaced with elegant wallpaper, soft lighting and sumptuous fabrics to create a dreamy master bedroom retreat.

of reading into the space. Skirted charcoal sofas, clean-lined, exposed wood and occasional chairs encircle a glass coffee table. The space is both elegant and functional.

Spending quality time together is extremely important for Sandra and Sharn, which is why the formal dining room was designed with the whole family in mind. Simple but dramatic wall trim provides definition. An elegant Strauss crystal chandelier reflects light in every direction, saturates the warm grey room and highlights the natural walnut tones in the circular dining table. The metallic detail in the recessed ceiling provides a dramatic focal point. “The home is sophisticated, user friendly and elegant,” Pamela says. “There is now a sense of romance and elegance to the home that it was once lacking.”

The kitchen was the one room that required very little tweaking. High white cupboards encompass sleek, stainless steel appliances and provide ample storage. A long centre island provides additional workspace and seating.

Just off the kitchen in the family room, a stone fireplace flanked by built-in benches adds dimension to the room. Deep earth tones anchor the space,

and sheer drapes grace the french doors and provide an unencumbered view of the backyard. To round out the custom designed interior, the backyard is just as functional and exquisite, boasting a hot tub, pool and newly added shower to help keep outdoor fun where it belongs.

A major part of the redesign was to infuse the space with warmth and personality. Textured wallpaper in the main floor powder room and master bedroom bring new life into the rooms that no colour of paint could. In the master bedroom, a lush carpet adds luxury, and dramatic, yet simple drum fixtures hang from the ceiling to add function and visual interest.

Every inch was transformed into a functional, family-friendly space. “It’s a very practical house,” Sandra explains. “Every room has its purpose and no space is wasted.”

For Sandra and Sharn, what started out as a redesign turned into the creation of a home. They couldn’t be happier. Michelle sums up the entire redesign perfectly, “The simple fact that they are happy with their home is the ultimate compliment.” **OH**

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TREASURE HUNTING

BY YANIC SIMARD // PHOTOGRAPHY BY TED YARWOOD



PHOTO BY BRANDON BARRE

Nothing quite compares to the adrenaline rush you get while shopping for antiques – imagining where a piece came from, who it belonged to, and what it was used for is exciting.

The best part is that feeling you get when you have to have it, and you better grab it right away or someone else will. Remember: you snooze you lose!

Going through museum-like shops is an adventure and if you're a serious shopper looking for authentic antiques, then it's very important that you go well equipped. Here are some tips and guidelines to encourage a smart purchase and to avoid disappointment.

1. Do Your Homework

Taking a few hours and getting online or digging into a couple of books is well worth it so that you're well educated when it comes to buying the right item for you. You will want to learn about how to tell if an item is authentic or a reproduction, and what traits and characteristics to look for in determining the value. Just because something has a high price tag doesn't mean that it's real. The main goal is to make a confident buy and feel good about what you are taking home at the end of the day.

There is a vast array of books on this subject – my top picks include:

- Miller's Antiques Handbook and Price Guide 2012-2013
- Unitt's Book of Marks on Antiques & Collectibles
- Antiques 101: A Crash Course in Everything Antique

2. Restoration

Just because a piece looks "old" doesn't mean it's the perfect antique. It may actually be in very poor condition and in need of some TLC. Always fully inspect the item before deciding to buy it:

- Open its drawers or doors
- Examine the bottom of it
- Check that its legs or arms are steady
- Pick up the piece to see if anything falls off
- Smell the item – odd odours could mean rot or decay
- Look for any cracked glass

A stack of travel-worn suitcases makes a perfect bedside table and creates hidden storage.

Vintage books and sports equipment give the room a sense of history.

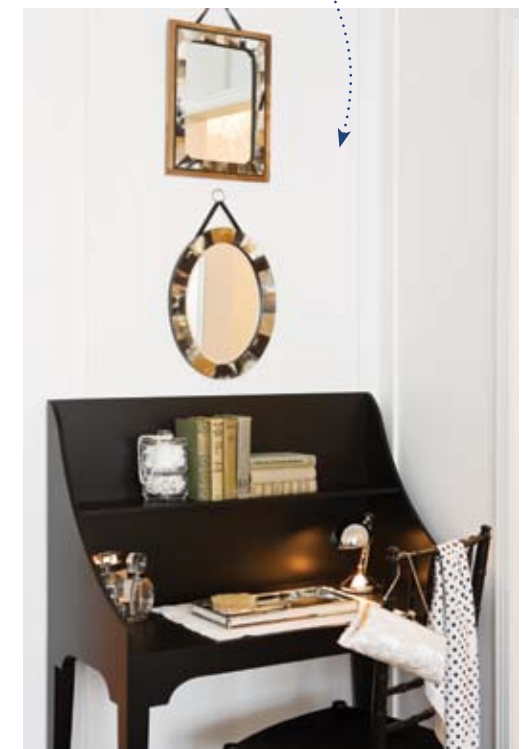


If antique ceramics are too delicate for everyday use, an arrangement of them on the wall can make a subtle artistic statement.



Incorporating accessories into your workspace can be simple: colourful spools of thread, a wrought-iron judy, and framed prints of vintage sewing patterns tell of this homeowner's love of fashion.

Similarly-themed items make a charming vignette in even the smallest spaces.



- Run your hand against the surface (if an antique is chipped, torn or damaged in any way, it may decrease its value drastically)
- If the piece is in need of some work, then it's a good idea to ask the seller if they know how and if it can be reconditioned. It's always wise to know what to expect ahead of time, so that way you know what you're in for once it's yours.

If you're a good "do-it-yourselfer," then you may be able to tackle some of the restoration on your own. However, if you're not 100 per cent confident in your DIY abilities then you may want to have a professional take care of it. There are many small shops that specialize in the refurbishment business.

3. Look Outside The Antique Shop

Antiques and unique collectibles are around us everywhere. Check out flea markets or garage sales; sometimes even local malls hold antique bazaars. I actually found an amazing elaborate gilt side table for my place curb-side! Browse often and compare – the more you search the more you'll know, which will help in finding the perfect items for you and your home.

4. Shopping in the UK

The United Kingdom is very well known for its authentic antiques, so if you're really interested in this field, I would highly suggest taking the trip. The UK has a prominent history in trade and invention, and many of the pieces from these times still remain in the region.

You might want to consider planning your trip around an antique fair. England's biggest is held at Newark in Nottinghamshire, which has 4,000 stalls of vendors! Following close behind with 3,000 stalls is the Arthur Swallow fair at the Lincolnshire Showground, which takes place six times a year. London's Portobello Market is also a wonderful place to browse for the perfect treasure.

There are also many antique centres that take place all year around. Two renowned dealers you may want to check out would be Woburn Abbey Antiques Centre in Bedfordshire and Edenbridge Galleries in Kent House where there are many individual shops selling furniture, clocks and ceramics.

My favourite antique market of all time is Le Marché aux Puces de Saint-Ouen in Paris. **OH**

PLANNING A HOME RENO?

A New Year, a fresh start and the time when so many of us resolve to do things to make us feel better. While many vow to get healthy and get fit, others vow to finish projects around the house that have gone on for far too long.

Perhaps a little help from technology can help us turn our house into a home once and for all. As the expression goes, there's an app for that – apps that can help you renovate, plan your garden and easily share files with trade professionals.

Here are a few ideas to help get you started.

#HomeRenovationApps

PHOTO MEASURES

Sharing measurements has never been easier. Take a picture with your iPhone or iPad and draw all your measurements right on the picture elevation. Say farewell to matching notes with photographs. Also, every picture you take can be saved into folders for easy organization; you can send the images to your email or just save them to your photo library.

HOME SIZER

Need to calculate the square footage of a room in your home? Home Sizer allows you to enter dimensions and it calculates the square footage of any space in your house. It can also estimate gross square footage of your entire house.

RENOVATION BUDGET TRACKER

Don't lose track of your budget again. This app allows you to build your budget and track your expenses quickly and easily. Now sticking to your budget – is up to you!

EASYMEASURE

Forgot your measuring tape at home? No problem. EasyMeasure shows you the distance to objects seen through the camera lens of your iPhone or iPad. Great for that impromptu drop in at your favourite furniture showroom.

MYGARDEN.ORG

This site is great for the social gardener. It's a great resource for learning from other gardeners. By completing your personal garden profile, you have the ability to create wish lists and an automatic to-do list of all the tasks your garden will need on a month to month basis.

Courtesy of Wendy Hicken, Principal Juice Marketing Group: As an integrated marketing firm specializing in social media, our purpose is to help stimulate new business for you with our marketing know-how. We offer value-driven, results-focused marketing initiatives.

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finishing touch



SPRINGTIME EGGS EN *cocotte*

BY MARIA DASILVA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY SCOTT HUNTER

I love eggs. Eggs always have my back. I count on them at least once a week for a quick and easy dinner. Breakfast never seems quite complete without them. And when I feel the need to impress there's baked eggs – oeufs en cocotte if I'm really out to make an impression!

I consider eggs en cocotte to be the “little black dress” of egg dishes. You can dress them up for any occasion. They are so lovely in their individual ramekins and have a perfect balance of delicacy and richness. Like little pots of heaven!

And they're dead easy. Just take care to not overcook them or the egg will become rubbery and certainly lose its appeal. Remember that the ramekin retains heat and the egg will continue cooking once out of the oven.

For this recipe, the eggs are enhanced with asparagus and mushrooms to celebrate spring. But you can play with other ingredients in the dish. Consider sautéed spinach and crumbled feta cheese, or chopped tomatoes and shredded cheddar cheese, or crispy bacon bits and parsley. The options are endless! And if you're cooking for a crowd the recipe easily doubles, or even triples.

EGGS EN COCOTTE

Serves 2

2 tsp olive oil

4 mushrooms, thinly sliced

4 spears asparagus, trimmed and cut into 1-inch pieces

2 tbsp whipping cream

2 eggs

1 tbsp finely grated Parmesan cheese

Pinch each salt and cracked pepper

1 tbsp chopped fresh chives

- In small skillet, heat oil over medium-high heat, fry mushrooms until golden brown, about 6 minutes. Transfer to plate. In same skillet, fry asparagus until bright green and tender, about 3 minutes. Transfer to plate with mushrooms.
- Divide mushrooms and asparagus between two buttered 1-cup ovenproof ramekins. Into each add half of the cream, one of the eggs and sprinkle with half of the Parmesan.
- Place ramekins in baking dish. Pour boiling water into the dish until it reaches halfway up the sides of the ramekins.
- Bake in 375°F oven until egg whites are set on the edge, but the centre is still slightly jiggly and the yolks remain soft, about 8 minutes. Sprinkle each with salt and pepper and half of the chives. Let stand for 2 to 3 minutes before serving with toast points. **OH**



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