



Home-decor publications are looking for photography that reveals something of the owner's interests. Magazine stylist Carol Schalla prepared this view of writer Chelley Kitzmiller's remodeled kitchen, complete with rooster seeming to welcome the morning sunrise. *Maurice Victoria*



INSIDE. Stories

How slick
can you get:
Your home
might star
in a
national
magazine
spread

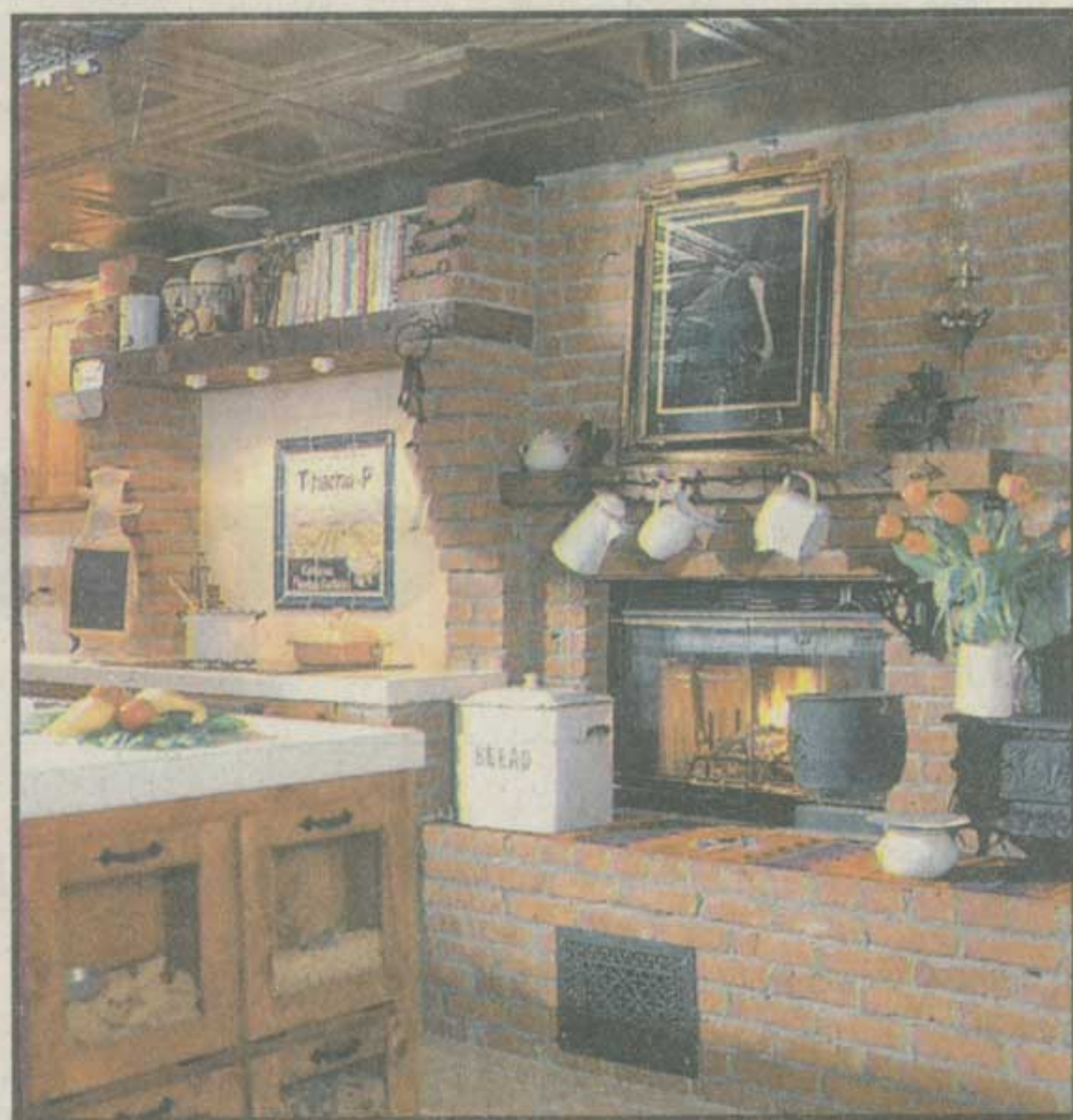
By Chelley Kitzmiller

TEHACHAPI — These days it seems there is at least one decorating magazine for every style and taste. The featured homes are picture perfect with colorful fruits and vegetables on kitchen counter tops looking as though the cook just took a break; dining room tables are uniquely set with florist-shop flowers and fancy folded napkins; and bedrooms look too perfect to be slept in.

Are the rooms sets or are they real? And, if they are real, who owns the homes and how does the magazine find them?

Those were questions I had asked myself many times but just never bothered to find out. Besides, what was the point? I consider myself a typical homeowner with a nice house, but one that by no means is architecturally significant.

Still, my curiosity wasn't satisfied. And those innocent but nag-



Vintage tins and cowboy memorabilia were placed by the magazine crew near the hearth of the see-through fireplace in Kitzmiller's remodeled kitchen to accentuate the Old West feel of the room. *Maurice Victoria*

Which homes are featured in decor magazines?

ging questions eventually would lead to a triple-play, three features in a national publication that involved not only my house, but those of two couples nearby.

Something to share

Three years ago, my husband and I hired a contractor to renovate our kitchen, dining room and turn the bedroom behind the dining room into a state-of-the-art office.

Once that was finished we looked forward to revamping the upstairs — three odd-sized rooms whose original purpose was a mystery since there was no bathroom. We decided to

A photographer, stylist, art director and editor came with surprisingly few props — flowers and fruits — as well as extensive lighting gear. That was it.

turn the entire upstairs into a master suite — all the rage in the newer homes.

We redecorated the larger of the three upstairs rooms and made it the bedroom, turned the small center room into an exercise room and plumbed the third room for a bathroom.

My love of the Old West guided my decorating theme. I have cowboy-and-Indian-style furniture, textiles, pictures and memorabilia throughout the house. When it came to decorating my new kitchen, I knew I

wanted to use the enamelware I'd collected and I wanted to incorporate lots of color. I was really hungry for color after years of earth tones.

The upstairs bathroom was my biggest challenge. I wanted the look of Old Tucson, circa 1870, which is the same time period in which my last three novels are set.

I turned to friend Elaine Palance to help fulfill that dream. Now, when I step into my bathroom, via a swinging bat-wing door, I step back into time.

The overall result, I thought, was a stunning transformation — a master suite to rival anything I had seen in a magazine.

It was a project I wanted to share.

A year ago, I sat down with a copy of *Country Sampler Decorating Ideas* magazine and thumbed through the pages. The magazine, I found out, is a national publication based in suburban Chicago with a circulation of 210,000.

With companion publications, the magazine showcases all styles of country decor. But what captured my interest was a cover story featuring a house decorated in "camp" style, which has similarities to my Old West decorating scheme.

On a whim, and with my remodel in mind, I turned to the contents page and called. I asked the receptionist for the editor, Michael R. Morris.

After leaving a voice-mail message, he was back to me the next day.

I described my home to Morris, and he suggested I send in pictures of my rooms with descriptions of what had been done. I am not a good photographer and told him so but he said not to worry, send the photos anyway.

"We love receiving photos of our readers' homes," he explained. "We don't do show-home type magazines. Most of the locations we feature are average, everyday homeowners decorating on a budget."

After viewing my photos, he called back and said he would like to feature my new kitchen and upstairs bathroom. I was on the way to answering some of those questions about how homes are featured in magazines.



Magazine stylist Sunday Hendrickson works with photographer Rick Szczechowski to find just the right angle to feature the kitchen entry of the Tehachapi-area home of Lyndee and Scott Richmond. *Chelley Kitzmiller*

Going for broke

Since my eye for design had been confirmed, I felt bold enough to ask if he would also like to see the results of projects undertaken by some friends in the Tehachapi area, in the hill country 35 miles east of Bakersfield, including the home of Elaine and her husband, movie actor Jack Palance.

The answer to that question turned up in the April issue of the magazine's companion publication, *Country Sampler Decorating Ideas*, featuring the Palances' Cummings Valley ranch home. It was the first of three Tehachapi-area homes that will be featured by the publisher's various publications.

In spite of her husband's fame as a movie star, Elaine's

medium-sized ranch home is modest in size and design.

An interior designer by trade, Elaine owns and operates Cielo Ranch Designs, which specializes in fabricating one-of-a-kind bedroom ensembles.

Her home needed an animal- and grandchild-friendly atmosphere without sacrificing the casual elegance she enjoys. Mexican pavers throughout the downstairs helped her create that goal. Textiles of varying textures and patterns were used throughout, along with a motif that clearly evoked Jack's Western roles, such as the grizzled trail boss in "City Slickers" — a role he won an Academy Award for as Best Supporting Actor. Pairs of well-worn West-

ern boots greet guests at the front door.

A design overhaul

But the Palance house wasn't the only other home in the area the magazine was interested in. In essence, I had become the editors' scout, sending in photos of my friends' homes.

Next up? Neighbors Lyndee and Scott Richmond's home is scheduled to appear in the October issue.

When the Richmonds bought their home, it was a nightmare, much too small for the family of six and badly in need of repair. Today, after a design overhaul, the home is testimony to a vivid imagination and good planning with classic country elegance.

Lyndee's vintage Flo-Blue china collection is used as a continuing theme throughout the downstairs. Going where few people dare to go, Lyndee has used brick red and golden-rod yellow paint to make her walls come alive.

While the Palance home was featured first, my turn arrived when *Country Sampler Decorating Ideas Kitchen and Bath Ideas* (May issue) came out with a feature on my kitchen and bathroom.

For the Palance and my home shoots, the magazine

sent its own editorial crew (a free-lance crew was used on the Richmond feature).

From eight in the morning to eight the evening, magazine staffers kept both families busy for three days, not quite taking over our homes.

A photographer, stylist, art director and editor came with surprisingly few props — flowers and fruits — as well as extensive lighting gear.

That was it, aside from moving a few of my decorating items around. For example, a bread box was placed strategically near my kitchen hearth.

The lighting equipment came in handy in my bathroom, when a gloomy day dictated the use of artificial lighting to create the look of morning light.

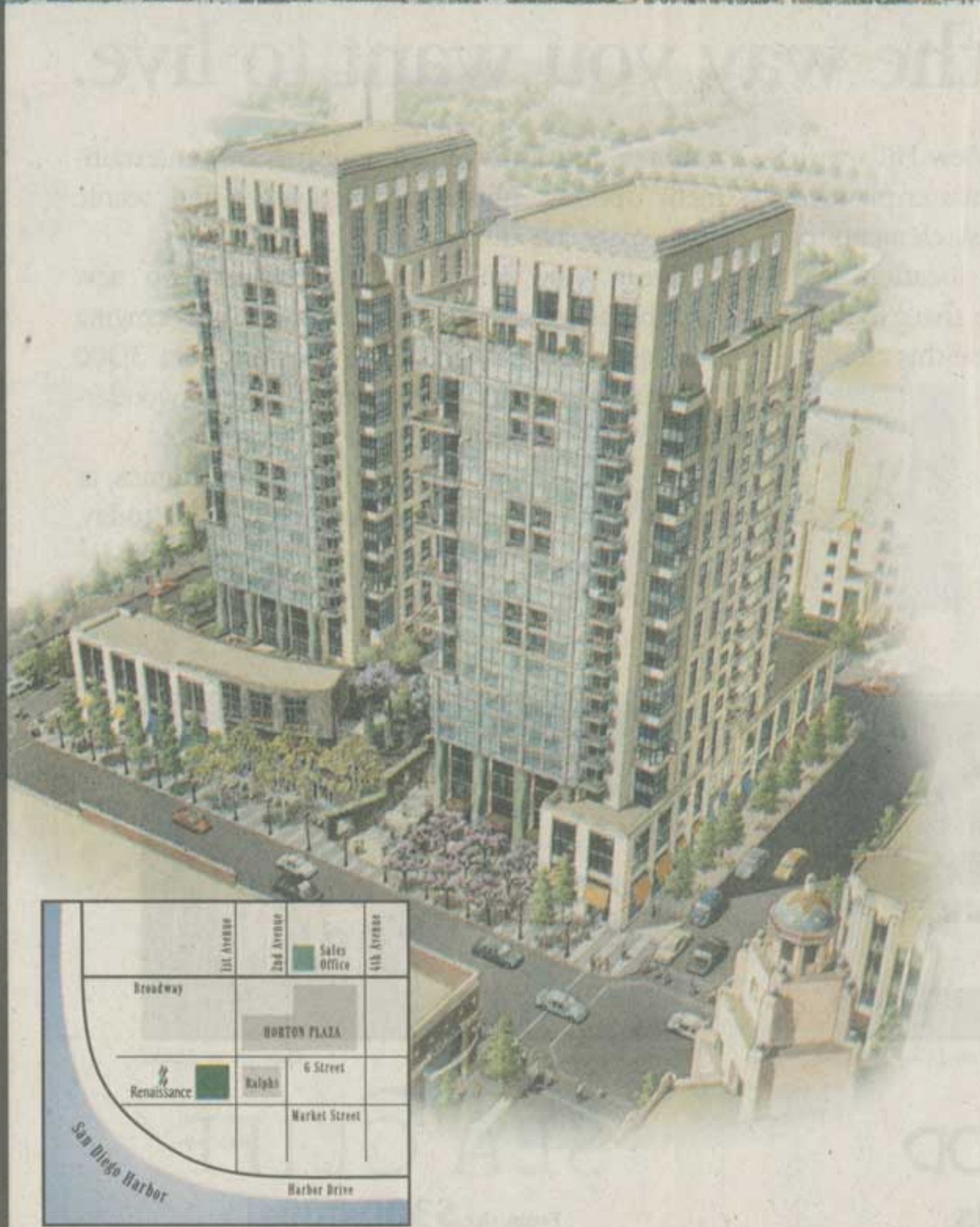
When it was all over, we had a different sort of house warming.

"We were won over by the Tehachapi hospitality," said Dennis Morgan, senior art director of *Country Sampler* and one of four who came for the shoot.

And from those few simple questions raised while thumbing through a magazine, I had my answer.

Chelley Kitzmiller is a historical romance novelist who lives in Tehachapi.

The Way We See It



Life is simply too short and time too precious to waste in rush hour traffic. What could you do with more personal time in the mornings and afternoons? At Renaissance, you could walk or jog along the Embarcadero, have coffee at a sidewalk cafe, work out in the fitness center, swim some laps, shop next door at Ralphs or Horton Plaza, or occasionally, just sleep in. That's because Renaissance is a sophisticated downtown community of condominiums, lofts, townhouses, and penthouses designed for your active lifestyle and located in the heart of San Diego's Marina District. Discover the luxury and convenience of Renaissance and find some extra time for living.

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How to curry exposure in pages of a magazine

While the majority of homes featured in magazines are found by on-staff creative directors and by scouts, it is possible for a homeowner to solicit coverage.

If you would like to show off a remodeling project or decorating ideas in your home, gather magazines that feature styles similar to yours, then take pictures and query the editors.

Here are a few tips to help you.

- Study the magazine to make sure it features your kind of decorating style.
- Clean your house and put all clutter away.
- Set tables not just attractively but with imagination, using things that may not be practical but which look great.
- Use a good camera and good film to take your pictures. Digital cameras and e-mail work well, too.
- Pick a bright, sunny day to take your pictures. Open the curtains, lift the shades.
- If there are still dark areas, bring in floodlights, even goose-necked desk lamps will help.

In magazine layouts, most pictures focus on a corner of a room, or a detail, rather than wide-view, straight-on shots. Take several shots of one room from different angles. Make sure the camera is seeing exactly what you want it to see. Using a digital camera or a Polaroid is a good way to determine what your camera is seeing before you take the actual picture.

With photos in hand, write a simple query letter to the editor. Put a number on the back of each photo and reference it

when you describe it (note the way a room like yours is described in a magazine).

If the magazine is of the how-to variety, focus on what you did to create a particular look, such as faux painting, stenciling, a window treatment, etc. Remember that "before" shots often are valuable in showing how the room was enhanced.

Enclose a stamped, self-addressed envelope if you want your photos back. Include your name, address, phone and e-mail.

A sampling of magazines that accept homeowners' queries include:

Country Sampler Decorating Ideas and *Country Sampler Decorating Ideas Kitchen and Bath Ideas*: Mike Morris, editor, 707 Kautz Road, St. Charles, IL 60174, e-mail: mmorris@samplermag.com. Mail queries and e-mail queries accepted.

Mary Engelbreit Home Companion: Editorial Department, 6358 Del Mar Blvd., Suite 450, St. Louis, Mo. 63130-4719. Looking for styles that are "unique, eclectic, quirky and funky."

Romantic Homes: Rebecca Itner, associate editor, 265 S. Anita Drive, Suite 120, Orange, CA 92868-3310. Mail queries accepted.

Victoria Magazine: Cynthia Searight, creative director, 224 W. 57th St., New York, NY 10019. Accepts mail queries only.

Victorian Homes: Erika Kotite, editor, 265 S. Anita Drive, Suite 120, Orange, CA 92868-3310. Features homes built 1850-1905. Gardens, too. Accepts mail queries.

—CHELLEY KITZMILLER

