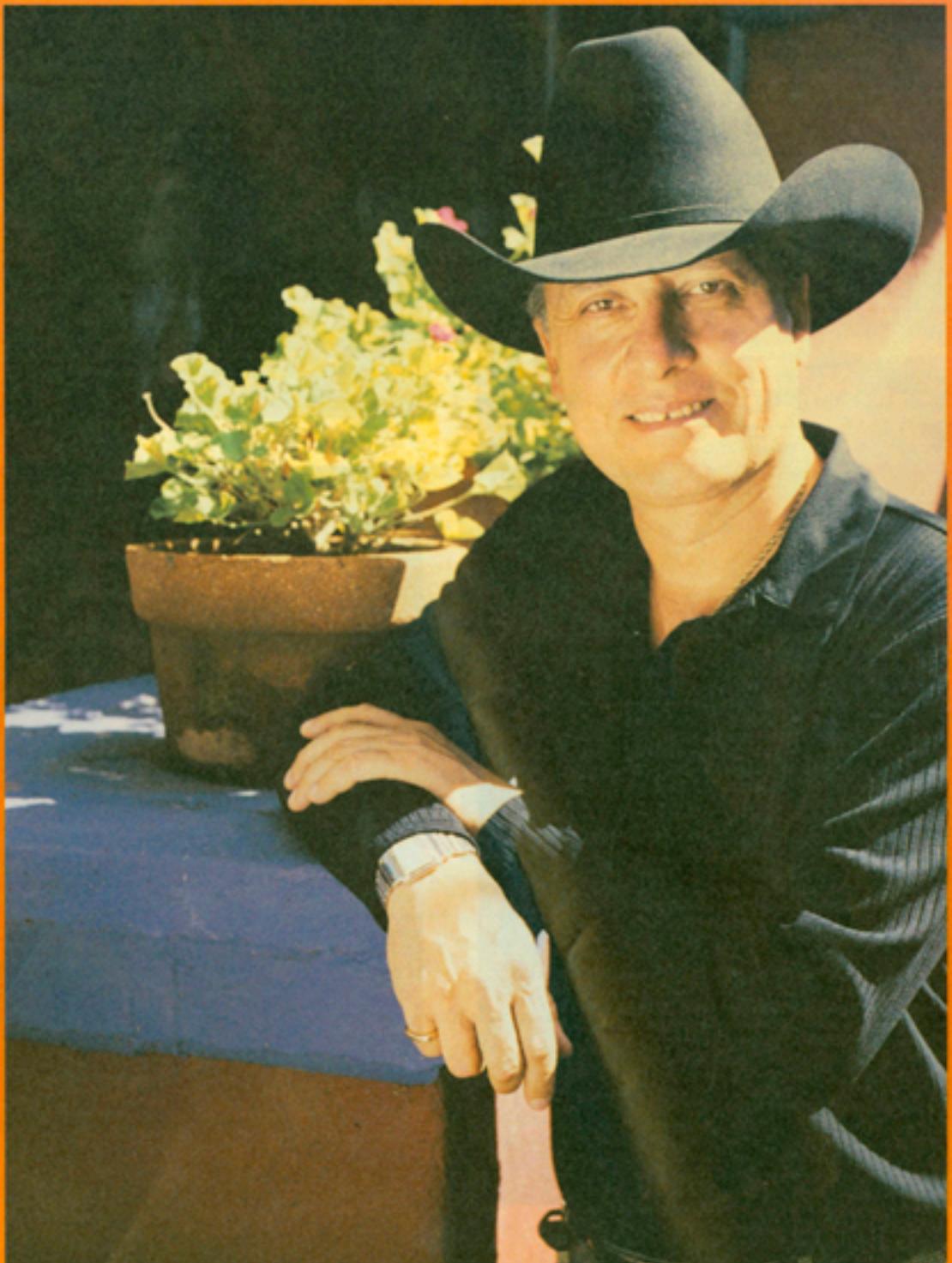


SANTA FE • ALBUQUERQUE • TAOS

OCTOBER 2002

# local flavor

FERNANDO OLEA OF EL ENCANTO



# renaissance at



Once upon a time we baby boomers were young and so pure that nothing artificial passed our lips or touched our precious bodies—we were like totally organic, man. But then came careers and kids, cell phones and computers. Sure we bought organic bananas when we could, but the concept of living that way became—well, as passé as bell bottoms, unshaved legs and sitar music.

Everything, we know, is cyclical. Bell bottoms are back. So maybe it's time to rethink the things that surround us. It's no big secret that the air quality in our homes can be pretty vile. There's everything from formaldehyde in carpets and asbestos in insulation to horrid little dust mites that look like tiny space aliens creeping around in our pillows.

What to do? Visit Daryl Stanton at Casa Natura. "I have high standards," she says. "All my things have to be healthy for people and also healthy for the environment." Think that means everything looks more or less like oatmeal? Definitely wrong. Here are shades of saffron and celadon that look like they popped from a Renaissance tapestry and there a fine web of eggplant-hued fibers ensnare a meadow of dried wildflowers. Everything from cork flooring samples to shower curtains may be organic, but it is also exquisitely gorgeous. "Beauty is primary to me," says Daryl.

This compact, but airy space is more than a store. It is a lifetime journey of careful thought for Stanton. With a doctorate in humanistic studies, she spent the early eighties consulting private clients on health and nutrition. "Around that time, I completely remodeled and redecorated my home," she recalls. "I immediately got very sick. No one had ever heard of environmental illness then." As she recovered, Daryl began the quest for better, safer ways to furnish and build a home. She learned how conventional materials were processed, then sought more natural alternatives.

Daryl is also a lifelong environmentalist and she began to realize that her two interests were really one. "Take cotton for instance," she says. "It's a crop that gets one of the heaviest uses of pesticides, then more chemicals are used to process, bleach and dye it. So it doesn't just affect the person who buys it for their home, but also the farmer, the factory workers and ultimately the environment. Many of these products create toxic waste and take up space in landfills."

The reverse is also true. "When you purchase something made from organically grown cotton, wool from sheep



grazed on pesticide-free land or wood that is sustainably harvested, you are helping an organic farmer, an artisan or a small company that is trying very hard to do something good."

Daryl has built two lovely homes in Santa Fe. "The first was healthy, the second was ecological as well as healthy," she says. It was such a learning experience that she began consulting with others about using more natural materials in their homes, then began selling some of the products she used. "It was by appointment only," she explains. "But gradually, people wanted to be able to come without an appointment or buy something without waiting for an order. At the same time, I wanted to go more mainstream and be able to reach more people." So last winter she opened Casa Natura.

The store is a treasure trove of things Mom Nature would love—posh bedding and towels, silky p.j.'s, adorable baby things, air filters and gauzy drapes. Plus, Daryl can handle just about any custom job from upholstery to floors. She even sells organic chocolate and clever gifties made from recycled metal.

A lively three-year-old bounces through the door. "He's been having some asthma," says his young mom. She's been here before, buying cotton bedding grown in its own natural colors and soft as a whisper. Asthma rates among children have exploded in recent years and she figures reducing the allergens and irritants around him may help. So today she'll take the next step and buy him a new bed.

"We spend a third of our lives sleeping," Daryl says. She carries Samina Sleep System beds made from organic cotton, merino wool, and natural latex (not an oxymoron, it comes from a rubber tree). Besides being chemical free, these materials are also inhospitable to the nasty dust mites. Instead of box springs, sustainably harvested ash wood slats support the body in a

# casa natura

way that cradles every curve. "Comfy?" the boy's mom asks as they take the bed for a test drive. But he'd rather talk about the three bears.

While the beds can cost in the several thousands of dollars, many things are no more expensive than their not-so-natural counterparts. As a bonus, untreated fibers feel like heaven. And with the use of organic dyes in sophisticated colors, the earth mama look is just as dead as a Herman's Hermits album. In fact, organic materials can blend perfectly with everything from French antiques to contemporary chic. "I have things that are beautiful," says Daryl with a twinkle. "And they just happen to be healthy too."

*Casa Natura is located at 544 Agua Fria in Santa Fe and is open Tuesday through Saturday from 11am to 5pm. (505) 820-7634*



AT LEFT: DARYL  
STANTON OF  
CASA NATURA

