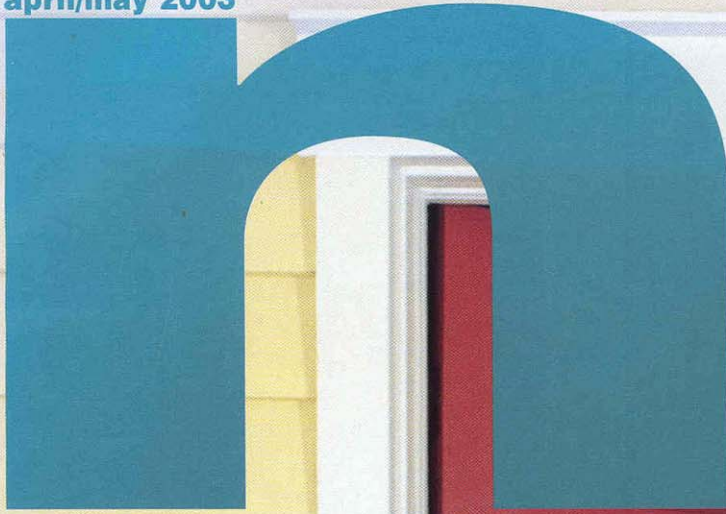
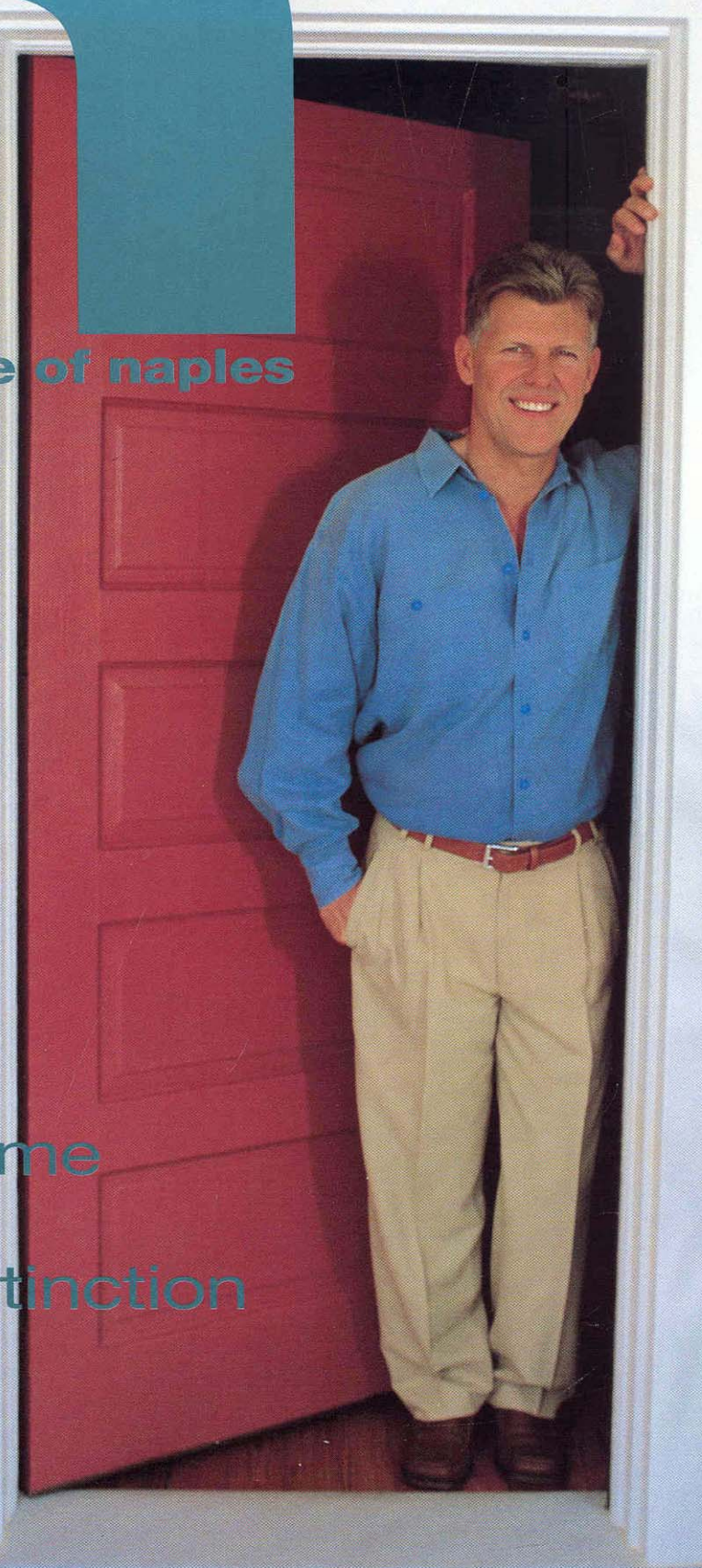


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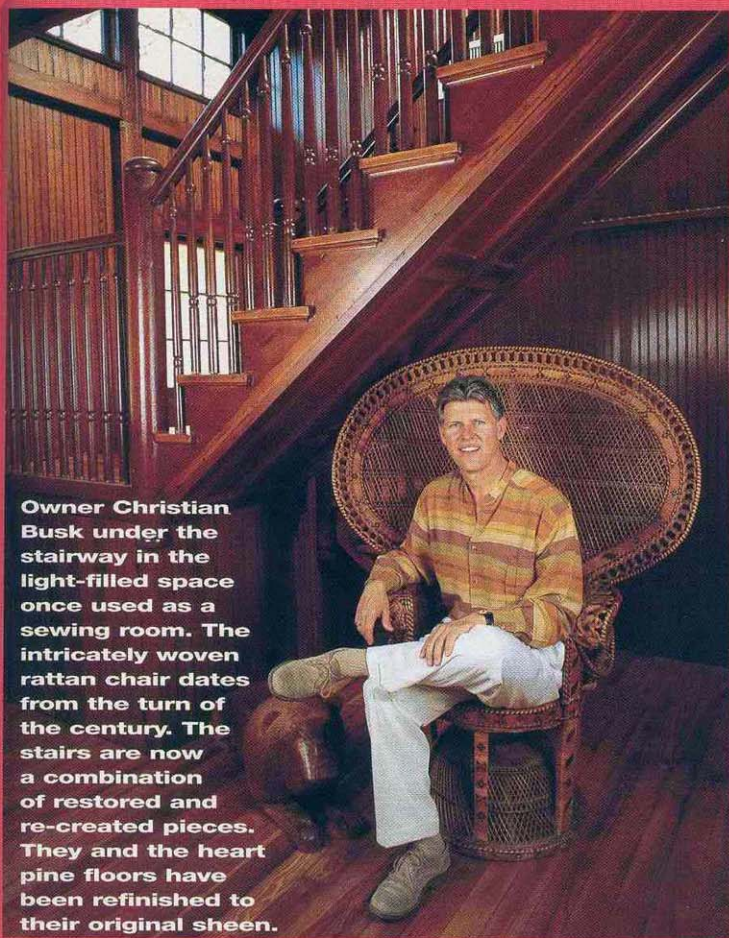
historic home
men of distinction





The 1915 home Christian Busk bought, moved and renovated looks right at home beside Oak Creek in Bohita Springs. The newly planted landscaping hints at the plans the landscape architect has for his new home.

his old house



Owner Christian Busk under the stairway in the light-filled space once used as a sewing room. The intricately woven rattan chair dates from the turn of the century. The stairs are now a combination of restored and re-created pieces. They and the heart pine floors have been refinished to their original sheen.

It looks like it has been there forever. The lemon yellow cottage on a busy corner in Bonita Springs sports a freshly painted red front door, newly planted palms, sod and hedges; just the sort of changes a homeowner would make when updating an older property. But these cosmetic changes merely hint at the scope of this unusual renovation project. This old house was built in 1915, and, until very recently, stood in sad disrepair miles from its present proud location.

STORY BY JANE SULLIVAN
PHOTOGRAPHY BY TIM STAMM

Landscape architect Christian Busk first saw the house on the front page of the *Bonita Banner* along with a story that caught his imagination. Developer Roy Evans had just bought the property across from the school on Dean Street and decided that, rather than demolish the house, he would offer it for sale for one dollar—with one condition. It must be sold to a qualified buyer who would move the derelict structure. Initially intrigued by the story, Busk waited a day before he called and was the 20th person Evans interviewed. What Busk saw amid the ruins was “Ideal spaces. I could see the rooms. I saw the wonderful proportions that referenced a grander scale. I wanted to see the house restored—but to a state better than it ever was.” After a 15-minute conversation about his professional experience and prior renovations, Busk was told, “Ok, it’s yours.” Then came the hard parts—where to move the house and what to do with it.

In an area as rich in history as Bonita Springs, it was surprisingly hard to find a lot suitable for the house. Busk’s goal was to find a neighborhood that still reflected something of old Florida, a place that came before Mediterranean became synonymous with style. He found it in a neighborhood of tree-lined streets that crossed and re-crossed Oak Creek. Oak Creek has its origins in the nearby spring on the grounds of the old Shangri-La resort—the spring that some say gave Bonita Springs its name. The lot that he chose backs right up to the creek and its overhanging trees, ensuring a view from many windows of a scene largely unchanged for the past 100 years. His initial plan to use the structure as an office for his firm, Christian Busk Landscape Architects, was soon scrapped in favor of reinventing the old house as a comfortable present-day home. After many twists and turns along the way, that plan has been realized.

In a feat of engineering magic, the Fort Myers firm of Flint and Doyle moved the structure during two nights, then other craftsmen, including carpenters from Viking Construction, eagerly moved in to lend their diverse skills. Barry Reardon of Island Construction says, “This house is beautifully proportioned and is now well-situated. The original construction is remarkable for its time. The project presented us with a wonderful challenge and also gave us a welcome change from the sort of construction we do every day. The goal was to bring the house up to present day standards without compromising its original integrity.” For the builders, that meant finding ways to introduce lighting, plumbing and air conditioning into a structure never designed for those conveniences. Busk credits teams from Aero Plumbing and Excel Electric for their work in finding creative solutions to those practical problems.

