

MEN'S WELLNESS

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Local Men on Wellness

Masculine Skin Care

Rosemary Court's Jon Sheintal

Boosting Men's Vitality

PLUS!

Nick Gladding Talks Green

Feng Shui from A to Z

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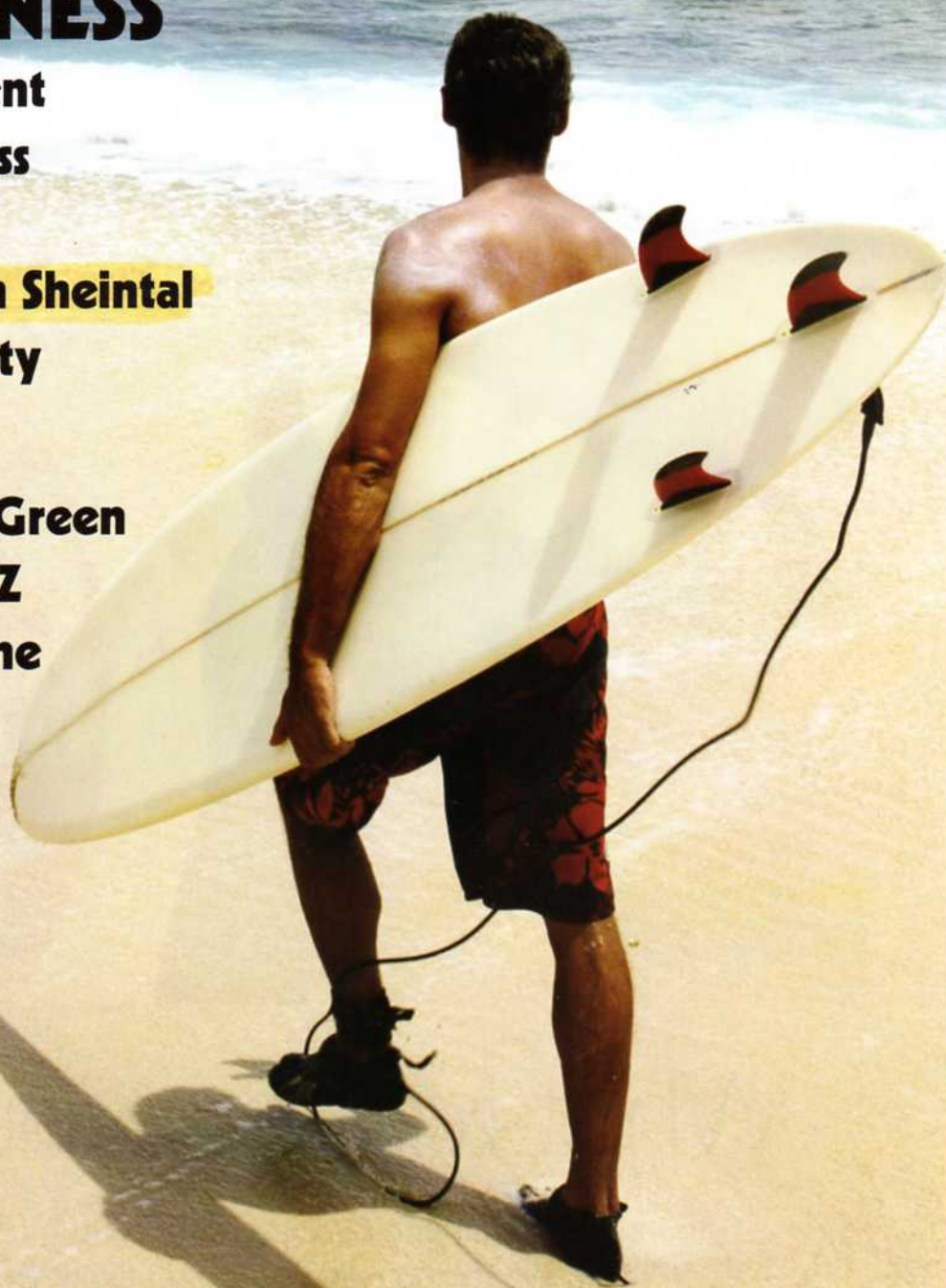
GREEN LIVING

HEALTHY EATING

PERSONAL GROWTH

TOTAL WELLNESS

TRAVEL ADVENTURES





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Rosemary Court's Jon Sheintal

Rising from the Ashes to Embrace Wellness

by Barbara Ann Weibel

When Jon Sheintal purchased Rosemary Court in 1996, of the four historic buildings on the site, one had been destroyed by fire, two were abandoned, and a hippie commune inhabited the fourth. Shortly after closing on the property, Sheintal learned that the ringleader of the commune, a dreadlocked son of a former Florida legislator, openly grew and sold marijuana from the premises, leaving only to attend Grateful Dead concerts. He also discovered that he could not insure the complex until the windows of the abandoned buildings were boarded up and the doors were secured with new locks. Although he immediately began repairs, before he could complete the work, the last remaining habitable building was purposely set on fire, requiring that it, too, be vacated.

Over the ensuing three years, Sheintal methodically restored the buildings, providing a mix of residential and commercial office space. Although his initial vision was to rent to artists, he was only able to attract starving young wannabes who drew on the walls and were destructive to the property. It wasn't long before he evicted the artists and sought an entirely different approach, one that would not only provide services to the community, but also be a good fit for the Rosemary neighborhood, which was by then enjoying resurgence due to its location just north of downtown Sarasota. The result was the holistic, wellness-related group of businesses that still occupy the complex, located at 800-830 N. Central Avenue in the historic Rosemary District.

Rosemary Court was originally the brainchild of a partnership between local entrepreneurs Ed Assip and Roger Morris. In 1986, the partners learned about three historic houses on Sunset Drive near the Ringling Causeway that were slated for demolition to make way for new development. They also discovered that the homes were free for the taking if they would move the structures at their own expense. Simultaneously, a strong preservationist movement was afoot in Sarasota. A group of concerned citizens was campaigning to clean up Rosemary Cemetery, which was the focal point of the neighborhood and the final resting place for many of the town's pioneers. Historic buildings like the Crocker Church were being moved onto empty lots in the Rosemary District and renovated. Seeing the potential for the neighborhood, Assip and Morris moved the houses to an empty lot across from the cemetery and began the renovation process.

The houses were arranged in a U-shape,



surrounding a spacious front courtyard. The Colonial Revival built in 1917 for city attorney John F. Burkett was positioned in the center. Flanking the Burkett house to the south was another Colonial Revival, built in 1936 for James Mason, who came to Sarasota as a Seaboard Railway supervisor. The 1928 saltbox built for Alva J. Fisher, inventor of the Thor washing machine, was placed on the north side of the lot, and the home's original detached garage was tucked into the northeast corner. Once the structures were in place, the partners began extensive restorations necessitated by neglect, termite damage, and even a fire in one wing of the Burkett house. Unfortunately, by the time the buildings were ready for occupancy, the real estate market was depressed, and in 1996, the complex was listed for sale.

Enter Jon Sheintal, a local contractor. "I was building cookie-cutter houses and subdivisions in Sarasota, and I just couldn't stand it anymore," Sheintal says. He began buying downtown properties that had a sense of history, adding that he "likes the idea of hammering the same nail that someone originally pounded in 1920." The Rosemary Court complex was an opportunity he just couldn't pass up, not only for the history surrounding it, but also because of the potential for the up-and-coming neighborhood.

Today, the complex is home to a yoga center, a number of holistic healthcare

professionals, and to the Rosemary Birthing Center, where scores of local mothers-to-be receive prenatal care and deliver their babies in a natural, homey environment. One can sign up to receive a weekly grocery basket of organic produce through Green Door Organics, learn to meditate, join a book discussion group, or take a pole-dancing class. A variety of alternative healthcare modalities are offered, including therapeutic massage, Reiki, craniosacral therapy, Chinese medicine, past-life regressions, acupuncture, floral essence therapy, and energetic bodywork.

Having been rescued from the brink of destruction and survived neglect, infestation, and at least two serious fires, Rosemary Court is literally a Phoenix rising from the ashes. It is only fitting that the complex, which today embraces wellness, should be located in a neighborhood that annually celebrates itself with the "Rosemary Rising" festival.

Barbara Ann Weibel recently left corporate life to backpack around the world for six months and pursue a career in travel writing. Wherever she goes, she seeks out yoga retreats, workshops, and classes. Contact her at baweibel@easywebsite.net.

