

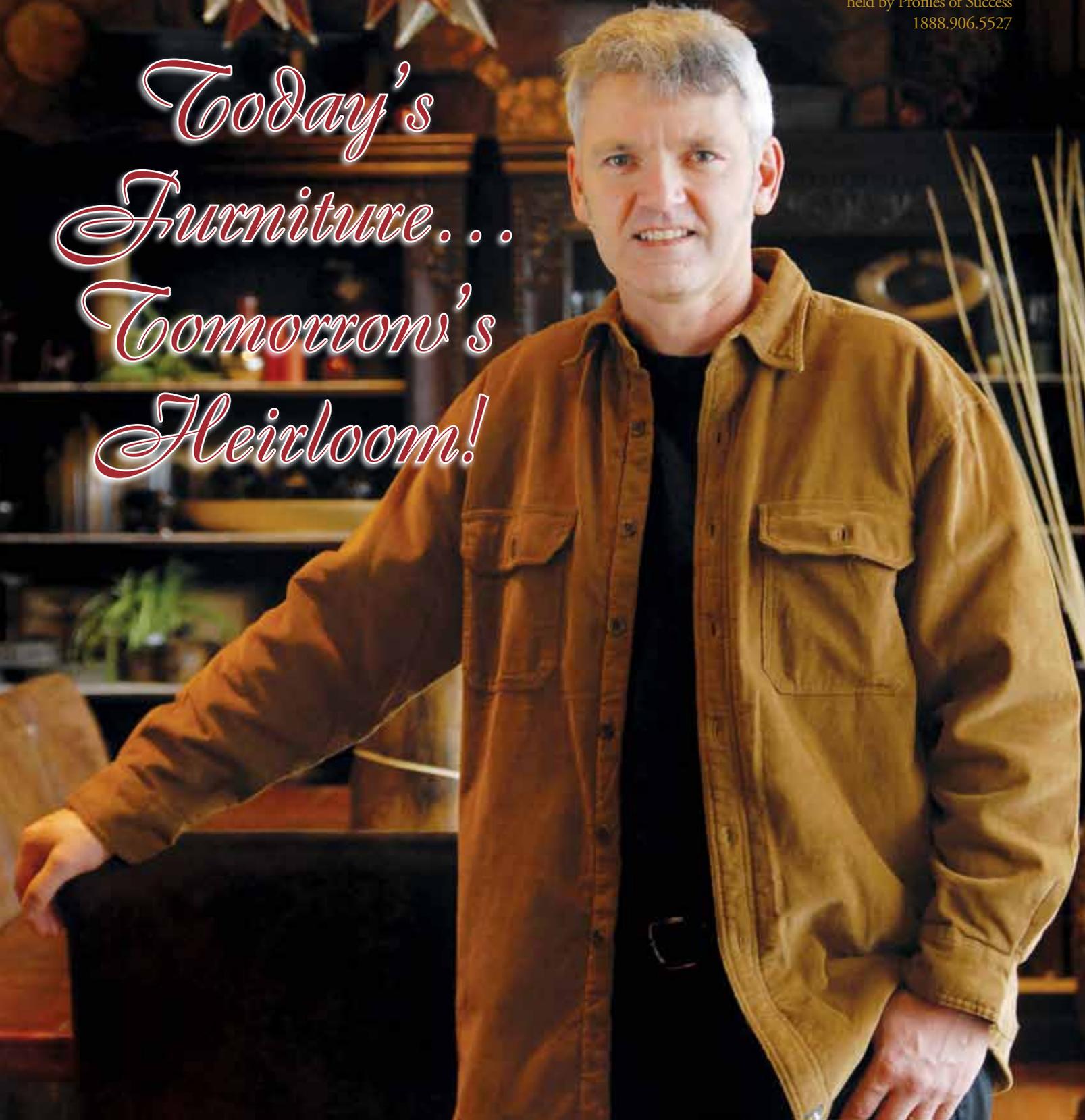
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*Today's
Furniture...
Tomorrow's
Heirloom!*



Today's Furniture... Tomorrow's Heirloom!

By: Suzanne Sharma



Imagine having access to furniture and accessories from all over the world at a reasonable cost without ever having to get on a plane. Britain, Singapore, Mexico, France, Ireland, Greece, Turkey, North Carolina, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and Toronto could be a short distance away. At Valley Direct Furniture, they do the hard work and help you transform your décor into that of your dreams.

The products at Valley Direct Furniture are exceptional and set it apart from its competitors since many 'big box' retailers don't have the ability to bring in the latest worldwide furniture trends. The dedicated staff at Valley Direct Furniture actually travels the globe to offer their

esteemed clients a wide range of options. From complete furnishings for your living room, dining room, bedroom, and office, to small accessories like rugs, clocks, artwork, and mirrors, it can be found at this eclectic store.

Located in Langley, B.C., Valley Direct Furniture displays its exclusive products in a family atmosphere. Without a doubt the store has its own unique niche, coupled with an excellent reputation and it is very design oriented. The company is constantly changing its displays, and experimenting with new ideas so that it can stay on the cutting edge of the industry.

Martin and Colleen Horner are the brains behind this

successful operation. Acting as owners, the couple launched the business in 1996 and it has continued to flourish since. While Martin takes care of the marketing portion of the business, Colleen is in charge of the administrative and banking duties. Their complimenting skills are one of their greatest strengths.

Martin was initially introduced to the industry through his family business, Western Foam Supply Co., where he worked together with his brother and father. The business supplied various furniture manufacturers with polyurethane foam. He realized how interested he was in the trade, and knew that he would enjoy a career where he could design, manufacture and market furniture. In 1989, Martin took the necessary steps to make his dreams come true by working part-time for Direct Furniture and Marketing.

Initially, the company was home-based and was a place where he and Colleen would design and sell furniture. With four young children at the time, it was a huge leap of faith. Eventually the business took off, so much so that they opened a location where they could market the products in an enhanced environment. Direct Furniture and Marketing became Valley Direct Furniture and Martin and Colleen have enjoyed success beyond many of their dreams. Recently, the couple developed and built a 34,000 square foot warehouse to compliment the retail store, and assist them as the business continues to grow.

Valley Direct Furniture carries products from many different manufacturers to suit each of their clients diverse needs. The store boasts assorted styles of furniture and accessories. From contemporary, to modern, to country, to shabby chic, to traditional, etc., there is definitely something to suit your taste and it can all be found under one roof!

The team of ten staff at Valley Direct Furniture, can answer their customers questions proficiently and knowledgeably. The group is there to assist their clients, whether they are searching for a new sofa, lamp, a piece of artwork, or are looking to furnish a complete show home. Most of the staff has been a part of the company for years, and is very familiar with colour and design. The entire team supports each other and shares each others enthusiasm about this dynamic business.

The company is very involved in all aspects of the industry, residential and commercial. Valley Direct also



provides contract furniture for countless restaurants, resorts, hotels, and bed & breakfasts, making the business renowned for its furnishings.

In the past, Valley Direct Furniture has played a part in many shows like the Interior Design Show and Home and Garden at B.C. Place. The products have been displayed in various show homes at each of these events. Most recently, Valley Direct Furniture has been selected to furnish the Sitka Log Home at the B.C. Home and Garden Show. This is quite an accomplishment for this thriving business since this same home was on display in Torino, Italy at the Olympic Games. Valley Direct Furniture has also furnished the Famous Street of Dreams Homes, many Hospital Lottery Homes, and numerous display homes.

It is the company's ability to think outside the box and be open minded that has been a major contribution to their success. Also, Martin notes that it is imperative to be a calculated risk taker, a quality that is necessary in this ever-changing industry.

“People want to see new, innovative styles,” says Martin. “It may not be everyone’s taste, but that’s okay. We’re niche marketers. We’re not selling the masses.”

A key component that proves that Valley Direct Furniture is willing to take chances and stand out is the addition of a giant chair outside the store. This magnificent piece of furniture stands at an enormous 24 feet tall, and weighs in at 2 tons! The chair is made in a Timber-frame style out of solid Douglas Fir. It is featured in many roadside attractions, publications, and websites.

Valley Direct Furniture has also been privileged enough to give back to their community. The company enjoys being in a position where they can provide local charities, schools, and sports teams with assistance. “Being a local company, we like to be involved in the community where we live,” notes Martin.

With ample knowledge about the furniture industry, Martin and Colleen are members of the Home Builders Association and the Chamber of Commerce. They are constantly finding



new and innovative ways to provide the best possible décor solutions to satisfy their customers. Their efforts have been recognized since a large part of their clients are repeats, or have been brought in through referrals.

Martin and Colleen note that they have met some wonderful people through their careers, and it’s given them insight into people. Martin recalls a particular instance where he bumped into a woman whom he’d helped in the past at a friend’s 50th birthday party. Martin had furnished this customer’s bedroom suite, as well as upholstered her couches. When the woman told Martin about a problem she’d encountered where her dog had ripped a chunk out of one of her couches, Martin was more than willing to help. Even though it had been years since he’d seen this woman, Martin still remembered the colour and style of the couch, completely shocking the customer. Needless to say, the woman was extremely pleased with the service she received and has continued to be a client.

Simply enjoying their careers has been the key factor to Martin and Colleen’s professional and personal success. They are married with four children. Two of their son’s work in the family business on a full-time basis. Their two daughters are both university students and help out part-time in the store. “Our family is a tight unit,” says Martin. “We all work and play together and enjoy skiing, snowboarding, and dirt biking on our family vacations.”

By balancing work and family successfully, the couple has founded a company that truly stands out from the competition. The future of the store looks bright indeed as Martin and Colleen hope to keep it in the family, while providing their customers with the hottest and most unique décor trends from around the world. At Valley Direct Furniture, the client can rest assured that the furniture and accessories they purchase today will be cherished for a very long time and become tomorrow’s heirlooms!

Martin Horner

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Photography by Kim Mallory