

West Hawaii Today
JULY 2009

at home

living with style in west hawaii

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Holualoa Inn, History of Hospitality



Welcome

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At Home

Living with Style
in West Hawaii

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Warm and cozy B&B invites old-
fashioned camaraderie
among guests.



on the cover

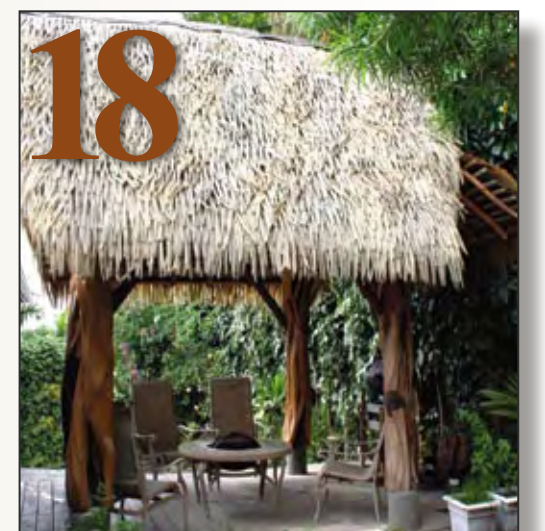
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Family estate's history
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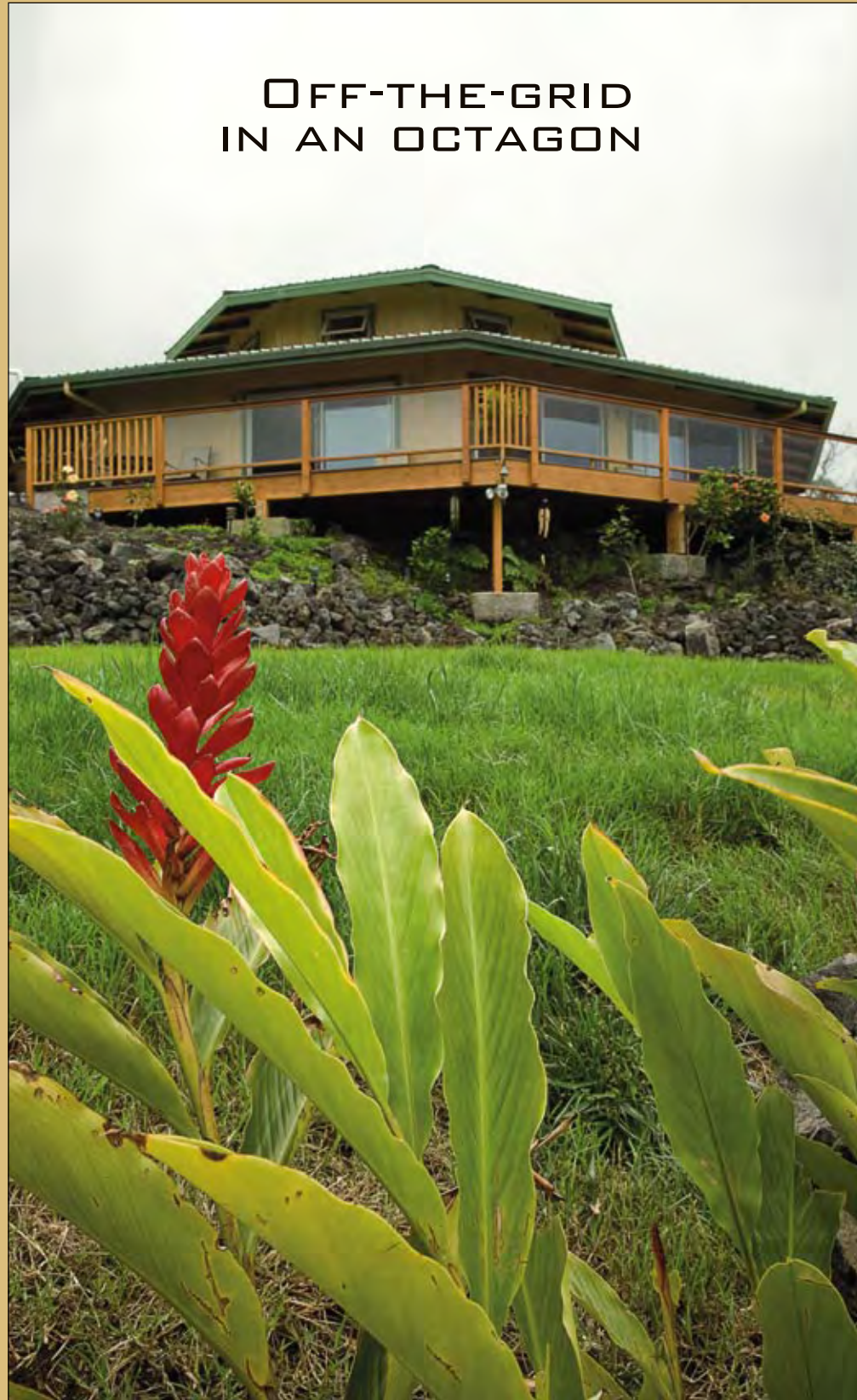
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Magic in Miloli'i

OFF-THE-GRID IN AN OCTAGON



The homeowners designed their octagon-shaped house from plans they found on the Internet. "We bought the plans and customized them to work with the view," said John App, homeowner. The wraparound Trex deck provides plenty of outdoor living space.



By Kristina Anderson
Photography by Giselle Thompson

Twenty-five years ago, long before anyone used the phrase "off-the-grid," John App built his own geodesic dome in the remote Ortega region of Southern California. Living seven miles up the mountain, he installed a six-panel solar system that tracked the sun through the day, one of the first of its kind. A dual-lighting generator and 12-volt RV lights provided electricity for the mountaintop mecca.

It was an experience that prepared him well to equip his new upper Miloli'i home with basically the same sustainable technology, updated by a quarter century of progress. Only this time, the home is an octagon.

The special house he shares with partner Donna J. Mills is a showcase of very personal art, treasures and interiors by Donna, as well as stunning, precision-made cabinetry created by John, with the help of his friend Kendall Whiting.

"The octagonal shape, like the geodesic, is very freeing," observes John, who, as a former ►



John App (pictured above) crafted exquisite koa cabinetry, furnishings and doors with the help of friend Kendall Whiting. They perfected much of it from scrap wood, sourced from a sawmill in Ocean View, with impressive results.



The central great room, with its 30-foot-high ceiling, leads to every room of the house. "The flow of the house is very freeing," John said. "There's a movement from room to room that is tangible."



Photo by Kristina Anderson

“I am privileged to be able to work with ‘Queen Koa’ and other beautiful wood such as mango and ohia here in Hawaii.” — John App

Mahogany flooring blends beautifully with porcelain tile from Tile Warehouse. Sliding shoji screens were custom made by Kona Shoji Design.

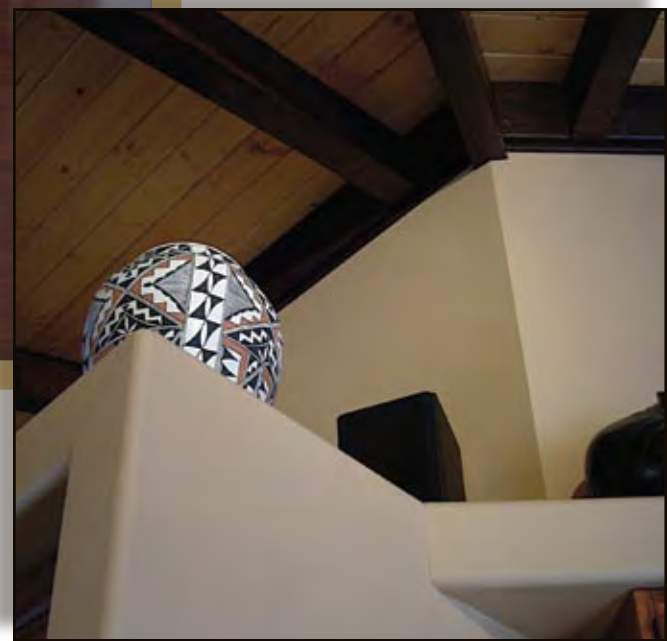


Photo by Kristina Anderson

Donna’s tribal motif includes her collection of Southwestern baskets, vases and art. Douglas Fir beams were primed to look like mahogany.

Marine Corps pilot, flew helicopters in Vietnam. “There are no corners except where you make them, and the octagon style gives you lots of leftover space; you don’t lose space until you get to the top. It gives an open, welcoming feeling.”

John explains that going off the grid in Hawaii was not only more desirable, it made more sense financially. For less cost than bringing HELCO power to the house, the couple purchased a state-of-the-art solar system. Now set with 21 solar panels and a huge inverter, the system has enough juice to run the entire household as well as John’s fully equipped woodworking shop. Add a repeater for cell phones and Internet, plus two large rain catchment tanks, lots of vegetable gardens, and voila, a nearly 100-percent, off-the-grid lifestyle.

Inside the home, style was not sacrificed for sustainability, thanks to Donna’s phenomenal sense of color and placement. Planning the position of each room with the architect, Donna designated ▶



A wealth of talent can be found in Ocean View, where John and Donna purchased cement stepping stones with petroglyph designs created by Brad Pitton of Brad’s Tractor Service.



John topped his handcrafted koa cabinets with an ohia lattice counter and a glass top. Beneath the ohia is copper sheeting distressed for a patina effect. Sparkling backsplash tile and trim are from Bella Pietra.

everything from lighting and carpet to tile and décor.

The art of woodworking has always been near to John’s heart, and a tour through the bathrooms and kitchen reveals his outstanding, gallery-quality efforts in koa cabinetry. Learning woodworking through night classes at Palomar College, John honed his expertise more thoroughly after moving to Hawaii from Southern California a few years ago. John, who has a degree in classical archeology, says it is a particularly special honor to work in koa.

“As woodworkers, we start with a rough-sawn board from the sawmill. This is a treat for us as this wood was created by a living life form over 30- to 40-plus years. Koa is even more so since it is born the queen of Hawaii’s forests. So we feel charged with preserving and presenting the beauty of each piece of wood.”

For both bathrooms in the house, John created unique vanity counters with ohia lattice tops covered by glass. Under the lattice, copper sheeting serves as a decorative base. In the master bath vanity (John’s favorite) is ▶



Bed from Koehnen’s Interiors; pillows by Donna.



Another of John’s custom koa vanities with ohia, copper and glass countertop. The couple found the brass dolphin fixture at the Ocean View Swap Meet.

copper sheeting that John and Kendall “distressed” themselves one fortuitous afternoon.

“To get the patina effect, we used battery acid, vinegar and bleach and let it sit for two or three hours,” he recalls. “We didn’t know what would result until it was done.” Fortunately, it worked. The startlingly beautiful copper piece complimenting the koa also picks up metallic flashes of color from the backsplash. Vessel sinks of frosted green glass enhance the palette even further.

In the kitchen, and indeed, throughout the house, John’s beautiful woodworking is on display in the form of tables, bowls, sideboards and doors. He says he treats cabinets as art pieces, searching for the special soul of the wood to work with.

“I don’t want every cabinet to look like every other cabinet — that would be boring,” he said. “When I start a piece, there is sense of awe and excitement when I ►



Vegetable gardens and orchards help support the couple’s 100-percent, off-the-grid lifestyle, made possible by a 21-panel photovoltaic system that provides plenty of juice to run the entire household.

AZADI; 9.653 in; 5.25 in; Black plus three; 000005548r4



To create the outdoor fireplace, a wood frame was built around a pre-fabricated fireplace, which was then stuccoed. John created the tiled chimney gecko and hearth. Lanai furniture from Champagne Spa & Lanai.

KALOKO FURNITURE; 9.653 in; 5.25 in; Black plus three; 000005507r1

see the grains, the curls and the fiddle-back patterns for the first time.”

Donna, an avid collector of Southwestern baskets, pottery and paintings, brings a touch of Santa Fe charm to the home with her unique sense of decorating, fabric and textiles. Donna and John, who met on Match.com, once considered moving to Santa Fe, but were put off by wintertime single-digit temperatures.

The warmth of Hawaii won out after they visited one year and fell in love with South Kona. Later returning, they found the five-and-a-half acre property and built the house over the past five or six years. In addition to designing the interiors, Donna planned the gardens, landscaping and the outdoor fireplace and sitting area, which echoes a Santa Fe spirit.

“It’s so calm and peaceful,” John says. “We just love being a part of this wonderful land and feel privileged to have our home here.” **AH**