

Inquirer Magazine

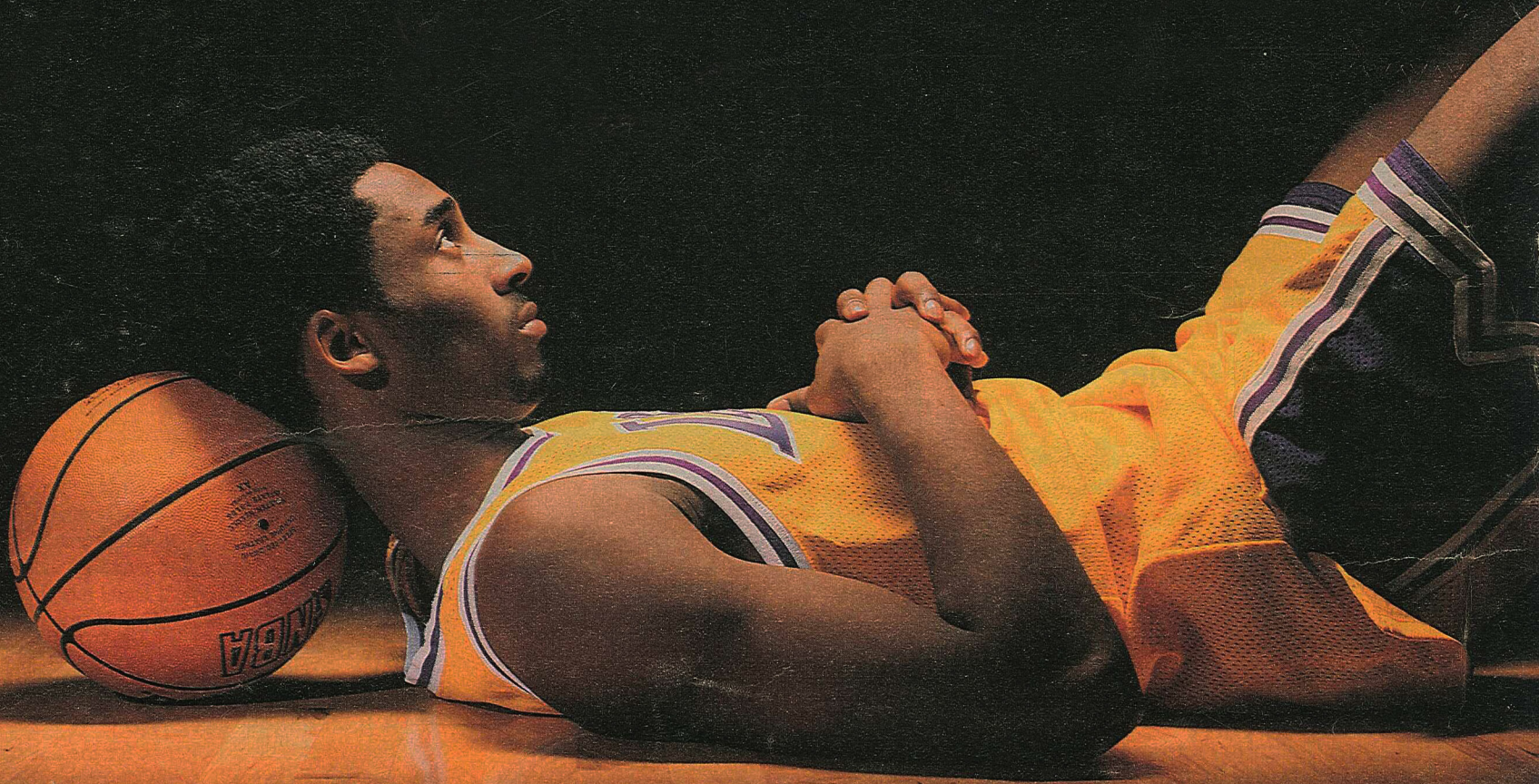
MARCH 1

THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER

SAVING DEADWOOD

JUST FOR KIDS:
EVENTS, SHOWS,
ADVENTURES

THE MAN'S \$2 BET



kobe's moment

The NBA spotlight is on Kobe Bryant. He knew it was coming. By Michael Sokolove

Home & Design

HILARY JAY



Welcome home

A restored Victorian is a haven of warmth, comfort and hospitality.

There isn't much talk of keeping up with the Joneses anymore, now that the middle class is limping along and it's a challenge to make ends meet. Who has time to compete for best manicured lawn, swankiest Jacuzzi or coolest kitchen renovation when time is stretched tight juggling dual careers, children, community involvements and personal growth?

Somehow, though, Greg and Mary Ryan Berzinsky manage to do all that and still have a charming and gracious home.

Greg Berzinsky's life so far has followed a certain orderly pattern. "We got married, bought a car, bought a house," says the 32-year-old architect. "All within six months," adds Mary Ryan Berzinsky, 28, an interior designer consulting to the Hillier Group, among others.

In their living room, 9-month-old Victor, a Gerber Baby candidate, smiles and gurgles a tune as Jack, the rescued greyhound, sprawls comfortably nearby. With a modest income, discerning eye

and passion for hospitality, the couple have created a place of beauty, warmth and comfort.

Six years ago, the then-newlyweds purchased their late 19th-century Spruce Hill twin, becoming only the third owners of the dwelling. The house had sat on the market for nearly two years, not from lack of character, but because of perceived turbulence in the West Philadelphia neighborhood. But the area offers jewels at wholesale prices, deals too good to resist.

Rather than collect period pieces to match the Victorian architecture, the Berzinskys decorated with post-1940s furniture. As a result, rooms are neither oppressive nor overly ornamental — problems sometimes associated with Victoriana — nor cold and intimidating, a criticism often leveled at modern interiors.

The angular furniture is softened by the large rooms, and accessorized with a few lush or whimsical objects. To everyone's surprise, one of the ugliest floor lamps ever produced ("intended to be

temporary," notes Greg) works nicely beside a contemporary mohair Cassina sofa. Danish-American designer Jens Risom's late-1940s bench guards a blazing old gas fireplace that has been garnished by Philadelphia artist Tim Schinsky's bronze handiwork. A pair of cantilevered classics — Mies van der Rohe's chair and Eileen Gray's table — complete the scene.

While the Berzinskys are serious design professionals, their overarching commitment is to their Christian faith. The couple regularly host receptions for new parishioners, gourmet dinners for friends and holiday feasts for family. They occasionally turn their house into a bed-and-breakfast for visiting faithful. Hospitality is their gift; their home is the vehicle for sharing.

Although the Berzinskys relish their possessions, they are not devoted to them. By design, their belongings are neither delicate nor precious. To this couple, nothing is more important to a home than the people welcomed into it. □



Post-1940s furniture helps soften the Berzinskys' living room, where baby Victor and greyhound Jack rest. A pair of 1960s Baker chests flank the master bed (facing page, left). In the dining room, a trio of etchings of the annunciation of Christ hang above a 1950s department store sideboard.