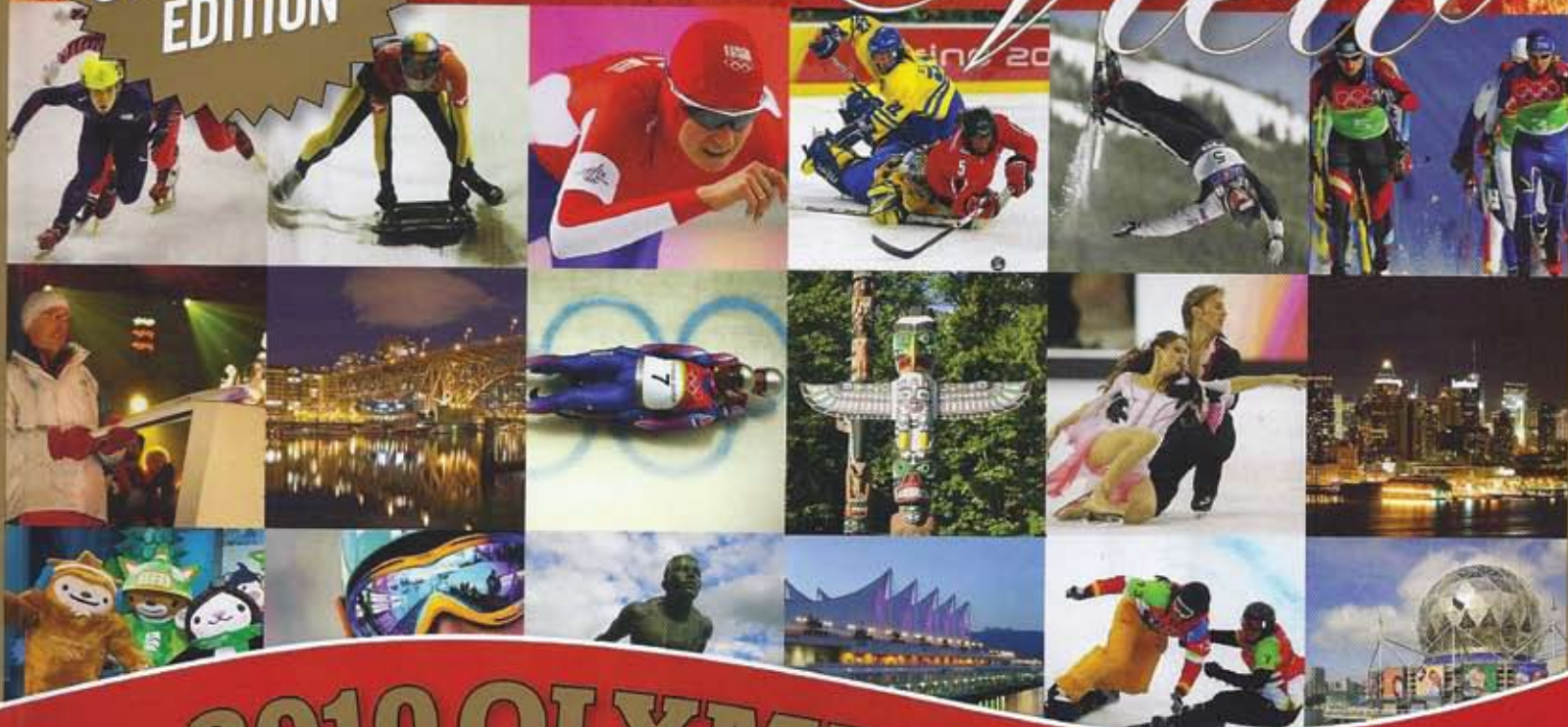


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Bring on the Chestnuts!

Curl Up in Front of a Fireplace This Winter

[By REISA POLLARD]

Although not a fixture in most households now the way it was in earlier times, the fireplace surely must be missed. Fireplaces can be underestimated as comfort furnishings and are consequently sometimes eliminated from modern design plans, but they really should be considered an important focal point and design element in any home. Nothing can take the place of a real flame!

Originally, the fireplace played a central role in the household for practical purposes like providing heat and light. Families gathered around the fire to keep warm, read a book, or just socialize. The fireplaces of the past were thus usually built solely for function, rather than aesthetics. Even with heat and light now provided through science and technology, people still remember the beauty and comfort provided by a real flickering flame.

The road to creating a stunning fireplace is not without a few bumps. In most homes, fireplaces must compete with the television set for attention in a living area, and an increasing number of new homes are being built without them. The benefits and comforts provided by a fireplace, however, have no substitute. We should root for a comeback.



Because of the literal and figurative warmth and comfort fireplaces provide, they add great value to the home. A fireplace creates a unique space that can be relaxing, social, or creative—it is truly a versatile design feature.

The selection of an aesthetically pleasing fireplace comes down to the choice of insertion and surroundings. Inserts can be fueled by a variety of materials, including wood, gas (sealed or open), electricity, or clean-

burning fuel. For smaller spaces, fireplace inserts come in a range of dimensions and formats. Freestanding and movable fireplace units are often convenient options for small spaces as they will not dominate, but instead add an element of elegance to the room.

Fireplaces that feature distinctive and traditional patterns, shapes and styles that

have been around for hundreds of years can project richness and a sense of history. Alternatively, they may also function as sleek and minimalist features to reinforce a contemporary design. The more modern installations see the fireplace escaping the traditional living room mantle-style placement and being incorporated into homes as space dividers, freestanding

design elements, and floating wonders that make a definite design statement.

Whether we prefer the traditional or contemporary, though, it seems only fitting that as the air becomes crisp and the coats and boots are dug out of the closet, we reflect again on the comforts of coming inside to a warm home and a cheery fire on the grate. ❧



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