

'Not your normal furniture store'

Business-C

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Couch Potato marks 15th year in business

By **KIRSTEN FAIRCHILDS**
SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT

SOQUEL — Growing up in Southern California, Bruce Cushnir never imagined he would follow in his father's footsteps and venture into the furniture business one day.

Now 45 and a Santa Cruz resident for the past 17 years, Cushnir is proud that his foray into the business has been to own "not your normal furniture store."

Sporting business cards that identify him as the "head spud," Cushnir opened the Couch Potato Discount Sofa Warehouse 15 years ago in Soquel.

The 6,000-square-foot warehouse holds sofas, sofa beds, sectionals, recliners, chairs and area rugs, all with low markup prices, according to Cushnir.

Cushnir's salespeople, known as "associate spuds," do not work on commission, and therefore take a low-key approach when a customer enters the store.

"We don't pressure anyone," Cushnir said. "We help when people want help. We leave people alone when they want to be left alone."

Couch Potato

OWNER: Bruce Cushnir.

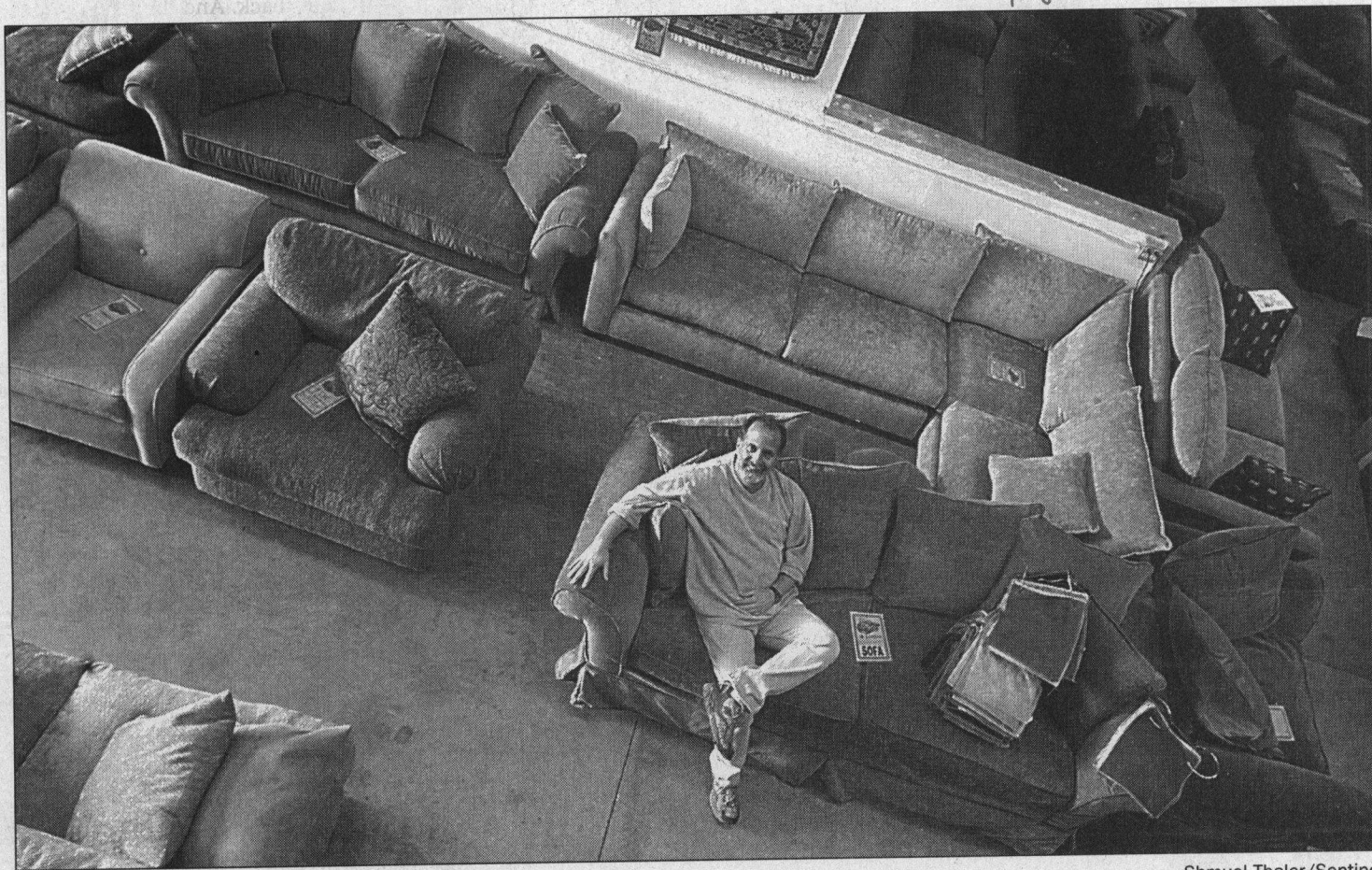
WHAT: A warehouse offering sofas, sectionals, chairs, recliners and area rugs at low-markup prices.

LOCATION: 3131 B Soquel Drive, Soquel.

HOURS: Thursday: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.; Friday: 11-8; Saturday: 11-6; Sunday: 12-5.

PHONE: 462-4636.

WEB SITE: www.cpotato.com.



Shmuel Thaler/Sentinel

"Head spud" Bruce Cushnir attributes the success of his Couch Potato Discount Sofa Warehouse to low prices and a low-key approach.

A self-described active person, Cushnir didn't name his business because it modeled his lifestyle.

Instead, the former high school English teacher was looking for an apt description of the kind of business he enjoyed patronizing.

"Couch potato had become a pretty common term when I opened the business," said Cushnir, a married father of two. "It seemed appropriate, catchy."

"There's no selling here, no pressure," he said. "People like the fact that no one is trying to tell them to buy this and that."

Cushnir estimated 75 percent of his business comes from within the county. Two-thirds of his business is specialized custom orders. Fifteen percent comes from Web site orders.

The warehouse offers a wide range of leather sofas as well as those upholstered in chenille and microfiber.

Scotts Valley resident Cathi Beighe, a homemaker who said she enjoys interior decorating on the side, spent Sunday afternoon walking a client through the warehouse.

"I bring people here — friends, clients, anyone I can convince — because Bruce has the best selection of styles and fabrics at the most competitive prices," Beighe said.

"We spent the entire day Saturday going to what felt like hundreds of places over the hill, but didn't find what we were looking for," said Beighe, who was helping her client pick out a sectional with

a coordinating chair. "Then we come in here and instantly find what we needed."

Some of the manufacturer lines carried by the warehouse include Berkline Recliners, Omnia, a California manufacturer of leather sofas that imports its leather from Italy; H.H. Hiatt, whose sofas can also be found in upscale department stores; and R.C. Furniture, which is where Cushnir's retired father Bob had worked in the City of Industry.

With his business only open four days a week, the younger Cushnir said he's happy he made the transition from teaching to the furniture business.

"Frankly, when I started this business, I just wanted to find a way to make a living, but still have a life," Cushnir said. "I never expected the success. It's been fun and enjoyable."

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