

Mary Porter Promotes Her Designs Through Fashion Catalog

Many young women plan careers in fields of law, science or mathematics and never consider the household skills acquired from their mothers and grandmothers. But in the life of Mary Porter, the skills she learned at home are the basis for her career.

During the past four years, Mary Porter of Warsaw has designed and constructed clothes for local customers. Last week, Mary mailed

2,000 catalogs of her first designs to customers in all 50 American states and seven foreign countries. Through the catalog, individuals can purchase Mary Porter designs custom fitted and tailored in her shop, a recently-restored 1880's bank building on Railroad Street in Warsaw.

"With this catalog I am no longer just a local designer," Mary Porter said. "I am national and inter-

national. It's all so exciting.

"I think one of the greatest things with the catalog has been to witness the excitement other people have when they see it for the first time," Mary smiled. "I am pleased that the idea of a catalog for my designs excites others and makes them proud, too.

"I feel good about the collection," she said. "And I have so many more ideas for designs I want to do. The success of this line will give me the opportunity to develop the new designs."

The catalog offers Mary Porter designs in women's evening and day wear, along with one child's dress. With the success of the first designs, Mary says she expects to first add a line of casual clothes and then consider children's fashions. In five years, Mary expects to have showrooms in New York City, Atlanta and Los Angeles.

"Already, I have worked four years," Mary said. "I really think it's realistic to expect to have showrooms in five years.

"I'm a dreamer, anyway," Mary smiled. "Without dreams the world wouldn't have anything, and I wouldn't have my career or the catalog. And, there is no other catalog of designer fashion that offers the service of custom fitting like the concept I offer.

"I design to make the individual look her most beautiful and feel she is a very special individual," she said. "And, I plan to offer that same service through the catalog purchases.

"I put a little bit of me in all the garments I design and construct," Mary said. "When someone puts on one of my designs and says, 'This is just what I wanted,' I know I have done a good job and feel good about myself.

"God gives different people different talents," Mary said. "I found mine when I was 10 and have worked hard to develop it.

"What I can say I am most grateful for has been the support of my family. I honestly know if it weren't for them and my local friends, I would never have accomplished a thing," she said.

Mary is a graduate of James Kenan High School and the 1976 Miss Duplin County. She earned a bachelor of arts degree in home economics from Meredith College after attending the University of North Carolina at Wilmington and studying mathematics three semesters. Following graduation, marriage and motherhood, Mary began her business with a job to design a pageant dress for a child. In the past few years she said nine of each 10 customers have been pageant contestants which also offered opportunities to design fashions for their mothers, too.

Mary turned down possible design jobs with well-known companies like Saks Fifth Avenue and Lords and Taylor to pursue the catalog sales of her fashions. Through catalog sales, Mary explained, she acts as manufacturer, wholesaler and retailer of her designs in order to maintain individual attention for each customer.

In full operation, Mary expects to employ six people at her shop in Warsaw and after one year need additional employees and work area.



Mary Porter Outside Her Warsaw Shop



Fashions by Mary Porter