

# Needle News From Fran

BY LOU ANN GOOD

**PALMYRA** — "I'd rather sew than eat," said Fran Horst, Lebanon County home economist assistant. With all the time and effort she has put into becoming a sewing expert, she no doubt has forgone a lot of eating.

A graduate of Mansfield University, Fran has taught the gamut of sewing from beginners to tailoring; she has judged farm show, fairs and women's clubs' sewing competition. Now, Fran has pioneered a new avenue to share her sewing expertise. She writes "Needle News", a newsletter published by the Lebanon County Extension Service. The newsletter's popularity has mushroomed in 14 different counties. Subscriptions are \$2 annually.

Each six-page issue contains fashion trends for the season, a lesson on construction details, an in-depth textile description and an update on interfacing. Since Fran also has a knack for art, she illustrates her own sewing instructions.

Fran said her background in judging sewing competitions proves beneficial in making the newsletter practical for the home seamstress. She said, "When I examine garments, I notice where people make mistakes in sewing techniques. I like to show people how to take their garment and make it more professional."

The most effective way of reaching seamstresses is through the mail, Fran believes. "Women who work don't have time to attend classes, but they can read the information at their leisure."

Recently, Fran received tremendous response to a questionnaire she mailed to her readers. The survey revealed the areas seamstresses need help in producing quality garments. Fran will write on those areas in future issues.

Although Fran does occasionally give private sewing lessons, she chooses not to teach groups. "I like to offer hands-on fitting and help them with their difficulties. She refuses to sew for others. She explains, "I'm a teacher, not a seamstress."

According to Fran sewing is a creative medium that is making a comeback. She sees the interest being revived by teenagers who are impressed with the money they can save by sewing themselves. Their mothers haven't time to sew since they usually are part of the labor force.

As a substitute home economics teacher, Fran has seen high school sewing class enrollment increase. But the traditional sewing projects have been replaced with sweat suits. "Teens take to Sergers (a special sewing machine that cuts seams while overcasting edges) like ducks take to water," Fran said. "They love to whip up sweats."

Can anyone sew? "I believe that it is a talent," Fran pointed out and then hastened to add, "The talent comes with interest."

Fran believes that with today's prices, learning to hem one's own clothing is a necessity and everyone can learn that."

Despite Fran's sewing loyalties, she does not advocate sewing a complete wardrobe. "You must weigh fabric cost and the time required sewing it with the price of the ready made article." To make sewing a cost-cutting venture, Fran suggests, "You must be a really good shopper when buying fabric."

She admits to stockpiling fabrics, but she said, "I'm learning to

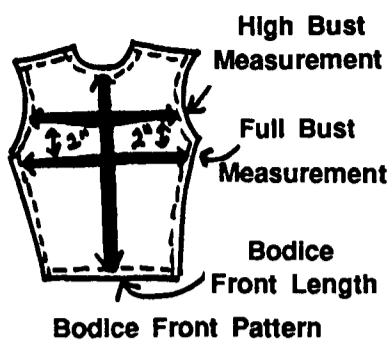
discipline myself not to buy anything until I finish the project I've started."

The "Needle News" started as a small project for her local extension services. No longer is it a little project, because 14 county extension services now offer it to their readers. Some counties publish her newsletter under a different name. If you would like to subscribe, contact your local extension service or write to Lebanon County Extension Services, 400 S. 8th St., Lebanon, Pa. Include \$2 for a subscription.

A back issue of "Needle News" carried Fran's pointers in "Making Patterns Fit." An abbreviated version follows.

## STEPS IN DETERMINING PATTERN SIZE:

1. Take body measurements over proper foundation garments. Tie a piece of yarn around your middle to determine the true location of your waistline. Remember to use an accurate tape measure, one that has firm ends, is flexible but not stretchable.



2. The most important measurement is the bust. It will determine the correct pattern size of blouses, dresses, suits, and jackets. Sometimes it's even used to determine the size of skirts and pants when they are listed as small, medium, or large. The bust measurement is taken over the fullest part of the bust, with the tape measure held firmly in place. However, if an individual has a medium or full bust, another measurement called a high bust is recommended. This is taken by placing the tape firmly under the arms, then straight across the back and then over the chest in the front.

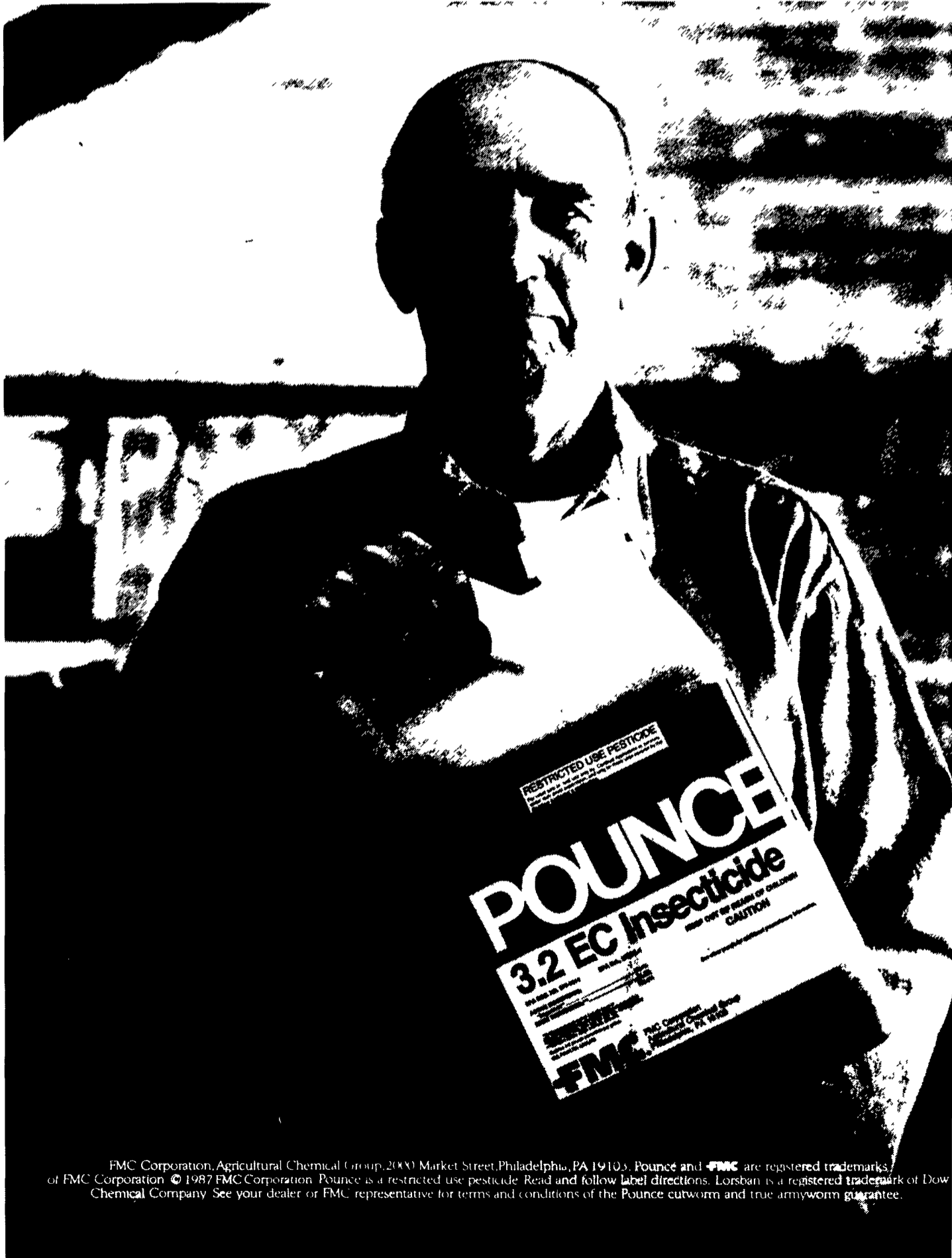


Fran Horst reviews some of her "Needle News" that women across the southeastern part of Pennsylvania are finding helpful.

3. If two or less inches occur between the full and high bust measurement, a smaller sized pattern could be purchased. The most difficult areas to fit are the chest, at the neckline, shoulder and armhole. The smaller sized pattern will fit these areas and it will be easier to alter if necessary.

4. The waist and hip area also may need some alterations. If you measure between sizes, but have a small-bone structure you may select a smaller size. The opposite is also true. If altering the waist or hip area, remember two inches is

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