

# Home Economics Fashioned This Woman's Career

**BY LOU ANN GOOD**  
**LANCASTER** — While back-to-school students stagger schedules with extra-curricular activities and studies, home economics is one subject that is liable to be dropped. According to recent trends, interest in sewing is on a downward spiral.

And that trend is one that Tamara Stermer Rue of Lancaster dis-

proves. She said, "Home economics helped me get where I am today."

And where Tammy Rue is today is in the highly competitive field of fashion design. She designs sportswear for The Leoniak Look\*, a contemporary woman's clothing line that sells sweaters, coordinates and dresses, in fashionable boutiques and specialty stores

nationwide.

Barbara Shenk, a home economist at Hempfield High School, was the major force encouraging Tammy as a student." Tammy, who has a natural talent in clothing and fashion, recalls, "Mrs. Shenk taught me a lot about designing and fashion. I always enjoyed working with colors, and coordinating and accessorizing outfits."

Tammy started sewing in the sixth grade. Not long after that she began to improvise patterns to create her own look. In eighth grade she placed third in a sewing contest sponsored by a national teen magazine. In senior high she placed first in a local farm show sewing competition and second in the state. She also placed both first and second in tailoring contests sponsored by the Lancaster Women's Club. "Barb Shenk was really an inspiration to me. She recognized my talent and interest and encouraged me to look for a college that offered design."

Tammy chose Drexel University. She found the studies demanding. There was a large number of dropouts. She said, "I think they intentionally made it tough, because it's even tougher in the working world to survive. It's an extremely competitive field."

Students' sketches and projects were critiqued by the instructor and classmates. Usually students were required to submit ten sketches with suitable fabric swatches attached. After the instructor selected one sketch, the student worked on making either a flat pattern or a draped muslin one and then stitched the original. Patterns needed to be made in the standard size eight or ten so the models could wear them. Tammy said, "It's an expensive course because we needed to purchase our own fabric for all our projects and make them for models, not ourselves."

Classes in home economics proved to be a plus for Tammy when she attended Drexel. Many of the students did not have a background in sewing. Tammy recalls, "Having tailoring skills really helped."

Besides sewing skills, an art background is helpful for designers. "You must be able to get your ideas across on paper. A drawing course that teaches basic figure drawing with proportions with some sewing ability is beneficial." Tammy admits she finds the sewing part easier than drawing, but it's no problem getting my ideas on paper," she said.

Seeing her completed projects modeled on stage was the most rewarding aspect for Tammy while attending Drexel, "but it was tough to finish all projects in the specified time frame."

Tammy considers herself fortunate to have landed a job designing since there are not many designer positions. She said most graduates of the course need to begin their career as pattern makers or assistant designers working on specifications. To fuel creativity when feeling unmotivated, Tammy finds flipping through fashion magazines or looking at fabric causes ideas to start flowing.

Tammy doesn't limit her talents to a 9 to 5 job. Recently she designed all the gowns for her bridal party. The gowns imitated the 1920s fashions featuring dropped waists, dolman sleeves, uneven hemlines and hand appliqued shoulders, hips and cuffs.

Her wedding has sparked a creative urge within her to design one-of-a-kind wedding gowns. She



**Tammy Rue, a fashion designer, got a headstart in her career by taking home economic courses. Both the dress on the rack and the outfit she is wearing is one of Tammy's original designs.**



**Pat Leoniak, the designer who founded the Leoniak Look, said, "Tammy's great at designing. Few people can sketch and design their own patterns."**



**One-of-a-kind wedding gown and bridesmaids' dresses were designed by Tammy for her own wedding. Here she and Matron of Honor Victoria Macoll modeled the creations fashioned after the 1920s styles.**

said, "But I couldn't use sales reps or anything. I'd probably need to sell out of a shop where people would come in with ideas and I'd make them or I'd design my own ideas."

For now, Tammy finds it exciting to work for a company that has grown from two sewers to more than 40, with five sales representatives who promote Leoniak designs nationwide. Tammy and founder, Pat Leoniak, who continues to design sweater outfits, select fabrics and work with sketches and ideas. Pat said, "It's difficult to find people who can design and make their own patterns." She regrets that fewer students are taking sewing courses. She said, "It was in a home economics class at Hempfield that

Tammy first heard about me." Pat had spoken about career opportunities in fashions; years later, when Tammy graduated and was job searching, she remembered that home economics class and looked up Pat Leoniak.

"The Leoniak Look was created by Lancaster's nationally known fashion designer, Pat Leoniak. Her clothing, which bears her name, is sold from Los Angeles to New York, from Miami to Palm Springs. Leoniak sweaters, sportswear and dresses have been selling in fashionable boutiques and specialty stores including Bloomingdale's, Elizabeth Arden, Lord & Taylor, Bendels, and Ann Taylor. Their Lancaster store is located at 1401 Oregon Pike, Lancaster, PA 17601.

## The Denver Fair

The 1988 Denver Fair will be held from Tuesday, September 13, through the following Saturday at the Denver Memorial Park.

The fair will open on Tuesday at 5:00 p.m. The baked-goods auction will take place at 6:30 p.m. The crowning of the queen will be at 7:00 p.m. and the jello-eating contest will start at 7:30 p.m. Tuesday evening will be Buddy Night. Bring a friend along to the fair and you and your buddy will be able to go on the rides from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. for the price of only one person. The Recreation Center will be closed on Tuesday for judging.

The annual parade will be on Wednesday, September 14, starting promptly at 7:00 p.m. The rain date is Thursday at the same time. Trophies will be awarded in the following categories: commercial floats; non-commercial floats; youth group floats; baton groups, with or without drum lines; high school bands; and a miscellaneous category. Two judges' trophies also will be awarded.

Thursday, September 15, will be Family Night from 6:00 to 10:00 p.m. Families can go on all rides for the price of one during that time. The sheep show will start at 6:30 p.m. and the Look Alike Lip Sync Talent Show will begin at 7:00 p.m. with registration at 6:30.

On Friday, free entertainment will be provided by the "Country Rockets" from 7:30 to 10:45 p.m. The beef show will begin at 7:00 p.m. with an auction of fat steers to follow.

The Cow Chip Poker will begin on Saturday at 8:00 a.m. The pet show starts at noon with the pet and baby parade scheduled for 2:00 p.m. and wheelbarrow race at 3:00 p.m. There will be a matinee from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. when everyone can ride the rides for one price. The "Mudflaps" will perform from 7:00 to 9:30 p.m.

The fair will have an arts & crafts show, and agricultural, horticultural, canned goods, baked goods, and commercial displays.