

Somerset Teen Sews All Her Own Clothing

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SOMERSET (Somerset Co.) — Since the days when at age five she sewed on paper and sewed on buttons, Julia Keafer, 18, has progressed a long way. She is the youngest of three girls born to Henry and Shirley Keafer and was initiated into the art of stitchery by her mother.

On such a foundation began young Julia's ascent to become a skilled seamstress whose closets now bulge with an assortment of her own tailored clothing. There are slacks, dresses, suits, gowns, and her prize-winning wool coat.

The reed-slender Somerset Area High School senior and nine-year 4-H member says that commercially manufactured garments never fit her properly. Shopping trips usually result in a futile search, such as the time she failed to find what she was looking for in the malls of two cities. Well, if one can't find the right-size clothing while shopping, one can always change gears and shop instead for suitable material and make your own. That's what she did.

"I'm such a perfectionist," admits Julia, with an air of helplessness. "One time I did a seam 20 times before I got it right."

Of her seven 4-H sewing projects Julia recalls the one which left her the most frustrated. After getting a perfect score, because of her young age, she could compete no further than the regionals. "I was little," she says, "but I wanted to go on."

In 1991 she competed at the state level in the clothing and textiles category. The same year she placed second in the state with her coat in the Make It Yourself With Wool contest. It marked her third year participating in the wool promotion event.

With a hectic roster of activities in her life, Julia's calendar is

choked full of engagements. And these necessitate having appropriate attire. One wonders where all those clothes go. Does she discard them? No, she doesn't.

"I have a blue dress that I made six years ago," she says. "I (emphasis on the I) haven't given any away," she continues loud enough for her mother in the next room to overhear. (One is instantly suspicious that perhaps Mother is guilty of something here.)

Julia says that although her schedule is very demanding, when she sews she does so in small-time installments, rather than for long periods. And she has a rule for herself not to sew clothes for friends although many of them have approached her to do so.

Besides a talent for sewing, Julia is an eight-year student of the violin and with the stringed instrument will be touring Europe this summer with a group of musicians. They are from the eastern United States and will be conducted by a leader from Hershey. Traveling with the American Music Abroad Orchestra, Julia will have the honor of performing in concerts in countries such as France, Germany, Austria, Belgium and Switzerland.

Certainly a new wardrobe is essential for such a journey. Consulting with her mother, Julia has planned it with selections that take into account the need for style and wearability, comfort and ease of care. Many of the items are simply patterned skirts, she says.

As a contestant for winning the title of Pennsylvania Maple Queen on March 21, Julia had created her own teal gown to wear in the evening gown competition. With 13 other young talented women, Julia had earlier survived the audition of 44 entries. The gown had puffed sleeves, a sequined bodice and a chiffon overskirt.

The overskirt was a headache to work with, she says and tells how



Pictured with just a few of her outfits, Julia Keafer is wearing her coat which placed second last year in the state.

frustrated she got working with it. "I would roll it up in a ball and throw it in a corner. I would quit and come back later," she says.

One of her sisters dealt with sewing frustrations in that manner and Julia picked up the habit from observing her. She says the only thing you can do is walk away from it and come back to it later.

The five judges named Julia Keafer the new Maple Queen. It is her duty to represent the Pennsylvania maple sugar industry during the 45th Maple Festival held in Meyersdale this April and to fulfill a year of obligations by appearing at many functions as the official spokesperson for the industry.

She had won the difficult on-stage interview award with her spontaneous answers to two soul-searching questions before an overflowing audience. She had

performed a violin medley which she calls "Millionaire's Hoedown," during the talent competition.

So with her new responsibility as Queen Maple XLV, Julia finds herself with yet another need for special attire to wear, like the frothy white gown she is currently making for the queen's ball and grand feature parade.

Julia has an affinity with farming. She has an uncle who is a farmer and allows her to have 4-H animal projects there for nine years. She's raised sheep, pigs, and a steer all of which did very well at the county fair and farm show.

Ironically, each animal was given a name designating it as royalty. There was Queen Elizabeth for instance, and King William. Julia even dubbed her uncle's farm as Royalty Ranch not realiz-

ing then that one day she would be called Queen Julia.

Early in her life Julia says she had taken piano lessons for two years. They didn't go well for her. So her mother issued an ultimatum. "Play the piano or play the violin." Julia says she opted for the violin and now declares, "I love it."

She is also on her school's forensics team as a member of the humorous drama squad. "I'm in forensics because I like to talk a lot," she says laughing. With comedy interpretation, she says you don't sit and worry about what you will say like the kids who formally debate and argue.

Georgia Institute of Technology has accepted Julia for its fall term. She wants to study architectural engineering which is a five-year program that includes studies in France during the fourth year.



Maryland Angus Princess Monica Feeser, left, of Taneytown, and Maryland Angus Queen Melissa Harrison of Woodbine will represent the Maryland Angus Association for 1992.

Farmers Build Homes, Churches For Mexican



The Fellowship of Christian Farmers build houses and churches in Mexico under the direction of Ed Williamson, former Nebraska farmer. Williamson has started 32 churches and a Bible College in Mexico with the help of volunteer work crusades. The group would like other farmers to spend nine days with a participating work crusade. Participants range from 20 to 72 years of age.

LYKENS (Dauphin Co.) — Farmers from eight states traveled recently to Mexico to help with construction of homes and churches.

In the past three years, members from Fellowship of Christian Farmers LTD have sent 143 farmers and 20 women to Mexico for nine-day work crusades.

Julia Holmes, a spokesperson for the organization, said that the opportunity to go on a work crusade is open to anyone with a desire, a willing heart and hands to help. No formal work experience is required and all ages can be used in the manual labor projects.

A fee of about \$300 is charged to go on a crusade, which starts in

San Antonio. The fee covers most meals, a place to put a sleeping bag, and most of the materials required for the building project.

For more information, contact George and Julia Holmes, 3220 Jacksonville Road, Trumansburg, NY 14886 or call evenings at (607) 387-6538.