

ASG SEWING HALL OF FAME

MEET: ANN PERSON

2004 Sewing Hall of Fame Honoree

At ASG Conference 2004's Denim & Diamonds dinner, the person who shone the brightest was Ann Person, the 2004 Sewing Hall of Fame honoree. Her husband, three daughters, son-in-law, and three granddaughters joined her in Dallas for the festivities.

As the founder and still president of Stretch & Sew, Ann built a thriving business based on her special techniques for sewing knits.

Ann attended the University of Oregon, majoring in art. Her education was interrupted by World War II, when she joined the Women's Army Corps. Ann married, raised three daughters, and experienced some disappointing business ventures and a serious auto accident. Through it all, she found time to sew.

In the mid '60s, a neighbor with access to knit remnants from a ready-to-wear manufacturer inspired Ann to develop some techniques for making T-shirts. This led to the opening of the first Stretch & Sew store in Burns, Oregon in 1967 and her first instructional book, "Stretch and Sew." It was just what eager home sewers had been waiting for!

Two years later, Stretch & Sew developed its franchise program—a revolutionary idea for the sewing industry. By the late '70s, there were 353 Stretch & Sew franchise and company-owned stores across the nation. One newspaper dubbed her "the Colonel Sanders of the garment industry."

Stretch & Sew didn't just sell knit fabric; it sold fashion and it sold sewing techniques. Stretch & Sew patterns, featured in major fashion magazines, books, knit fabrics from around the world, and a cable TV show were all part of her empire. This prompted another journalist to refer to her as "Halston for home sewers."

By 1983, knits were no longer a nov-



Ann (center) celebrates with granddaughter Cory (left) and daughter Mindy.

elty and blue jeans had replaced jogging suits as primary leisurewear. The franchise concept was phased out in favor of independent store ownership. Distributions systems were changed so that the patterns, books, and notions identified with Stretch & Sew were made available through multiple retail channels.

Stretch & Sew is a matriarchal business. Ann's daughters have always been a part of it, on both the business side and the glamour side, serving as models for book and pattern photos.

Several years ago, Ann wanted to downsize and move from Oregon to warm, sunny Arizona. Mindy Moore (Ann's daughter) and Cory Pzitzer (Mindy's daughter) talked her into keeping the business open and letting them run it. Ann still serves as president, filling roles as consultant and providing inspiration.

The company currently offers approximately 120 patterns, plus wonderful products that Ann developed, such as Du-Sew, action elastic, and Perky Bond. Family members live in close proximity. Ann is currently teaching her great-granddaughter Chloe (Cory's daughter), age 5, to sew. Chloe has her great-grandmother's work ethic—she comes to the office every day to help run Stretch & Sew.

Ann, who will turn 80 in December, is celebrating all year. We, in turn, celebrate her!