

ASG SEWING HALL OF FAME

MEET: MARTHA PULLEN

2005 Sewing Hall of Fame Honoree

As the Sewing Hall of Fame presentation began at ASG Conference 2005, a very composed Martha Pullen sat at a luncheon table with husband Joe and her staff. ASG Executive Director Margo Martin began to speak about this year's honoree without mentioning any names. About three-quarters of the way through, it dawned on Martha that the person Margo was talking about was *her*. To the delight of her husband and staff, who realized that they had indeed kept the secret well, Martha burst into tears of joy and surprise.



But to anyone who has followed Martha Pullen's career, this honor was no surprise. As Margo put it, Martha "is by all standards a living legend in the sewing industry—innovator, educator, designer, author, publisher, promoter. She is an extraordinary woman. She didn't invent heirloom sewing—but she built an empire around what began as her favorite hobby."

Martha was raised in Scottsboro, Alabama and graduated from the University of Alabama with a degree in speech and English. She taught those subjects at almost every middle and high school level. Ultimately, she earned a Ph.D. in educational administration and management. But when her baby daughter was born, she discovered smocking and French sewing by machine. She realized that if she could be drawn in so passionately, other women could be, too.



Martha (holding Hall of Fame plaque) with (L to R) Angela Jones, retail marketing, Martha Pullen Co. (MPC); Kathy McMakin, MPC executive vice president; Angie Daniel, MPC accountant; husband Joe Pullen; and Diane Bradshaw, *Sew Beautiful* advertising manager.

Her first venture, in 1981, was a tiny shop in Huntsville, Alabama that sold heirloom sewing supplies. Within two months, she began importing laces and fabrics to sell mail-order, both wholesale and retail.

Next came the Martha Pullen School of Art Fashion, which now attracts more than 600 women to Huntsville twice a year and has been repeated in Australia, England, Sweden, Canada, New Zealand, and Mexico. As an author, she has more than 49 books to her credit. The newest is "The Vintage Collection of Martha Pullen, Volume I" with two companion CDs of embroidery designs. As a publisher, she can take pride in *Sew Beautiful*, a magazine she founded in 1987 that focuses on heirloom sewing and other classic sewing arts. She is also the host of "Martha's Sewing Room" on the Public Broadcasting System, which is seen in the U.S. and Canada.

Martha and her husband Joe have five children and 15 grandchildren, many of whom find their way into the tales Martha tells in her weekly e-mail newsletter.

In 2003, she sold her highly successful business to specialty magazine publisher Hoffman Media, but remains as president of the company she founded.

In addition to all this, Martha serves as a national spokesperson for

Hancock Fabrics and St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. An active member of her church, she has volunteered with the Southern Baptist International Mission Board in Africa, Jamaica, and Brazil. She is, to quote Margo Martin again, "a woman of faith—a Proverbs 31 woman—who has never failed to publicly acknowledge the source of her strength, inspiration, and blessings."