

Sew Special 2018

We are pleased to have Marla Kazell at Sew Special this year. She is a well-known seamstress / educator who comes to us from Tigard, Oregon. A quote she likes is "An ounce of experience is worth a pound of theory". You can learn many things from reading books and listening to lectures, but when it comes to sewing, doing is best. That's why Marla love teaching individuals and small groups. She loves being able to give everyone in a class individual attention and help, and see real improvement in sewing skills and self-confidence. Marla's focus is on learning new techniques and improving skills. All of us know how to sew, but Marla will take our sewing ability to a higher level and make our sewing exceptional, instead of average. Her inspiration comes from us. Over her 30+ years of teaching, she has learned what her students want to accomplish, where we get stuck, and when we are ready to try something new. She has designed her classes around those things she has learned from her students.

Marla Kazell has been sewing professionally for 30 years and creates beautiful couture garments in her custom clothing studio in Tigard, Oregon. Her focus is on fit and fine sewing techniques and her garments feature wonderful details. She has shared her sewing knowledge in articles for *Threads* and *Sew News* magazines and teaches sewing classes and hands-on workshops in Portland, Oregon and across the country.

FUN FACTS ABOUT MARLA

My first sewing teacher taught me that the inside of a garment should look as good as the outside. I was graded on it! Today I know that everything you do, or don't do, on the inside affects the way a garment looks on the outside. So I still carefully finish seams, trim, grade and clip threads. Neatness counts.

My first job in the sewing industry as a sample seamstress taught me the importance of accuracy. I had to sew accurately to test the integrity of a pattern draft or grade. Today I know that aiming for perfection may cause you to slow down, baste or rip out some stitches along the way. Just remember, it's the aiming and not the perfection that's most important.

Years of being a custom dressmaker and teaching fitting workshops with Pati Palmer taught me how much a few small changes to a pattern can affect the fit of a garment. Fit is one of the biggest frustrations for so many sewers. Today I know that searching for the perfectly fitting pattern isn't the answer. Knowing your body shape and learning how to alter any pattern to fit it is.

40 years of sewing classes and studying clothing, patterns and books taught me techniques. I have learned from many wonderful teachers over the years - each one with their own unique twists and variations of the same techniques. Today I know that having a wide repertoire of skills - knowing more than one way to do anything - construct a welt pocket, insert a lining or make a buttonhole - is invaluable. You will have the ability to make the best choices for each fabric you choose; for each garment you make.

Years of training with couture expert Roberta Carr taught me how to sew in my head, to think through the process, to anticipate and solve problems and to visualize the finished garment. I learned that this process, as much as having the sewing skills, leads to couture quality garments. Today I know that couture sewing is truly an art and

"it's all in the details..."

Meet Marla Kazell

Training/Education: Learning to sew was a breeze for Marla Kazell, who excelled in seventh-grade home-economics classes in Kenosha, Wis., where she grew up. Her skills in designing and making clothes soon landed her part-time work in a fabric store during high school. She continued working there while pursuing a degree in social sciences at Carthage College.

"It was the 1970s, and knits were becoming very popular," said Kazell, 53. "I worked at Stretch & Sew, a franchise store specializing in the new fabrics."

In 1977, Kazell eagerly transferred to Stretch & Sew's headquarters in Eugene, where she became a sample seamstress.

"We worked with a patternmaker to sew test samples, and then wrote and illustrated the sewing guide," she said. "Such a job had never occurred to me, but I liked it instantly."

After a couple years, though, she wanted more freedom to tinker with patterns and create clothes, so she began doing custom sewing, building a clientele through friends and co-workers. By 1983, after a move to Portland, she was sewing full-time.

"Some clients like designer patterns but don't want to do the sewing themselves; others are very tall, or are different sizes on the top and bottom, so finding clothes, especially dresses, that fit properly is difficult for them," Kazell said.

She found herself shopping more and more at Josephine's Dry Goods, because "everything she (owner Judith Head) has in there is beautiful."

Soon after, Kazell started teaching sewing classes at the downtown Portland store. She also teaches workshops, through the American Sewing Guild, for sewing groups around the country.

"To do this, you need a lot of experience in sewing and fitting clothes, and, because it's a pretty personal business, you also need to be able to make people comfortable," Kazell said. "But as far as equipment, all you really need is a sewing machine and a good iron."

JOBS



ONE AD.
TWO PLACES
In print and online
503-221-8000
OregonLive.com/jl

A PUBLICATION OF THE OREGONIAN ADVERTISING DEPARTMENT

Marla Kazell, seamstress

By JAN BERRS

SPECIAL WRITER

Wage range: \$15,000 to \$80,000

Employer: Self-employed

Training/Education: Learning to sew was a breeze for Marla Kazell, who excelled in seventh-grade home-economics classes in Kenosha, Wis., where she grew up. Her skills in designing and making clothes soon landed her part-time work in a fabric store during high school. She continued working there while pursuing a degree in social sciences at Carthage College.

"It was the 1970s, and knits were becoming very popular," said Kazell, 53. "I worked at Stretch & Sew, a franchise store specializing in the new fabrics."

In 1977, Kazell eagerly transferred to Stretch & Sew's headquarters in Eugene, where she became a sample seamstress.

"We worked with a patternmaker to sew test samples, and then wrote and illustrated the sewing guide," she said. "Such a job had never occurred to me, but I liked it instantly."

After a couple years, though, she wanted more freedom to tinker with patterns and create clothes, so she began doing custom sewing, building a clientele through friends and co-workers. By 1983, after a move to Portland, she was sewing full-time.

"Some clients like designer patterns but don't want to do the sewing themselves; others are very tall, or are different sizes on the top and bottom, so finding clothes, especially dresses, that fit properly is difficult for them," Kazell said.

She found herself shopping more and more at Josephine's Dry Goods, because "everything she (owner Judith Head) has in there is beautiful."

Soon after, Kazell started teaching sewing classes at the downtown Portland store. She also teaches workshops, through the American Sewing Guild, for sewing groups around the country.

"To do this, you need a lot of experience in

On the Job



Seamstress Marla Kazell teaches classes and does custom work for clients who desire well-tailored clothing.

sewing and fitting clothes, and, because it's a pretty personal business, you also need to be able to make people comfortable," Kazell said. "But as far as equipment, all you really need is a sewing machine and a good iron."

Best part: "I get to sew great fabrics, and I enjoy matching them with patterns to make pants, skirts, jackets. I like taking a simple commercial pattern and making it in different ways."

Realities: "As always with being self-employed, you have to take care of your own insurance, marketing, and so on, so you need to be a businessperson as well as a creative person."

Future: "People will always have a need for clothing that fits them."

Jan Berres is a Portland freelance writer who can be reached at janberres@hotmail.com