

Patsy Madrid Helps Make Your Vintage Fantasy Come True

Tucked away at 412 Bullard Avenue is a double-storefront shop filled with styles of yesteryear. Mannequins pose and primp in the store window, modeling haute couture and seasonal finery for Valentine's Day, Mardi Gras, Saint Patrick's Day, Easter and the rest of the holidays. Inside, racks billow with gowns of satin, chiffon, tulle, chemise, and sequins galore are surrounded by a galaxy of accessories - trees of hats, trays of jewelry, and drawers of hankies, scarves and gloves.

For nearly 25 years, Vintage Fantasies has been THE place to shop for gowns and stylish outfits for special occasions, especially "for families who can't afford a \$200 prom dress," says owner Patsy Madrid. She sells vintage costumes, wedding gowns and bridesmaid dresses, as well as dresses for quinceañeras and first communions. "I have new gowns, new clothes, recycled and vintage. And lots and lots of hats and other accessories. We curate to get the most unusual, most unique things, but keep it affordable."

Her customers include all ages and types. "For young girls, we have really pretty dresses. We won't sell a slinky dress to a young girl unless her mama says it's ok," Patsy explains. "We're kind of a family store. We have high school boys come in for prom. They see themselves dressed up in the mirror and say 'I look good.' We've dressed high school students who do history days, who go to Washington D.C. We've had a lot of theme parties, theme weddings - Gothic, Eastern Indian, Rainbow."

She has a lot of throwbacks to the 1950s, '60s, and '70s, sprinkled with a few Elvis Presley accessories and memorabilia. "I love the 1960s, the Jackie O look and the A-line Dress. But it's so fun to get somebody who wants to dress for the fifties - dress, gloves, hat, shoes." Hats are one of her weaknesses. "I collected 1,600 before I opened the store. I love them."

Patsy has adored fashionable clothes all her life. She recalls her pivotal clothing memory in the late 1950s, when she was a teen-ager and fell in love with a petticoat at Bornstein's department store in downtown Silver. "I wanted that petticoat so much that I screamed and cried. Dad finally got it for me. I still have it."

During her 40-year career as a mental health therapist Patsy started collecting career clothing to dress women going back to work. "I gathered clothes from my friends and other people, and had a storage shed where I could dress them and make them look nice. There were

girls wanting to go to prom who couldn't afford the dress. My friends would give me the dresses and I was able to dress them.”

She decided to open the boutique in 2002 after she retired and after her husband passed away. “So I bought this building. It used to be the Model Shop, a high-end clothing store run by a mother and daughter.” Ironically, she remembers when she was 15 years old the store owner turned her away, saying Patsy didn't have enough money to buy a fancy dress there.

Vintage Fantasies inventory comes from a variety of places. “We buy deadstock and overstock. Sometimes we get donations. We get warehouse orders of trendier stuff, have it drop shipped to us. I used to go to the market in Las Vegas, Nevada. There was a vendor who'd let me buy one at a time,” she says.

Her sister Jean helped for many years, now her daughter Missy is involved. Missy Lopez also owns her own store, All My Momma's Junk at 107 Broadway. “We are planning to sell some of the inventory at online shows,” Patsy says. “We're purging, getting rid of old to bring in new money to buy new clothes. But I don't want to raise my prices.”

“It's a lot of fun. I enjoy doing it. I love all the customers, the wonderful people. I love their dogs. I love meeting so many people. I didn't open up to be a millionaire, just wanted to help the community. Many of my customers come from Santa Fe, Albuquerque, Las Cruces, El Paso, and of course Lordsburg and Deming. I've had people come in from Germany, China, Japan, New York.”

Patsy also enjoys the treasure hunt of finding special items for the store. “I like surprise pieces. You never know, it's like Christmas. She describes her biggest find, “A lady passed away and her pastor brought me her gowns. There was a black jersey knit dress trimmed in fox fur, a Lillie Rubin. I called a New York dealer and found out it was worth \$2,400. It had been used for the Oscars, but they couldn't tell me which actress wore it. A beautiful young woman bought it.”

Born in Silver City, Patsy grew up in the Brewer Hill neighborhood. Her father was born in Pinos Altos and raised in Santa Rita. He worked in the copper mines and played the drums in a country western band. Her Irish-Scotch grandfather “Red” Robertson was a steam engineer at the Santa Rita Mine and her grandmother was a full-blooded Yacqui Indian from Mexico.

A graduate of WNMU, Patsy holds two masters degrees. She helped start the Mental Health Area Human Services and the Bridgeline crisis line at the university for information and referral. “That morphed into Border Area Mental Health Services,” she says.

Patsy was very involved with the Silver City Museum. “The museum made it a comfortable place for longtime residents to visit. We had so much fun at the bingos. They were so well attended.” She organized the museum’s mid-February Territorial Charter Ball again this year. “I used to be in charge of fund raising at the museum, so I said, ‘we have to do it.’ We were on our own, with no sponsors. We did make money from ticket sales, so the event paid for itself with a little extra.” As usual, some of the party-goers shopped at Vintage Fantasies for their frontier Victorian costumes.

Vintage Fantasies is open 11:00-4:00 Thursday through Saturday.