

## Passion For Fashion

By Alicea Jones

Let's face it, we all want to look beautiful and would go to almost any extreme (financial and otherwise) to achieve it. Yet sometimes, accentuating our positives has less to do with how much we spend and more to do with wearing the right clothes. Joni Woollen understands. Besides the unique outfits and the secret slimming garments you'll find at Joni's of Georgetown, you'll quickly learn she has an eye for what looks good on you.

But first, let's take a tour through Joni's shop which celebrates its five year anniversary this month. From outside, you will find a display window showcasing her newest acquisitions. Currently, she is presenting a romantic collection of softly draped, lacy, tea-stained beige tops, and pale peach palazzo pants. Even on the manikin, the ensemble is a *déjà vu* of lazy afternoons on the porch swing, nosegay in hand.

Now, we enter the store like a bridesmaid waiting to catch the bouquet. You sense this is not just a store, but a place of enchantment. Focus, if you can, on the first rounder. A light-weight, silky, "strawberry-to-orange" summer jacket begs your attention. You are drawn by the bodice, dyed in a juicy shade of strawberry--flattering to any complexion--which then melts into a quenching shade of tangerine down to the hemline. Cinched side pockets and hood, and a flattering hip-length hem, make this summer night 'must have' functional as well as pretty.

In keeping with this colorful sunset-themed palette, you are lured by the ankle-skimming sun dresses posed lazily against the east wall. There are racks of them; some splashed with the color of sherbet, others with jewel tones. Spaghetti straps show off summer tans but for blushers, Joni carries coordinating sari-like scarves to drape loosely about the shoulders.

In mid-store, you'll notice rows of sensuous separates; tops, palazzo pants, and skirts, all wrinkle resistant and perfect for traveling. Our pulses rev with anticipation. "You can roll these up in a suit case for hours and they won't wrinkle," said Joni. They're perfect for that cruise to Alaska or the high school reunion.

But what's a tantalizing outfit without beneficial undergarments? Joni's store is stocked with figure-flattering unmentionables like Spanx®, the redefined (lighter and more comfortable) girdle. They are made for the top, mid, or lower sections of the body, wherever you'd like to re-shift your endowments. Also, try the new Bra-llelujah, a bra whose praises are sung because of its power to defy gravity. "It's soooo comfortable," said Joni. She also carries Not Your Daughter's Jeans. They remember where your real waistline is and are "comfortable enough to dance in," said Joni who wears them herself. These jeans are a boon for Joni's mature clientele.

Where did Joni get her eye for unique garments and color? It all started with paper dolls. When she was a little girl, finances were tight and Joni had to figure out how to satisfy her passion for fashion. "I'd get a Sears catalogue," said Joni. "I'd find a model that you could put clothes on top of. It was always funny to cut out the extra notch to fold over the doll," she said. The clothes weren't always a match so Joni had to be creative.

When she was a bit older, her grandmother gave her scraps of fabric and her own sewing box with grown up scissors, despite her mother's hesitation. That was the beginning of Joni's lifelong love of fabric, design, and sewing. "I made all my own clothes, with a lot of guidance from my mother, an experienced seamstress herself."

Through her 20's and 30's, sewing was her life. Her first job was doing alterations for *Famous Barr*, a division of the May Company in downtown St. Louis. "My roots were at May Company," she said of the store that gave her a foundation for professional dressmaking and alterations.

She eventually ran her own alterations business for many years but in 1990, after back problems and several surgeries, she put down her scissors and measuring tape, at least for a while.

So at Joni's, you not only get carefully selected garments for your perusal, you get Joni, a personal shopper extraordinaire, who knows a thing or two about dressing women beautifully.

Some of her tips include:

1. A boot cut or slight flair, rather than a narrow leg, looks better on women with larger hips.
2. Petite women who would like to lengthen their look can wear tunic length tops. "They want to avoid tops that end at mid-hip cutting them in half," said Joni.
3. One color, top to bottom, creates a leaner look.  
"Every rule has an exception depending upon texture, color, size, even personality. But this is a good place to begin," said Joni.

What's coming in the fall? According to Joni, there will be no Dear John letters for the mainstays. "The retro look will still be in: tunic length tops, leggings. Leather-like fabrics and animal prints will still be popular. And pants of varying widths won't go away, like narrow pants with ankle slits," she said.

So Joni knows fashion. But how does she get her sewing fix? "I teach my grandchildren how to sew," she said.

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