

Sally Whinghter

PROPRIETOR OF FARMHOUSE FABRICS



BORN IN 1950, SALLY GREW UP ON A BEAUTIFUL DAIRY FARM IN MICHIGAN, which has been in her family for more than 150 years. Cooking, gardening, and sewing were all a basic part of their daily life on the farm. Her mom, who taught herself to sew, was happy to pass along all the tricks, tips, and techniques she had learned through the years. She loved quality fabrics, so Sally learned to appreciate them, too.

“When she sewed, I sat on the floor by her old Singer sewing machine and made little doll clothes from her scraps. I sewed most of my clothes in high school and college. It was a hobby that I thoroughly enjoyed,” Sally shares.

In 1977, her first son (of five) was born, and Sally was delighted to learn that she could earn an income from her sewing hobby. After spending some months taking in sewing, Sally gravitated toward heirloom sewing and smocked garments. “The fabrics and trims were so pretty, and I quickly learned that children had fewer fitting issues than adults!” Sally says.

A turning point in her sewing business occurred when Sally attended a workshop sponsored by The Clemson Extension Service called “Sewing as a Business.” The workshop was led by professional women, and it was the first time Sally caught a glimpse of a bigger future in the sewing industry.



The inventory at Farmhouse Fabrics is a treasure trove of fine fabric, laces, trims, and everything sewists could imagine for their special projects. Sally is a source for sewists all over the world and travels constantly seeking new products for her customers.



IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

From the beginning, her business schedule was arranged around her family. "When I was custom sewing, I would wake early in the morning, often at 3 a.m., and sew until the boys awoke, sew during naps, and in the evening after they went to sleep," Sally states.

Later, when Farmhouse Fabrics retail store opened, the hours were planned so Sally could drive carpool and attend school functions and ball games. Her husband and sons have all been involved in the business. Several of her daughters-in-law have worked here. Now, her granddaughters rotate working on Fridays. The grandchildren have all modeled for Farmhouse Fabrics ads in *Classic Sewing Magazine*. "There is usually a reward involved...ice cream, candy, or a sweet treat...not to mention some very nice outfits!" Sally says.

Sally shares, "We have an annual Tent Sale, and all of the family gets involved. My husband's longtime friends from his men's Bible Study even joined the troops this year, calling themselves 'The Pa Patrol!'" Some of the granddaughters oversaw the concession stand. They love meeting and interacting with their wonderful customers!

Because of her focus on family, Sally encourages her employees to do the same and allows a flexible work schedule when she can. "I love to see them joining their children and grandchildren for lunch at school and attending awards ceremonies. Farmhouse Fabrics will still be here, but their child will only be young for a little while, and they shouldn't miss that special opportunity to be with them," Sally states.

INSPIRATION

When it comes to products, Sally really loves trims and buttons! "For years, I could sniff out a stash of vintage mother-of-pearl buttons a mile away! Digging in basements and attics was a favorite pastime, and I collected vintage sewing patterns, vintage garments, and sewing supplies," Sally says. These amazing items from the past have been an inspiration to her in creating trims and garments. She loves to take parts and pieces of vintage patterns and create

something “new for now.” “And with nine granddaughters, I have a never-ending supply of models ready to try on something new,” she says.

Sally foresees a great future for the sewing industry. Although sewists are touchy-feely people and prefer to handle fabrics, she finds that social media offers much in the way of inspiration. “We are created in the image of God, the Master of Creativity, and social media is such a visual sharing platform. It inspires us to create and produce beautiful things!” Sally shares.

Just a quick look at Pinterest, Etsy, Facebook, or Instagram can be just the springboard Sally needs for a new project. “No longer do we have to drag our rowdy little boys into a fabric store while we spend hours flipping through pattern books and fingering fabrics while they are bored out of their minds! It is wonderful! And it is inspiring an entire new generation of creativity,” she says. Sally believes if a younger generation continues to join the industry, sewing will continue to thrive. Her typical work week is Monday through Friday, up at 4 a.m. and working in the shop until about 7 p.m. “I absolutely love what I do,” she says.

Sally is a spark plug for so many people in the sewing industry, and she is often referred to as the go-to person when you are looking for something special. Her offerings at Farmhouse Fabrics are overwhelming for sewists, as she finds the most wonderful fabrics, trims, and buttons in her shopping excursions. Sally is a beautiful lady with a heart for serving. ☹



Sally's joy comes from her wonderful family. She is always surrounded by adoring grandchildren who love her and make great models!

