



Farmwife's Heartfelt Era Climaxing With Audra's Country Bridal Internet Auction

This farmer's wife has fashioned, stitched and sold wedding gowns around the world.

"I always loved to sew, and my bridal business just grew from that, really," said Audra Wilson.

Eldon and Audra Wilson operated a grade-A dairy at Harveyville in Wabaunsee County for many years. "That's a long ways from a bridal shop," she admitted.

"I sewed for my family, made my daughters' wedding gowns, costumes for programs," reflected Audra, mother of three girls and two sons.

"I never had any sewing lessons, just learned from my mother and grandmother," she noted

From meager beginning with this farm woman's creative personal touch, Audra's Country Bridal has thrived.

Thousands of brides, entire wedding parties worldwide have appreciated Audra's loving assistance.



After 46 years_ Audra Wilson is closing her Audra_s Country Bridal_ now in Burlingame_ after being in three Topeka locations. Remaining stock of gowns_ accessories and fixtures is being offered through an internet auction.

After 46 years, Audra's Country Bridal, now right on the old Santa Fe Trail, in Burlingame, is closing.

An internet auction of all remaining bridal and formal outfits, accessories and fixtures is being conducted by Webb & Associates Auctions & Appraisals. It has been advertised and promoted on WIBW, the Kansas Agriculture Network and WibwNewsNow.

"It's difficult, but the time has come," Audra conceded.

While working at Topeka K-Mart assisting brides with selections and fittings, Audra's brainchild began.

"The store manager said I needed to open a bridal shop, and it just zoomed," Audra admitted.

"Brides would come in, describe or show a picture of what they wanted. I'd sketch it, and make the gown," she said.

With Audra's unique innovations and designs, "The business just mushroomed all over the world," she humbly recognized.

First at Fairlawn Plaza in Topeka, Audra's moved to 21st & Gage, then Holiday Square, and has been in Burlingame four years.

While Audra has always been the designer-seamstress, a number of employees have assisted through the decades. "Mostly sales doing fittings, sometimes straight seams, had six girls at one time," she remembered.

Work went beyond the shop. "I did a lot of sewing at home, evenings and weekends. I just loved doing it," Audra stated.

Demand, "hundreds every year," outgrew Audra's time limitations such addition of commercially-made gowns.

"I worked with wedding shops all around the country, New Orleans, California,"

Audra commented.

"Our mission was always to provide brides with the ultimate in fashion, fit and service," Audra verified. "We offered only the highest level quality and design in all of our gowns that made every woman look and feel beautiful.

"The one-stop-shop experience covered bridal designer gowns, with dresses for bride's mothers, bridesmaids, flower girls, the entire wedding party," she insisted. "We had veils, jewelry, shoes, tiaras, baskets, Bibles."

"There was everything brides needed for their wedding, except the groom," Audra smiled.

Yet, she also took care of wedding menfolk. "We offered tuxedo options ready to rent," Audra verified, "with packages for groomsmen, ring bearer, the bride's dad and grandfathers."

As if that wasn't enough, Audra was often called upon for special custom outfits.

"I made costumes for The Nutcracker play in Topeka several years, recitals, school uniforms, just about everything," she said. "I made different outfits for girls as they grew up, for pageants, the prom, then their wedding."

Yes, Audra's gowns have been worn by brides around the world. "England, Saudi Arabia, Holland. That was the prettiest dress I ever designed and made," Audra said. "A KU student heard about my services, the bride in Holland described what she wanted. It was just beautiful."

On numerous occasions, Audra was called on by brides to assist with final-minute gown adjustments. "A bride in Saudi Arabia asked me to help with her gown, but I don't fly. I turned that down," Audra said.

There have been emergencies. "One bridesmaid panicked after getting candle wax on her gown just before the ceremony," Audra recalled. "I went right over with some cleaner, helped her, and it was fine."

Some weddings have many more than the bride and groom. "One bride had 18 bridesmaids. I made all the gowns, the mothers, flower girl, outfitted the groom, all the men, too," Audra remembered.

There's no record of how many gowns Audra's fashioned personally, even larger would be the thousands of brides and wedding parties Audra's outfitted.

This includes fashioning three generations of some families. "The bride came to me, because I'd made wedding dresses for both her mother and grandmother," Audra said. "Everything's always been very reasonably priced, too."

Close-out of Audra's Country Bridal is very dear to Audra's heart. "Eldon's health is not good, and I need to be at home," she said. "I didn't know how to sell out. A bridal shop in Kansas City successfully dispersed through an internet auction. So, that's what I decided to do."

There'll be thousands of wedding gowns, formals, bridal party outfits, jewelry, and accessories, plus furniture and store fixtures.

"I've just loved helping all of these brides and everybody with my designs and sewing. I really enjoyed it," Audra, 89, assured.

Information can be found at www.dlwebb.com.



Well past retirement age for most_ Audra Wilson with a lifelong love for sewing_ designing and creating has remained active in personal operation of Audra_s Country Bridal. On numerous occasions_ brides have come to Audra_s for wedding gowns because their mom and grandmother got dresses there.

Padre Says:

"Love is of all passions the strongest, for it attacks simultaneously the head, the heart, and the sense."



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