

The fashion plate

Vicky ties on to a fashion star

By RUSTLE SHAND

Vicky Davis, Mrs. PTA suburban housewife, had an idea that became a reality. It transformed her from a typical suburban housewife and mother to a fashion leader in men's neckwear and accessories. It also brought her the coveted Coty Award in 1978 for her innovative men's ties.

It all began in 1959 in Oak Park, Mich., when Vicky was in her early 40s. She spent hours finding a tie for her husband, Larry, and wondered why all ties looked so much alike. She thought how many men must share the same frustration and boredom. So she bought some unusual fabrics in a local shop, gathered a few of her PTA chairmen in her basement to sew some ties, and her business was launched.

"I was ecstatic when I got my first order," she said. "Knowing no better, I walked into the Claymore shop in Birmingham with my samples in a brown paper bag."

"If the buyer, Harry Martin, had said no, I wouldn't have gone further. He ordered two dozen, and a couple of days later, five dozen more. It's been like that ever since."

WHEN PRODUCTION became too much for the PTA group, Vicky knew she had to get to New York. She had never flown alone, nor been away from Larry and their two sons, Robby and Kenny, who were then 14 and 17. Needless to say, the Big Apple overwhelmed her.

For two years she commuted, Manhattan during the week and Michigan on week-ends.

She would leave New York with a cheese cake

under her arm Friday afternoon, and then would be picked up at the airport in Detroit and dropped off at the supermarket to do her weekly shopping. She would spend the weekend washing clothes and cooking meals for the following week.

Business continued to grow and, in 1975, husband and wife joined forces and moved to New York. Vicky makes several trips a year to Europe where she works with out-of-the-way small fabric mills.

Her line covers a tongue-in-cheek view with sophisticated fabrics. "Accessories should be fun," she said. "And I am giving men choices in neckwear and accessories they never had before."

VICKY'S CREDITS include being the forerunner of the bowtie boom five years ago, being the first designer to completely commit to a super-skinny two-inch men's tie two years ago and introducing ladies' ties to this country a year and a half ago.

Her ties for men are carried by Mark Keller, DiFronte and Tweeds in Birmingham, J.L. Hudson stores in the contemporary department, and at Me 'N My Lady in Royal Oak.

How does Vicky account for her success?

"I am a very poor loser and I don't know how to give up," she said.

"Many times, as I ran around New York, dragging fabrics around in the snow to contractors, rushing to meet store's cancellation dates, I would think about my family and friends in Oak Park, sitting comfortably in their dens, watching TV, and think I've got to be crazy."

"Honestly, though, I just don't know how to stop or quit. There is something within me that just keeps pushing me on and on."



A tie to dress down.



A tie to dress up.



Vicky Davis shows one of her innovative neckties.

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which will give shade to the house but not interfere with growing flowers in the box. In the winter, the acrylic can be removed to allow the sun's rays to help warm the house.

The sun was used to warm the buildings of ancient Rome and Greece, according to information from the American Lung Association. This group favors solar energy because it does not pollute the air we breathe.

"In ancient Rome, building a structure that blocked a neighbor's sunlight was illegal," said the association. "In the ancient Greek city of Olynthus living rooms of houses faced north while open courtyards were on the south. Although the houses were of two stories, the southern wings were kept to one story so as not to block the low winter sun rays from slanting into the living rooms, where it was absorbed by adobe walls."

"During the summer, protruding eaves shaded the southern facade; gardens flourished and the living rooms were cool. The west and east walls, exposed to the sun during the rest of the day, had no windows, so the houses stayed cool."

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Follow instructions for projects in this new book and you can save a lot of energy by expending a little.

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New book tells how to use solar energy

Our pocketbooks have been telling us to save energy, and our president recently repeated the message.

Now "Better Homes and Gardens" has come up with a book telling us how we can cut down on energy waste in our homes. It costs \$3.95. Called "Energy-Saving Projects You Can Build," the book provides the do-it-yourselfer with information and instructions needed to insulate and weather strip the home.

It gives valuable facts about heating and cooling so that intelligent purchases can be made for these purposes and understand how to get the most from the equipment.

"The U.S. Energy Department of Energy estimates there are 40,000,000 single family homes in the U.S. that are not adequately protected from the weather," reported the Meredith Corp., publisher of the book. It noted that about 40 percent of the energy wasted in a typical single family home is lost through the infiltration of air.

"Ninety-eight percent of this loss occurs around doors and windows," it added.

Keeping hot air out in summer and cold air out in winter are, therefore, the main problems addressed by the book.

Methods for ventilating, insulating and weatherstripping are discussed in detail, with drawings for further explanation.

The energy department estimates that homeowners can reduce the load on their heating and cooling equipment by as much as 20 or 30 percent by investing a few hundred dollars in insulation, said Meredith Corp.

Suggestions are also made for what are called passive systems to conserve fuel. Does the cold winter wind roar in every time you open your front door or patio doors? A simple wood enclosure around each could send the breezes in another direction.

Specific methods for building such enclosures around your patio door are offered, along with ways to construct a small vestibule around your front door, a structure that can be removed and stored when not needed. Protecting the outside air conditioner from wind and sun can also be accomplished by erecting simple wood structures that can blend into the surroundings.

Speaking of air conditioners, the book lists a number of steps homeowners can take to keep their air conditioners operating at peak efficiency. It also gives similar information about furnaces, humidifiers and water heaters.

To take advantage of the sun, "Energy-saving Projects" suggests a window box with sides the height of the window. In summer put across the top of the box a piece of translucent acrylic plastic.

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