

It takes a cook to whip up a spanking new kitchen

Story: CORINNE ABATT
Photos: DICK KELLEY

With one quick statement Lenore Greer of Kitchens by Lenore of Birmingham will probably acquire an army of believers.

"It takes someone who cooks and understands to design a good kitchen."

In her two decades as a kitchen designer, Mrs. Greer, who last fall moved her business to Birmingham from Southfield, has helped change the kitchen's often stark image.

More studio than showroom in her Woodward location, Mrs. Greer puts kitchens in a glamorous perspective with the addition of original art, plants, plush carpets and soft lighting.

Mother of three sons, one of whom, Stefan, is in business with her, and wife of retired builder, Arnold, who frequently helps out as a consultant, Mrs. Greer and family came to Michigan about 20 years ago.

"I was an unknown person with a cabinet no one ever heard of. I worked out of my home and broke into an all male industry," she said.

Her product was (and still is) Grabbil made by an Amish tradition cabinet making factory in Indiana. She has an exclusive franchise with the firm.

SHE DESIGNS the kitchens and the cabinetmakers follow her plans. All Grabbil cabinetry has six hand-rubbed finishes which give it a durable surface as well as a rich, glossy appearance.

In addition to pine and maple, cabinets may be of black walnut, hickory, ash or cherry, although some of these woods are fast disappearing from the market.

Finishes come in anything from natural wood to a variety of colors — in fact, between styles, woods and finishes. Mrs. Greer said her clients have well over a hundred choices.

When Mrs. Greer, a graduate of Adelphi University of New York, went to Pratt Institute in Brooklyn to become a fashion designer, she was momentarily discouraged.

"I took fashion design, but I had no talent," she said. "I did, however, have a talent for color, composition and design." If they had had counseling and guidance 30 years ago I would have been an architect."

The flair and interest in architecture was asserting itself ever since. Mrs. Greer designed several homes for her family and her kitchen designs are evidence of the combination of her interests in cooking, architecture and art. A talent for psychology also comes into play in her designs.

Once she understands a client's needs, she tailors her designs to the individual and budget. The average remodeling may cost between \$4,000-\$10,000, she said.

When she's asked how much a new kitchen costs, she will frequently counter with a question, "How much does a car cost?" Depends on what you want and can afford.

And individual needs run the gamut. Mrs. Greer recalled the couple who both liked to cook, but one swore by gas and the other liked electric heat. Mrs. Greer designed a kitchen with his and her stoves, one electric, the other gas.

Then, there was the couple with a poodle who was like a child to them. When they both cooked, the poodle had to be there to watch and enjoy the action. Mrs. Greer designed a special rolling unit with a cushion on top for the dog to sit on. Underneath was a chest for his toys.

"I love dogs," she said, "so, I built that kitchen around the dog."

For a man who adored salami, she designed a ventilated salami cupboard.

"I enjoy everyone — each person is a challenge," she said.

If built-ins or furniture for other rooms of the home is requested, she will design that too.

"I'm a space squirrel," she said as she opened cupboard doors in the showroom to illustrate. A lazy Susan revolving shelf in one utilized otherwise dead corner space. There were tall narrow cupboards for trays, roll-out shelves for canned goods and Mrs. Greer pointed out that it can be put in on their sides, labels can be readily seen. Straight up it's always a guessing game.

STORAGE AREAS designed especially for casseroles and lids are a particular favorite as are readily accessible racks for spices and herbs. These are often tucked neatly into a corner area near the store on a revolving wooden rack.

From first-hand experience, Mrs. Greer knows what the cook will need close by and how equipment is best stored. Desks have a high priority in her kitchens, in truth it is the home-maker's office and work area and the desk is a natural for an efficient operation.

When she completes her design it is a picture of how the kitchen will look

when a client walks into it — not just a blueprint type layout. Mrs. Greer likes to locate everything and make suggestions on how storage space should be used.

When she isn't in her office, Mrs. Greer is likely to be at home in her own kitchen cooking for, or with, family and friends or doing needlepoint while she "listens" to TV.

"I design my own needlepoint — I play with needlepoint and I'm self taught."

Several of her framed needlepoint pieces in her office are sophisticated and contemporary. From a distance they look like modern graphics.

The showroom's studio type atmosphere is due in large part to the importance of art in the lives of everyone in the Greer family.

Hardly had she found the new location at 750 S. Woodward when Mrs. Greer commissioned stained glass artist Vera Sattler of Bloomfield Hills to do a window over the front door.

Stefan Greer has several graphics and paintings in his office in addition to a large marble sculpture by his friend Jay Lefkowitz, who had a one-man show at Lee Hoffman Gallery last year. Mrs. Greer likes to display original ceramics and small sculptures in her showroom kitchens.

Resident named to LIT post

John E. Miller of Farmington Hills has been named executive director of development at Lawrence Institute of Technology in Southfield.

Formerly with Peterson & Schouman, Inc., a private fund-raising consulting firm, Miller will be adding in the annual capital development programs at LIT. G. Robert Harrington, vice president for development, said Miller will be directly involved with the \$12.5-million capital campaign, which the college has undertaken to build two new buildings and alter several others.

Miller has specialized in organizational planning, management, evaluation and resource development as a consultant and at several institutions, including Detroit Institute of Technology and Siena Heights College in Adrian.

He received a B.A. degree from Goshen College in Indiana, an M.Ed. from Kent State University and a Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

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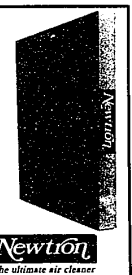
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License plate renewal time is here and numerous Michigan motorists have not purchased their plate tabs.

Confusion for vehicle owners is being created with Michigan converting to an expiration-on-birthday system.

"Some vehicle owners are assuming their 1979 license plates will not expire until their birthday. This is not true," said Betty Fitts, manager of the Secretary of State office at 33316 Grand River in Farmington.


The 1979 license plates for all pickup trucks, vans, commercial vehicles and trailers expired Feb. 29. Plates on passenger vehicles, motor homes and motorcycles will expire March 31.

"We are encouraging people to come in now and avoid the last-minute rush," Fitts said.

As in past years, people will need proof of insurance and their computer-prepared renewal form, or their 1979 registration, or their Michigan title and plate number.

Another Secretary of State office is at 38487 10 Mile Road, Farmington. Hours at both offices are 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. Mondays-Fridays.

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