



Wedding dress by your own

By Cathleen Collins Leo
special writer

ACCORDING to Toby Haberman, the bridal counter at Haberman's Fabrics is a very busy place on Saturday mornings.

"There are dozens of brides and their mothers lined up here," says the co-owner of this family store. "There are yards of lace and silk all over the place."

The customers are so pleased to see the different options we have here, and they all check out what the other (brides) are doing."

But even Haberman was surprised by a recent industry study showing that 40 percent of brides sew their own dresses or have a dress made for them, rather than buy it ready made. She wasn't too surprised though — to her, the advantages are obvious.

Those who sew themselves or work with a dressmaker have more options because they can combine styles that they like and which flatter them, Haberman says. Because the dress is made for them, it's going to fit them perfectly. And often they will have a better quality dress for less money. But even for those who plan to buy a wedding dress ready made, Haberman feels her store has a lot to offer.

acelates and tulle that can work as well as silks and cost less. Other fabrics there include tapeseries, moire, velvet, charmeuse, and jacquard. The shop also has an entire case of different colored French laces — re-embroidered, beaded, appliqued, and plain.

Haberman says that the staff is made up of experienced seamstresses who can point out some of the many options available. They can show how to combine patterns and how to choose materials that fit within a budget. They tell you about shortcuts, like having the skirt "serge" or bind the edges of the bridal veiling for a nominal cost. And they might point out that if you want beaded lace, you can save money by beading it yourself. One customer who took them up on that idea handsewed 3,000 beads on her wedding gown.

Haberman estimates that the materials for a wedding gown could cost from \$50 to \$500. If you use a dressmaker, those costs can vary, too.

"Sometimes you know a dear little lady who likes to keep her fingers busy who will sew it for you for \$50," she

Here are some tips for making your own gown:

- Plan to be finished at least a week before the wedding.
- If you are beading the lace yourself, do so before applying the lace to the gown.
- Keep the dress, other pattern pieces and lace in plastic bags to protect against dust, dirt and spills.
- Make a rough, muslin sample for a

lined bodice.

- Use a clean, sharp shears for fabric and embroidery scissors for lace.
- Use new glass-head or silk pins to avoid snags in fine fabrics.
- Use a new sewing machine needle in a size appropriate to your fabric.
- Make sure your iron is clean.
- Wash your hands and use hand cream to avoid pulls on fine fabrics. But leave time for the cream to be absorbed so that it doesn't cause stains.

"IT'S PROBABLY the most expensive and important dress a woman will buy," says Haberman. "I can't imagine making that kind of purchase without learning a lot about it. People at a ready-to-wear shop are not going to take the time to explain about all the different fabrics and laces. This is the bridal resource for the state of Michigan — we can help people make an educated decision."

The Royal Oak store, founded by Haberman's in-laws in 1958 and formerly known as House of Fabrics, does carry many options for bridal dresses. In addition to silks, there are polyesters,

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