

Master tailor proud of craft

By ROSE WEBER

Benito Longo learned to be a tailor by first using a broom. At an age when most American children are struggling with third grade lessons, Longo went to work sweeping out a tailor shop.

"My buddy wanted to be a tailor so I went along with him. The first job I had was sweeping the shop in Calabria, Italy. I was eight years old," Longo said.

Six years later he was allowed to make his first complete suit.

Longo, who works at Jordan Kahn men's clothing store in Orchard Lake Mall in West Bloomfield Township, remembers his step by step training vividly.

"WE STARTED putting the buttons on the pants, they didn't have zippers in those days. Then we learned to make buttonholes and finally a complete pair of pants," he said.

There were no patterns used, and the material was cut from the customer's measurements, a practice Longo still follows.

Although he does alterations exclusively for the store, he does accept work from friends and old customers.

"But the suits you buy off the rack, if altered by a good tailor, are just as good or better than tailor-made. And certainly cheaper," Longo said.

He would charge more than \$200 just for the labor to make a suit.

And although he much prefers working with men, he does make women's clothes.

EVERY YEAR at New Year's his wife selects a style and material for a new gown made by Longo.

"But only for my wife and daughters," he exclaimed.

He admitted that men can be just as exacting in their demands for tailoring perfection as women, but he is used to men's clothing and prefers working with it.

Longo believes that tailoring is becoming a lost art because there are no adequate schools in America. Almost all of the present tailors here were trained in Europe.

He is a firm believer in doing work of which a man can be proud. He not only fits the customers in the store but does the actual alteration work himself.

"I INSIST on them trying the garment on before they leave the store. Then if there is a minor adjustment to be made, they can sit down for a cup of coffee while I do the work right then," he said.

And he believes a man is entitled to quality work no matter whether he bought a pair of slacks or a thousand dollars worth of suits.

He admitted there are limitations to what he can do with a suit to



Benito Longo made his first suit at the age of 14 (Photographed by Art Emanuel)

make it fit the customer's desires. He advises men to check the fit of the sleeves and shoulders because shoulders are difficult to cut down.

"And it is really not possible to cut down lapels. Better to look for a different suit," he said.

There is one more trick of the trade Longo would still like to learn, re-weaving.

"I studied the book but I can't learn that way. I'd like to go to the school in Chicago. I can only learn by doing," he said.

Observer & Eccentric

BUSINESS

International array of food fills variety of gift baskets

By ROSE WEBER

The next best thing to sending your own home-made food to friends and associates is sending food selected by a lover of good things to eat.

Florence Share, who with her brother Arthur Schurgin owns the Horn of Plenty, 442 S. Woodward in Birmingham, is the buyer for the shop.

"I love good food and even on vacation I look for new and unusual foods to include in our gift baskets," Ms. Share said.

Although as a buyer she does make regular trips to Chicago, California and New York, it is when she is on vacation trips to Europe that she finds the most exotic foods.

"I AM ALWAYS experimenting and looking for something different. When I try something that is outstanding then I bug the supplier until he agrees to get me some," she said.

The shelves in the back of the shop contain foods from Japan, Switzerland, France, England, Belgium, Germany, Portugal, Finland, Sweden and the United States.

But Ms. Share does not depend on her taste alone when deciding on a new item.

"I DON'T EVER include

'weird' food in the baskets. People like familiar tastes. So I always have 15 or 20 of the employees taste a new item," she said.

When they first started the gift food basket business, she included a post card asking the recipient to rate the food.

"That's why I never buy apple jelly. There is nothing wrong with apple jelly but people just don't like it as a gift. They want strawberry mostly," she explained.

The shop provides baskets on a year-round basis as hospital, new baby, condolence, birthday or thank you gifts. However, its largest volume of business is done in preparation for the Christmas season.

They supply industrial firms as well as individual shoppers

EACH YEAR the containers for the Christmas gifts are changed. And that means that in addition to scouting new foods, Ms. Share also looks for interesting, useful containers.

But unlike the foods, which don't begin arriving until early October, the containers must be on hand before the catalog is printed.

"I don't want to tell customers that we don't have an item. So the back room begins to fill up as soon as we decide on a container," she said.

Hundreds of boxes line the walls

of the back room and the space over the gift shop.

The center of the work room becomes a beehive of activity when the Christmas production line starts. And production line is the right term.

"I DON'T THINK a customer should have to pay a disproportionate amount of money for labor. So we engineer the filling of the baskets to take the least amount of time and motion possible," the buyer said.

Ms. Share pioneered their pack-

ing methods and has received a design award for the baskets.

In addition to the gift items for Christmas, they also provide a Treat of the Month package for three, five, eight or 12 months.

A wine package may also be purchased with imported wines alone or with cheese and crackers in various containers.

"I tried for a long time to sell people on the idea of sending food instead of always flowers. And I am happy to say I have finally succeeded," she said.

Pardon no block to finding job

By ROSE WEBER

Finding a job may be one of the hardest things a draft evader or deserter has to do when he has completed his obligation to the United States government.

But it isn't because of discrimination. Most area employers said the equal opportunity law would apply to all those who did not have criminal convictions. Most of the large corporations contacted have not discussed employment of these men yet.

HOWEVER a spokesman for the General Motors Corporation said, "I am sure there will be no problems with hiring except for the fact that we still have 54,000 people on layoff. And they have first re-hire rights."

He added that the corporation has been actively involved in the government's program to hire returning veterans.

Most of the large corporations such as Federal-Mogul with world headquarters in Southfield, Ford Motor Company and Kresge with world offices in Troy indicated they would formulate a policy when actually faced with the situation.

"I don't think the amnesty issue will have an impact on this area even though Canada is close," said Jim Renfro, staffing manager of Sperry Vickers Division of the Sperry Rand Corp. in Troy.

Applications from these men

would be given the same consideration as any other, he said.

"WE WOULD WEIGH the information according to the seriousness of their convictions and other convictions. But when that was resolved, we would hire on the basis of experience and qualifications," Renfro said.

John Heller, owner of Eton Shell Service in Birmingham, said, "Oh, sure, I would hire them. I fought in the war but there was a reason for that war. There was no reason for the Vietnam war."

"I have no hard feelings toward them. They did what they thought was right," he said.

THE CITY OF BIRMINGHAM'S personnel director said he has not discussed to city policy yet.

"I would want to wait until the government decides on the conditions for amnesty before deciding. The reports on just what the men will be required to do are too vague," said Robert Kendall.

But once those obligations were fulfilled the city would treat their application the same as any other, he said.

"We hire on the basis of qualifications and ability to do the job. A person's service record has no bearing on our decision," Kendall said.

All of the employment directors said the problem of assimilating draft evaders and deserters into the work force just doesn't exist because the numbers are so low.



Cleo Taylor has a specialized job in packing the baskets (Photographed by Art Emanuel)



Gifts are packed in a variety of large and small baskets