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### The Lost Art of Sewing

Lafayette resident passes along a family tradition

By Moya Stone



From left: Kathy Wharton, Allison Wharton, Audrey Wharton, and Photo Andy Scheck Savannah Flowers.

t seems that nobody knows how to sew these days. Sewing went out of favor in the 1970s with the influx of inexpensive mass-produced clothing and the influence of the feminist movement, which claimed women sew as did most girls her age, signing had bigger things to do. But for up for all the home economics classes Lafayette native Kathy Wharton, sewing is a pretty big thing; it's a business and it's a family tradition.

As a child in the 1960s Wharton learned to sew from her mother and grandmother, who like most housewives at the time were accomplished seamstresses making clothing for themselves and their families.

along what she knows to three of her I could do this and do it right." granddaughters. "Sewing is very rewarding," she says, "if you can hang in there long enough to get over the early frustration of figuring out the ins and outs of it all." Savannah Flowers, 7, from Walnut Creek thinks she's up for it. She has made clothes for her dolls and now wants to make clothing for herself. "It's fun and you can make up your own designs," she says. Visiting from San Diego, Audrey Wharton, 10, and Allison Wharton, 8, also have made doll clothes and are now ready for bigger challenges. Audrey says she's excited about going back to school in the stay at home with her three sons.

fall sporting a skirt she made herself. at Audrey's age. "Just to be able to do Southern lifestyle, wanted detailed your own mending and hemming is and dressy pieces, which Wharton enhelpful," she says, "but to be able to joyed making. She says that's when make your own clothing is fun." she was able to practice her skills in Wharton started off making doll clothes, too, and by the time she was 9 years old she completed her first dress. "It was a Girl Scout project and 1990 with her family, Wharton set up we took a class at Capwell's in Walnut Creek," explains Wharton. "I made a pink and white sleeveless fullskirt dress with buttons down the front and a collar."

However, sewing didn't always go smoothly for Wharton. "I was a real mess when I first started," she admits with a chuckle. "If it didn't fit I wanted to throw it away." One such disappointment was a royal blue wool A-line skirt. At 12, Wharton was impatient and sewed the skirt without taking time to measure the pattern. It didn't fit and she tossed it in the trash. But Wharton's mother would have none of that, telling her that she wouldn't buy any more fabric if Wharton didn't dig that piece out and try again. So she did and learned that

she needed to slow down. "That was hard for me," she says. Still, Wharton persevered because she enjoyed the sense of accomplishment.

After that, Wharton continued to she could at Del Valle High School in Walnut Creek. Wharton says it took three or four years of classes and projects to hone her skills but by the time she graduated from high school she was able to make her entire wardrobe for college, which included three blouses, two skirts, a dress, and a jacket. "That was a turning point for Wharton is now pleased to pass me," says Wharton. "I knew then that

Wharton went on to get her degree in child development from UC Davis. Later while she and her husband were living in Memphis, Tenn., she opened a sewing business, which she named Kathleen Amanda: Dressmaking, Alterations, Home Décor.

"A friend of mine asked me to make some school clothes for her kids," Wharton explains. Soon, friends of friends were placing orders and Kathleen Amanda was officially a business. It was a good situation for Wharton, as sewing allowed her to

Most of her customers were Wharton had the same experience women who, living a more formal detail work such as pin tucks, pleating and her favorite, smocking.

After moving back to Lafayette in shop again. She does everything including alterations, wedding and prom dresses, slacks, blouses and skirts, and home décor items such as pillows and cushions. She is able to work with patterns or without. Often she is asked to create something from just a magazine photo or to recreate a favorite but worn-to-shreds piece.

It's these rare skills that Wharton's granddaughters have the opportunity to learn over time. She plans to start them on a pillowcase and then a simple elastic-band skirt. "As a grandmother, it is great quality time spent with my eager granddaughters."

For more information on Kathy Wharton's sewing services e-mail kfwharton@yahoo.com or call (925) 283-2153.

## Local Aviatrix and Author **Discusses Life in the Sky**

By Bobbie Dodson

of a mission into sub-orbital space. belts and float around the cabin. My finest dream yet."

Representative for Virgin Galactic's South Bay Space Agency. She is on the list for a trip into suborbital space on which, she explains, she will take along research that will help others here on Earth. It's with Virgin Galactic, the world's first commercial spaceflight company. The flight, which

J Marggraff says learning to costs \$250,000, will take two hours fly and becoming an astro- and accommodate six passengers and naut was a childhood dream. "Funny two pilots. The space adventurers will thing about dreams, they never really experience six minutes of weightlessgo away. Now I will one day be part ness when they can release their seat-

It's been quite a journey to get to Marggraff is a Mission Support this point which the Lafayette resident recently shared in her presentation, "To the Edge: The Next New Astronaut" with those attending the Three-Quarter Century Club luncheon in Orinda, and the Lamorinda Sunrise Rotary breakfast meeting where her husband is a member.

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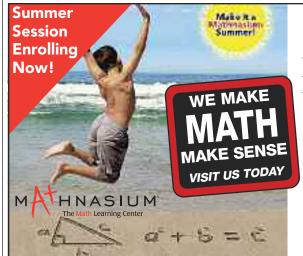
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