

(LOWE, from page 3)

Her first gown sold as did every dress she made. In New York, again, she was discovered by a young lady of a socially prominent family, Polly Bush. Soon society women were coming for original gowns by Ann Lowe.

It was an Ann Lowe original that Olivia de Havilland wore when she was named best actress of the year for her performance in the motion picture, *To Each His Own*, at the 1947 Academy Awards. Although Ann Lowe designed and made the dress, the shop owner received the credit. "Only Sonia", declared *Vogue* magazine, "could design a gown so beautifully".

In 1950, two of Mrs. Lowe's customers persuaded her to form a partnership with them. The new shop became a by-word among society women. Mrs. Douglas Dillon, wife of the Secretary of Treasure, brought her daughter in for her debutante gown.

Early in 1952, Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss made an appointment for daughter, Jacqueline, who had become engaged to a young Wall Street broker named John Husted. Ann was commissioned to make sketches for the bridal party dresses but, within a few weeks the engagement was called off. Miss Lowe did not hear from Jacqueline again until 1953 when her engagement to John Kennedy was announced.

By this time, Miss Lowe's partnership with the two women had been dissolved, and she was joined in business by her son, Arthur who kept books and ordered materials for her.

DISASTER AGAIN STRUCK Anne Lowe. Arriving at her shop one morning, she found her workroom in shambles. Water from a broken plumbing fixture had stained and ruined 10 of 15 nearly finished gowns. One of them was the wedding gown she had designed for Jacqueline Bouvier to wear 10 days later at her marriage to Senator John F. Kennedy. The others were the bridesmaid dresses. The accident not only threatened to spoil what newspapers were playing up as "the wedding of the year", but also a special dream of Ann Lowe's. The Bouvier gowns represented a lifetime of hope--proof that a Negro could become a leading American designer. Ann immediately called the fabric house from which she had purchased the materials and, fortunately, there was just enough of the French silk chiffon on hand for the bridal gown which called for 50 yards of the fabric. There was also material available for the bridesmaid dresses. The fabric house proprietor credited her on her promise to pay him later.

The bride's gown had been two months in the making; the cutting, alone, took two days. So everyone was put on an emergency schedule. A few days before the wedding, the bride-to-be's mother, Mrs. Hugh Auchincloss, telephoned that she was getting nervous about the dresses. Ann assured her client the dresses would be ready; that she wouldn't trust anyone else with them, and that she was personally going to make delivery. "I'm afraid", she said, that they might get lost or delayed in some manner".

On Thursday, the gowns were ironed and packed. Friday, Miss Lowe, with the boxes, arrived in Newport. The dresses fitted perfectly, but Miss Lowe was a total wreck. Costly as they were to make, the figure she had quoted for the gowns would have allowed her only a \$700 profit. Having to remake the lot, turned the expected profit into a \$2,200 loss. Miss Lowe never mentioned the accident to Mrs. Auchincloss.

Exclusiveness is the soul of Ann Lowe's business. Having always felt she should be selective in her clients, she necessarily deals in quality rather than quantity. Although much of her out-put is sold through fashionable stores throughout the country; e.g., Henri Bendel in New York, Neiman-Marcus in Dallas, Magnin in San Francisco, she has never turned out dresses in volume. Each Ann Lowe dress is an original and each requires hours of painstaking handwork.

TRAGEDY STALKS ANN LOWE. Her son, Arthur, was killed in an automobile accident in 1958. In 1960, she owed \$1,000 to her suppliers, and \$3,000 in back taxes. She went to work for Saks Fifth Ave. There a salon was opened carrying only Ann Lowe creations. Saks provided the workroom; Miss Lowe bought her own materials, hired her own help, and Saks bought her out-put. Not until it was too late, did she realize that the dresses for which she was being paid \$300 each, had cost her \$450 to make.

She left Saks, set up a new shop, but never had a chance as Saks hired her sketcher and chief assistant away from her, both of whom she



FOR THE YOUNG AT HEART--Great fun was had by all at the recent birthday party of four-year-old Patty Sue Reed (See Who's Who - page 2 for story). Standing behind the younger celebrants at the Operation Independence Nursery School are Carmen Yanez, Rhoda Kluge, and Diane Mason--Vista Volunteers; Ethel Prim, Clementine Addison, Marilyn Washington, Gloria Rome, Linda McMurray, Mabel Hoggard, Operation Director, Mrs. Lubertha Johnson, Ollie Bowie, and Gloria Turner.

Pleased as punch about the whole thing is adorable Patty Sue pictured on the right.

OPEN 6 AM to Midnight

Louis CHEVRON

1500 W. Bonanza 385-9627

had trained. Unable to hire comparable replacements, she couldn't fill orders.

By 1962, she owed \$10,000 to suppliers, and \$12,800 in back taxes. Such stores as Stanley Marcus, Neiman Marcus, and Gerry Stutz loaned her money to keep going. However, after repeated warnings, Internal Revenue agents closed her shop for tax delinquency.

FOR SEVEN YEARS, Miss Lowe's right eye had troubled her. She underwent two operations to correct the condition. The condition worsened, and her surgeon, renowned eye-specialist, Dr. James Purnell, paid for her hospital room and operated without a fee. Customers, including Mrs. Henry Sears, sis-in-law of Mrs. Henry Cabot Lodge, sent her money.

Upon her return home from the hospital, she received a call from an Internal Revenue supervisor. An anonymous friend had paid the entire \$12,800 debt. She has said that her suspicions about identity of the unknown benefactor center around Mrs. Jacqueline Kennedy.

Not long after returning to work, the strain on her eyes proved too much, and again her sight began to fail. She went to another surgeon and pleaded with him to operate. This time surgery was successful.

Her vision perfect again, Ann Lowe was ready to go back to work. She sent out 500 hand-written postcards to every customer she had ever had. Slowly, orders began to come. Now she designs clothes for the wholesale business she opened with another designer, Dorothy Dickerson, who heads a small dress manufacturing firm that caters to a limited, select retail clientele of debutantes, brides and their mothers in a small shop on Lexington Avenue.

Ann Lowe lives an extremely simple life. Except for church on Sundays and visits from friends, all her spare time is spent in perusing fashion magazines.

A friend, Arthur Dages, an importer of very expensive high-quality fabrics, said of her "Ann Lowe is creating art. She deals in elegance". Ann Lowe confesses it is music to her ears when she hears the Ohs! and Ahs!, and that her creations caused someone, on one occasion, to remark "The Ann Lowe Dresses were doing all the dancing at the Cotillion, last night".



DEE DEE LYNN'S
School of Performing Arts
815 W. Owens 382-9290

Louisiana Club
F & JACKSON STREETS

Famous for Delicious Authentic Chinese Food

**KENO
CRAPS-21-SLOTS
POKER**

Drinks As You Like Them
in the
Cocktail Lounge