



***By Maggie Sharpe***

*San Leandro Times*

Seamstress Janet Wilds marks a major milestone tomorrow.

This Friday, Dec. 14, Wilds celebrates 50 years in business as Janet's Dressmaking at 114 Joaquin Ave. She's been in the same small shop at the corner of East 14th Street since she opened her doors at the tender age of 18.

"That's the amazing part, to stay in the same spot," says Wilds, 68. "I feel very blessed, I even had the same landlord until they sold the building 4 years ago."

Wilds began sewing clothes for her dolls when she was 7 years old. When she was a teenager, she took up roller skating.

"I started designing and making costumes for myself and my brother," says Wilds. "When I was 15, I designed the club costume for Rollarena, the roller skating rink that used to be next to Macy's at Bayfair."

Her first 10 years in business, when she was trying to get established, were hard. It's a different story today.

"I stay very busy all the time," says Wilds, whose business is all word-of-mouth. "I've had customers with me for 40 years."

She also tries to keep her prices low, as she has a lot of clients who are senior citizens.

Longtime customer Essie Henry, who lives in Oakland, stopped by Wilds' shop to get a black, glittery two-piece altered in time for the holidays.

"I couldn't do what she does," says Henry, who has been a customer for more than 15 years. "It's fantastic. She's beautiful. I love her and I love her work."

San Leandro resident Betty Townsend says she's been bringing work to Janet's Dressmaking for about 25 years.

"She hems, she makes trimmings for my clothes, she does everything I need," says Townsend.

Wilds doesn't just do alterations. She makes dresses and outfits for women and men for all occasions.

"I just finished a wedding where I made dresses for seven bridesmaids," says Wilds.

Anyone who's ever threaded a needle, knows that sewing takes a lot of patience.

"It takes time if you want it to come out correctly," says Wilds. "It's an interesting business. I love working with my customers, they become your friends."

Wilds lives in Livermore with her husband Ron. They have two children and three grandchildren. So, does Wilds intend to retire any time soon?

“No, I don’t think so, not anytime soon. I enjoy what I’m doing.”

Janet’s Dressmaking is at 114 Joaquin Ave., San Leandro. Open Thursday through Saturday, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The telephone number is 483-5040.

**CAPTION: Janet Wilds uses a sewing machine to finish seams on a holiday gown. She opened her shop when she was just 18.**

*PHOTO BY MAGGIE SHARPE*

# Seamstress Marks Half Century In Business at Downtown Shop

Thursday, 13 December 2012 16:31

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