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INTERIORS BY J.C.

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You deserve a beautiful home, according to Joan Cowen of INTERIORS BY J.C., of St. Charles, Illinois. "Your home should be a place of refuge, the place you love to be, so that you can find the peace and tranquility you need to go out again into a very troubled world."

Peace and tranquility abound in the Fox River Valley forty miles west of Chicago where the Pottawatomie Indians used to fish and wehre the early settlers planted corn on the wooded hills. Now those oak groves and hills shelter luxurious brick mansions built by corporate officers and professionals moving into the area. These are the clients whos seek the help of Cowen in making their homes into the proper setting for their entertaining

of their world wide business clients.

An interior designer is a special personl who is allowed to enter the most private world of a human teing - their home. My responsibility is to listen to them talk so I can find out what they love and then guide them in putting the things together. I try to find out the little things, " explains Cowen. "Do butterflies remind them of a wonderful childhood memory? What colors make them feel at home?"

Cowen says that there is a return to traditional styles and elegance. "We are all riushing so muchg, that we don't take the time to feel elegant anymore. And thats a pity.l I look at my clients and ask, what do they want their home to say to you when you enter The people we design for do a lot of entertaining. ONE client territory is literally the whole whordl. They are from England. I had to study their English ehritage and Anne Hathaway's cottage. What did they watn to pull from England. Most poeple don't realize that a lot of research goes into a decorating job. I have a new clietn now who wants to reproduce the feel of ther Twenties,

Cowen will do a whole house. many of her clients are corpiatons head who do a lot of entertaining, they are moving

into a new home, and what the whole house done.

Other clients will call and say they started doing their own house, but they need help, just don't know how to get the right combination of things they want for what they want to accomplish.

In fact, one of the most creative things she ever did is when a developer retained her to do 2 model homes in Wheaton. He told her to spend money on the accessories but that he was on a stringent budget and didn't want to spend much money on the furniture. So she hunted flea markets, garage sales, and estate sales, bought things for 25 and stripped them down under many layers of paint to discover wonderful woods, then they ended up # ordered furniture, they cut them down and reupholstered them.

Bought things for 25 and 2nd furniture worth hundred of

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Just all of the furniture used in the model homes eventually dollars.

But you don't need to be rich to have a beautiful home, Cowen thinks.

in the builder's own home.

Cowen's love of beautiful fabrics started early. Born in

Montgomery Alabama, she grew up as a typical southern belle. Her family, though not rich, still lived the southern lifestyle.

Whereas most little girls, when a mother asks what can she bring from a store, may say, please bring me candy, or a toy, or a doll, or a book, Cowen remembers that she always asked her mother to bring me some pretty fabric. Then she would make clothes for her dolls and later on she made all of her own clothes.

She wanted either to be a teacher or a nurse. Since she loathed teaching, after a half day stint in high school when the children wouldn't obey her and threw spitballs at her, she became a nurse and did public health nursing in Cleveland. I don't regret my nursing experience, though, explains Cowen. I think it made me more sensitive and understanding of people. Now, when I am around someone who is irritable, I never take it personally, but I try to understand what could have happened to upset him so much.

She married the man who fixed the flat tire on her car parked in front of the nursing dormitory. Four daughters arrived.

When she decided she wanted to finish off their basement into a recreation room and found out it would cost several thousand dollars, she decided instead to buy a radial saw and do it herself. At first the hardware store man would not even sell

her the saw. But with her hisband's approval she persisted, studied books and magazines and di it all herself. That was the real start of her successfu& decorating business.

A firend- her first cleint, after seeing her work, asked her to edesign and build a dsweing cabinet and worktable for her. TYhat led to other requests from friends, cabinets. Then they asekd her to help pick the colors and the wall papers for their rooms.

She elarned everything on the nob, by trial and error. she always wanted to do it all ehrself. AFter one eyar, her hsuband said, you have eveeryone's couches all over the basekemnt, you have wlal paepr samples all over the house, can't you at elast
Those were still the days when a girl as

to run the business and she has always b een able to pay all biklls on time out of current receipts. s She has never advertised, but clients called mostly by referrals and she was always busy.

Win sic motnhs she has to move to a larger store. Then she got too busy, and felt too rpessured to do it all ehrllef. So she gotclosed ehr store and accepted the job of doing the two model homes. cLEITNS REferred kept her busy for years again working out of her St. Charles home

She refused to start another store, knowing what a commitment it was. Finally, her third daughter, Kathleen, graduated from college with a business degree convinced her that she wanted to be an interior designer too. So three years ago together they opened their first store in St. Charles. Now Mr. Cowen, has taken early retirement, so it is a family business.

Joan and Kathleen do the designing, and Kathleen does some of the business, while Gerald has taken over all of the accounting, payroll and taxes - things Joan hated anyway. Those were still the days when a girl aspired to get a little shop so that we can get our own house straightened up. Mr. Cowen would not go to work until all of the children were in school full time. THEN WITH Four dollars in her pocket, she signed a lease for \$800.00 a month for her first store in Wheaton, Illinois. She has never borrowed any money. She chose WHEATON because she transported her children daily to a WHEATON christian day school and wanted to be near them in case they needed her during the school day.

Jan tends to be conservative, but Kathleen decorates with flair and eclectic. So they balance each other.

The have eight fulltime employees and doo all fo the
u8phostlering and construction fo furniture and draperies on the
premises. Coewen uses a lot of wood for cornice onstruction.
That makes her deisgns harder to copy. the designs are
compeltely sewn and cosntructed and put together in the store
workroom, and then traported to the site in the delivery truck.

They will do any styles. Now she is into ceramic tile. I
am beginning to icnorpate tiles into our cornices, tiles are not
beoling sued as widely as they should be. sHE PLANS to change
that.

To when her hsuband reitred he would ahve been happy to sell
everything and travel toegehr with her for the rest of their
lives.

AS a compromise, she agreed that he could plan trips whneever he
wanted to and she would accompany him. The first week whe
unwinds
and the next week she is inspired to begin to create the designs
she will come home and implenet.

She still has her goals. Thgey want to get into furniture

creating, to fill the niches they find in their work. They have some designs and patents in progress. maybe even children's toys. I am going to design pieces that are not out there yet. I am going to have the enjoyment of failure, things that people need.

Cowen feels that interior design offers her a chance to use her GOD-GIVEN CREATIVE GIFTS AND this is where she belongs and this is what she will continue to do. If you love what you do, you will do a good job and you will succeed.

Rich elegant designs now, lots of swaging of fabrics.

Favorite popular colors now: mauve, rose, teal, gray, soft and beautiful and rich colors, with dark accents such as hunter green or burgundy.

are the colors soft and peaceful, does it look like it has been put together with love and care. Children remember things more than you think, when my daughter left home, they wanted to take their rooms with. Give your children happy memories to follow them throughout their lives.

So many people go through life unhappy, not really finding out what they were meant to do. we should develop our lives to the potential. I operate a very satisfying business that I love. If you are not in the job you are happy with, you must go back and

find out where your talents belong.

Cowen has another goal for her busienss - to raise money for her charitable goals. When she started the business, ehr profits . I go intwent into two hjfunds - her four daughter's eduations fund and a fund to support missionaries from her church. Now that her fourth daugther is almost through college and after they complete their current planend business expansion, azhse wants to turn mroe profits over to the Lord. She prays about her work into a roo2 and feel good about it. and realzie this si the way a home should be.& fact, she has had some wonderful anwsers to prayer. One bvuildre rsaid to her, this is going to amze you, but you have chosen the colors I love, or this wondow treatment is jsut what I wanted, or thiwhat you are doing remindns me of someone I love very much. So I am able to bring joy to p