

## High Tech Patterns

by Julia Alaniz

One of a kind. That is probably an accurate description of the vocational clothing construction program at Point Isabel High School in Port Isabel, Texas.

The most unique aspect of our program is the use of patterns generated by computer-driven plotters which are drafted to the students' individual measurements.

These patterns address the problem of fit and are designed to reduce the level of frustration and subsequent loss of interest which could otherwise be experienced by a beginning sewer. Students can concentrate on the actual production of a garment for a quicker finished product and greater satisfaction.

How did the patterns come to be? I have drafted patterns for customers at my custom clothing boutique for many years. In the process of catering to my clients' many fitting preferences, I found that purchased patterns seldom resulted in the fit desired. Armed with extensive knowledge of what my customers were looking for, I proceeded to develop my own patterns.

One day as I was working on my pattern drafting, my 14-year old son, Coleman, happened to be working with the plotter on

plotter to a 36-inch size to accommodate the pants patterns. Leave it to Coleman to find a way to project the legs of the pants onto the patterns.

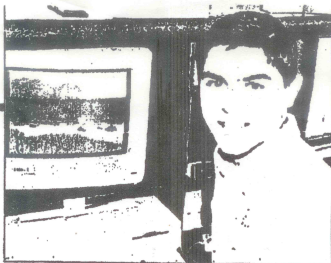
We have used the Apple Macintosh and printer for bodice patterns but the Compaq-driven plotter works better for slacks.

When I introduced our system into the classroom, I was bubbling over with excitement. To my surprise, the students were not the least bit amazed. Being novices in the trade and more computer-oriented than I, they tended to receive the patterns as a matter of course — assuming, I suppose, that such marvelous things had been around for ages.

The adult education students were considerably more appreciative as the machines plotted their patterns right before their eyes, complete with names and personal measurement data. Those with experience in clothing construction were the most impressed of all.

As wonderful as the computer-drawn patterns are, they are not the only aspect of our classroom program that I am proud of. Because we are more interested in promoting student success and self-esteem than in the product itself, we incorporate several educational models to help reach those goals.

For a first experience, students



Coleman R. Annerman, age 17, is a computer engineering major at the University of Texas at Austin. His knowledge of computers and plotters at the age of 14 proved crucial to the development of our personal-fit computer-generated patterns.

*What's in the future for computer-made patterns? I see limitless possibilities in the clothing construction industry. Already I can imagine the day when the average consumer can walk into the store and be able to select fabrics and styles—we are all designers at heart—and walk out with a custom fitted garment which is representative of that person's individuality. The garment would be laser cut, heat stitched and pressed!*

readers can perform these complicated garment details by referring to the examples.

I like to see people wanting to acquire skills and I am especially drawn to boys who enjoy working with sewing machines. I encourage them to be proud of their sewing abilities, telling them it was a man who invented the sewing machine and describing my own brother who was just as comfortable operating sewing machines as he was flying airplanes.

In fact, I use a flight training concept in the clothing laboratory—solo.

Solo experiences are designed

clothing projects have won more than their share of blue ribbons in our valley-wide competition and I'll answer "yes" for a very specific reason. Blue ribbons, like high tech patterns, help me to achieve my ultimate goal in education, which is to inculcate in my students a "Yes, I can" attitude.

NOTE: Computer-generated patterns require a substantial initial investment in equipment. I would be happy to discuss my experiences. You can write to me at:

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