


150th
ANNIVERSARY

LIFE

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A tribute in style



SARAH PETRESCU

Ready to Wear

Sarah models the new 113 Jacket (\$195) and a silk print ascot (\$55) from Smoking Lily on Johnson Street.

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It's a place for all generations to shop together and value each other

Not everyone who walks into Sweet Nancy's boutique connects the retro family photos through the pleasant girl in each one.

The baby. The 1950s first-grader. Newlyweds in front of their first brick house.

The '70s mom with a bowl cut and black-rimmed glasses. The young family. The proud mom at her daughter's graduation from nursing school.

"Some people are curious," says Charlene Walker, 31, who moved to Victoria to open the women's clothing store last October at 618 Broughton St. "Mostly they ask who Nancy is."

Nancy Tamlin was Walker's mother. She died from ovarian cancer in 2003 at the age of 57.

Sweet Nancy's is her tribute.

"My concept was for a place where daughters, mothers and grandmothers could shop together," says Walker, who carries lines ranging from the edgy Victorian-inspired Noa Noa to Not My Daughter's Jeans and the higher-end Ellen Tracy. "The whole idea behind the store is to promote individuality through classic looks. It's not super trendy."

Neither was Nancy Tamlin. She rarely dressed up or splurged on herself. When she died, "She left a number of pretty things in her closet with the tags still on them," Walker says. "This is why I tell women who get excited about finding something beautiful to 'Wear your things!' My mother never got the chance."

Walker admits she went into the fashion business with more drive than experience. After her mother's death, she found it difficult to continue her job nursing terminally ill patients in Edmonton. She moved to maternity. But the depression of losing a parent lingered.

"She kept on mourning. She was stuck in the first stage of grief, unable to move on," says Malcolm Walker, an emergency physician and



Charlene Walker wears turquoise — the colour associated with the fundraising efforts of Ovarian Cancer Canada. Walker's mother, Nancy — whose portrait hangs high on the wall behind Charlene — died of the disease, and running a store is her daughter's way of coping with her loss.

Charlene's husband. They have three young children and another on the way. "We discussed the issue and had to do something about it."

The boutique became Charlene's catharsis in dealing with her mother's death.

"I did so much research," Walker says. "Like most women, I knew how to shop, so I started with what was in my closet and approached reps from there."

The couple decided on Victoria as the perfect location for the boutique: The downtown is thriving and it is where they honeymooned.

Walker's father came to help set up the store with her — an emotional process considering he split with her mother in 1987.

"It was cathartic for him as well. He measured each photograph to place them perfectly," Walker says.

He also built the store counter where Walker keeps pamphlets about ovarian cancer. Raising awareness and funds for the cause are another aspect to her store.

"The signs of ovarian cancer were there much earlier for my mom than when she was diagnosed," Walker says, wearing a turquoise top and stone necklace — the colour for the cause. She wants more women to take precautions. So she has partnered with Ovarian Cancer Canada. Ten per cent of her dress-sales profits will be donated to the organization at the Walk of Hope in September.

At a wine and cheese gathering at Sweet Nancy's last Thursday, Walker made a short speech urging women to protect themselves from ovarian cancer.

"In 2007, 1,700 women will die

from this disease that has a 90 per cent survival rate if caught early," she told the dozen mingling shoppers. "Most women don't know this, but a Pap smear does not protect you from ovarian cancer."

She plans to host similar events monthly. "I try to make it short and more of a coming-together event," Walker says. "Everyone's been touched by cancer. Everyone has lost someone. Sometimes when they hear about why I started the store they want to share, too."

Indeed, a woman comes up to Walker to say her mother died from cancer as well. And if it weren't for fighting back tears, I'd tell her about losing my own father to cancer five years ago.

"I don't think you ever get over it," she says. "But doing this makes me happier."



RHONA RASKIN

Ask Rhona

askrhona@rhona.com

Colleagues object to the odour

Dear Rhona: I am a partner in a small (six-person) office. One employee is having a negative impact on the rest of us due to her body odour. This lady is northern European, and her command of the English language is often lacking. Can you suggest a tactful conversation I might have with her regarding this personal problem and its unfortunate impact on her co-employees?

Need Help

Dear NH: I don't suggest you breach the language barrier by hopping around and holding your nose while pointing to your armpit. I must assume that your employee speaks well enough to communicate on the job. If there's a female who can take on the task it would be preferable to your fielding the funky fragrance fiasco.

The best approach is one-to-one and in private. "I've noticed in the last few days that there seems to be an unusual odour around you. I don't mean to offend you but I thought you'd like to know before other people noticed as well. Are you feeling OK?" This provides a face-saving opening (you usually smell nice, maybe you are sick.)

If that doesn't work, you'll have to try the more direct route. Don't be surprised if she disdains deodorant or thinks daily baths poison the balance of cosmic energy.

Dear Rhona: I read your response about the woman in sales who feels pressured to attend after-work functions, dinner meetings, etc. I've worked in male-dominated areas all my life. If you don't go to events, you're labelled Not A Team Player. You are shut out of some business discussions. I let everyone know I'm married and off limits. If someone says something inappropriate, I don't laugh it off — I respond with dead silence. The woman could tell her colleagues that lunch meetings work better for her schedule. Often the guys who want to play after work have marriages in trouble and are looking elsewhere. It's convenient for them to find someone at work ... once they are successful, it's not the guy who starts looking for another job because he feels uncomfortable in the workplace, it's the woman.

And to her fiancé who wrote you: Send her flowers at work a couple of times a year.

Been There

Dear Been There: You could write a manual; these are great suggestions. It can be tough for women who want to play ball in the boys' business world but it is possible. And a rat at work is a rat in life — why try to coddle a person who is a bottom-feeder? Since we spend a big chunk of our day at work, it's best to work where we feel at ease.



— Come here often? —

Visit the Easter Bunny
March 14 - 23!

Decorate an Easter basket.

Saturday, Mar. 15, 1-3