

“There have never been so many dresses out in the marketplace – thousands for brides to choose from,” Anne Barge says, but a bride could try on 3,000 dresses and still not find the one dress that combines all the features she wants.

With a good seamstress or a willing designer, however, the perfect dress is just a rip and a stitch away.

Barge says she has made a lot of alterations to necklines and skirts to make brides happy.

“In general, as long as I think a change that they ask for is tasteful, I have no problem making any change,” she says.

Barge has thought enough of the occasional change requested by a bride that she has included it in her trunk shows.

“We sell all over the world. There are all kinds of different ideas. Every bride’s got some kind of idea that we may not have thought of,” she says.

Diane Crawford, owner of The Lady in White Bridal shop in downtown Brunswick, says she has asked designer Casablanca Bridal to combine the bodice of one dress with the skirt of another, and the designer complied. Barge says it’s not unheard of to merge two or three dresses into one.

Perhaps no other industry is as eager to please its customers as the bridal industry. Companies will usually add or take away from designs, changing long sleeves to cap sleeves, for example.

Flexibility is required, to a degree, since a wedding gown is the one item of apparel most women have never tried on before. While she may have an idea of what she wants before setting foot in a bridal boutique, it’s the rare bride-to-be who finds the perfect look on the first try.

“If a bride’s asking for a certain look the sales person should let them try that on, but sometimes if a girl ... is focus on one certain look and can’t find the dress, maybe that’s the wrong direction,” Barge says. “Sometimes if you just focus on one thing you might not know all the varieties that are out there or actually what might work best on you. It’s always better to have an open mind.”

The most meaningful changes Diane Crawford has seen made are those that incorporate heirloom gowns or veils with modern bridal fashion.

Kristin Crawford of The Lady in White recalls a bride bringing her mother’s Juliette cap to the shop’s seamstress, Kaye Sanford, who created a

headpiece from the lace. The headpiece was then secured to the bride’s veil. She has also seen Sanford create a new veil for brides by taking a single tier from their mothers’ old-fashioned three-tiered veil and adding a comb.

“A lot of times we can take that ‘something old’ from veils or that ‘something old’ from the mother’s dress and work it into a new dress to make it personal,” Kristin Crawford says.

“It’s all about a good seamstress,” adds Diane Crawford, who has seen Sanford take a size 8 sample dress to a size 0 for a bride who did not have time to wait for the correct size to be ordered. Brides are advised to have a dress selected six to eight months before their wedding date, but shops will work with shorter deadlines. Know when you step into that bridal boutique that an entire industry stands ready to make you happy, from the designer who dreamed up the dress to the seamstresses who made it reality.

“This may be the most fantastic dress women ever own. It’s a dream dress, and you’re dealing with people’s dreams,” Barge says. “That’s a very fulfilling thing when you’re able to make people so happy and feel so confident and feel they look beautiful.” ■



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