



THE VFG NEWS

SHARING OUR PASSION FOR VINTAGE FASHION

March 2025



1037 A



1037 et 1037a Ensemble, du soir: robe sans dos en soie, blanche; petite veste en broderie perlée.

1937

CRÉATIONS DE HAUTE COUTURE

1937



REMEMBERING CLAIRE SHAEFFER

by MAGGIE WILDS (denisebrain)

The Vintage Fashion Guild mourns the loss of Claire Shaeffer, a beloved longtime member, renowned couture expert, and tireless educator, who passed away on January 11, 2025. Her death leaves a deep void for the VFG, but her extraordinary legacy—a wealth of knowledge generously shared with all—will continue to inspire generations.

News of Claire's unexpected passing swiftly spread through the sewing and vintage fashion communities, prompting an outpouring of grief and tributes. Her son, James Shaeffer, simply stated, "With Claire's passing, her unique style, expertise, and authority will be deeply missed." This understatement reflects the profound impact she had.

Claire's skill was unparalleled. As detailed in a recent *Threads* magazine article, she was an internationally recognized authority on haute couture construction, possessing a seemingly encyclopedic knowledge cultivated through decades of dedicated study. She meticulously researched garment construction in

her extensive collection (a remarkable 2,500 pieces, including 600 Chanel suits, bequeathed to Syracuse University's fashion design program), museum archives, and directly from the artisans themselves. Her approach was both scholarly and intensely practical, driven by insatiable curiosity and a desire to understand—and share—the secrets of haute couture artistry.

Judith Neukam, contributing editor emerita at *Threads*, who collaborated with Claire on numerous videos, recalled her unwavering dedication: "She would go straight to the maker...and ask, 'How was this done?'" This relentless pursuit of knowledge fueled her prolific career as a Vogue Patterns designer (creating at least 45 couture patterns since 2001), author of numerous books (including the seminal *Couture Sewing Techniques*), and frequent contributor to *Threads* magazine and her own [YouTube channel](#). Even her instructions for seemingly simple garments were celebrated for their comprehensive approach and authentic couture techniques. As Carlos Correa, fashion design team

leader at IG Design Group Americas, noted, Claire's Vogue patterns often included twice the instructions of average patterns, offering, in his words, "a masterclass in tailoring and hand sewing."

Beyond her publications and patterns, Claire was a beloved teacher and mentor, sharing her knowledge through workshops, college courses, and lectures at conferences such as those held by the Association for Sewing and Design Professionals. Her generosity extended beyond formal settings; countless individuals remember her willingness to share expertise and offer personalized guidance and support. Couture expert Mary Funt described Claire's "encyclopedic knowledge" and her readiness to assist, recalling a detailed conversation about a specific tailoring technique. Margo Martin, Executive Director of the American Sewing Guild, where Claire was a cherished member for over 40 years, called her a "godmother" to the organization, highlighting her enthusiastic participation and commitment to mentorship. For the Vintage Fashion Guild, Claire

was a treasured font of wisdom who was unfailingly curious, supportive and warm.

Claire's collaborations with museum curators, such as Phyllis Magidson at the Museum of the City of New York and Timothy Long at the Chicago History Museum, demonstrate her dedication to preserving and sharing the history of couture. Her meticulous photographic documentation and insightful analyses significantly contributed to exhibitions and publications, making valuable knowledge accessible to a wider audience.

Claire Shaeffer's impact on the world of fashion history and sewing is immeasurable. Her legacy lives on in the hearts of those she mentored, the students she inspired, and the countless people who will continue to benefit from her tireless pursuit of knowledge and generous spirit. The Vintage Fashion Guild is deeply saddened by her loss, yet profoundly grateful for her immeasurable contributions to our shared passion. Her memory will be a constant inspiration.



Working with students at The Fashion Institute of Technology in 2011 (courtesy of FIT)

SPOTLIGHT ON VFG MEMBER AND VOLUNTEER TERRI BROWN (VINTAGE DEVOTION)

A member for nearly the entire history of the VFG, Terri's impeccable presentation of choice vintage fashion finds, along with her thoughtful nature, has made her a tremendous asset to the VFG. She is currently a Member at Large on the VFG Board, and in addition, she sends thank-you letters to donors—a perfect fit for Terri!

You always seem to have amazing garments on offer. What is your favorite vintage find of all time?

That would be a 1920s ivory silk shantung coat. It featured wide panels of Egyptian-themed appliqué surrounding the hemline, cuffs, and broad sailor collar. Images and figures depicted on the coat included the Egyptian Bird God, Horus, as well as ceremonial items such as a canopic jar made for preserving internal organs into the afterlife. The canopic jar depicted in the appliqué appeared to be a dog, representing Anubis. Other images depicted snakes, vessels, scarabs, scepters, and ceremonial fans. It was spectacular! It was sold to the Fashion History Museum in Cambridge, Ontario, and may still be on view there.

What vintage fashion item do you most wish you could find?

A New Look-era Christian Dior. I do have a 1950s Dior, which brings me great joy, but I surely covet his designs from the late '40s when he introduced a groundbreaking silhouette that had a tremendous impact on the fashion industry.

What have you taken away from your experience serving on the board?

I am deeply impressed by the level of skill, passion, and selflessness of the long-term members of the board and equally grateful to our newer participants who step up to add their voices, enthusiasm, and new perspectives. Our organization relies on volunteers to take on these positions to continue the growth and reach of the VFG while striving to maintain a

commitment to educating the public on the unique nature and quality of true vintage. Time and effort are freely given by our volunteers out of love for and dedication to this organization that we all value dearly.

What is one of your favorite memories as a member of the VFG?

During COVID, we all needed some uplifting camaraderie, so our member Karin Marty (Midge) organized online Zoom parties. Since we are an international organization, we got to meet members from all around the world. Putting faces to names and getting to know each other on a more personal level was a true highlight. Of course, there was much vintage chit-chat, sharing our personal histories as collectors, our passion for all things vintage, our individual and varied knowledge of our craft, and our exciting "new" finds.

Where do we find you online?

[VintageDevotion.com](https://www.vintagedevotion.com) will bring you to my Etsy shop, and [@vintage.devotion](https://www.instagram.com/vintage.devotion) on Instagram is where I post notice of my new listings.

Here's a thank-you note to you, Terri: The VFG appreciates you deeply!



Two current finds from Vintage Devotion, a 1950s Hobe demi parure with its original tag, and a 1940s beaded rayon dress by DuBarry

HEM LINES

THE LATEST VFG MEMBER HAPPENINGS



HE'S A SHOE-IN

Long-time VFG member JONATHAN WALFORD (Jonathan), has started something fascinating: Museum Minutes, featuring an artifact from his Fashion History Museum. These fun episodes are going viral, and have brought the museum 4,000 new followers on Instagram. Check out his video on Master John Boots – Jonathan is a natural!

[FHM on Instagram](#)

LOVE TO FIND

[Diane Love: Trifari After Alfred Philippe](#), written by JANINE SHAW (Distantdetails), with input from Love herself, is a fascinating read on the VFG Blog. Diane Love revitalized Trifari, creating over 100 innovative designs. The prices of her jewelry have risen significantly in recent years, so you will want to keep an eye out for her work!



BUON COMPLEANNO GIUSEPPE

GIUSEPPI NOTARBARTOLO (Oteri Moda) is closing his Messina store as he turns 75 this summer. Opened in April 1944, the store has seen several generations of his family involved. As he liquidates stock, Giuseppe is offering a 10% discount code (2023010SU) on eBay, where 20% of the shop's inventory is listed. He welcomes requests for unlisted items and is open to negotiating quantities and prices. [Oteri Moda on eBay](#).

Let's get the show on the road!

VFG MEMBERS VENDING AT SPRING SHOWS

MARCH

1-2

[DC Big Flea](#), Washington, DC

HEATHER RAMEY (Noble Vintage Clothier)

1-2

[Little City Thrifty](#), Providence, RI

SUSAN ROBBINS (northstarvintage)

8

[Pickwick Vintage Market](#), The RowDTLA

SANDRA MENDOZA (debutanteclothing)

25-29

[Spring Marburger Farms Antiques Show](#), Round Top, TX

ANASTACIA BANIKE (GandP)



APRIL

19

[Twin Cities True Vintage Show](#), MN State Fairground

BROOKE NAULT (DaisyandStella) Curating and vending
KAY MILLER (Assassin Vintage)



MAY

11

[Threadbare Show](#), Southbridge, MA

BROOKE NAULT (DaisyandStella)

KAY MILLER (Assassin Vintage)

13-18

[Brimfield Antique Show](#), MN State Fairground

SUSAN ROBBINS (northstarvintage)

17-18

[Manhattan Vintage](#), NYC

HEATHER RAMEY (Noble Vintage Clothier)

CARLA REY (Carla Rey)

25

[Lost and Found Market](#), Portland, ME

SUSAN ROBBINS (northstarvintage)

JUNE

1

[Vintage Market at Bow Market](#), Somerville, MA

SUSAN ROBBINS (northstarvintage)

8

[Baltimore Vintage Expo](#), Baltimore, MD

HEATHER RAMEY (Noble Vintage Clothier)

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBERS

REGINA SANTUCCI (Vintorious) Syracuse, NY

Gina's motto is "Veni, Vidi, Emi" (I came, I saw, I bought). After loving and collecting for three decades, Gina is parting with stellar items that she claims she has hoarded unfairly. Be sure to check out her [collection on Etsy](#) and follow [Vintorious on Instagram](#).

ABIGAIL DE CASANOVA (AbigildeCasanova) Alexandria, VA)

Originally hailing from Peru, Abigail pursued her studies in fashion design in Italy. She is now a dedicated hair stylist and make-up artist, specializing in period hairstyles and make-up for television productions. Her extensive experience is showcased on her [remarkable IMDb page](#), featuring projects such as *Rustin*, *White House Plumbers*, *Ghosted*, and *Kennedy Center Honors*. In addition to her professional endeavors, Abigail is also a passionate collector of vintage items and previously ran a sales venture in that field. Be sure to see [her website](#) and follow her on [Instagram](#).

NOELLE GENSLE (ladylairvintage) Manitowoc WI

The VFG welcomed Noelle as our first new member of 2025. She has provided her unique pieces to prestigious clients such as MGM, HGTV, SNL, *Mrs. Maisel*, *Godfather of Harlem*, *Young Rock*, Coach, YSL, and Pierre Cardin. Explore Noelle's Etsy shop [LadyLairVintage](#) and connect with her on [Instagram](#).

MERIWETHER NICHOLS (vintagerescuesociety) Glorieta, NM

For almost three decades, Meriwether has worked as a costume designer in the film and television industry, beginning her career as a Fashion Design student at FIT in New York. Her expertise in period costumes ranges from the 1880s to the 20th century. She was the head costume designer for the 2010 film [One Came Home](#), set in 1946. Meriwether is also preparing to share her extensive collection of vintage fashion with the public in the near future.

MARY PODSIADLY (Dime A Dance) Cedarburg, WI

Most weeks, Mary dedicates seven days to her vintage shop located in Cedarburg, a quaint town situated 20 miles north of Milwaukee. With over 40 years of experience in the industry, Mary has established a notable reputation. A newspaper article from 2021 highlighted her establishment, stating: Everything old is new again at Cedarburg's Dime a Dance. It noted that items from Dime a Dance have appeared in various films, including *The Color Purple*, *Two Jakes*, *The Addams Family*, *Titanic*, as well as in the Milwaukee-set film *Dillinger*. Mary also shares her collection in an Etsy shop named [PiggleysPassion](#).

DAWN NELSON-STECKMESSER (Timeless Treasures VCB) Manitowoc, WI

Since 1993, Dawn has been immersed in vintage fashion and operated a brick-and-mortar store for 19 years. Additionally, she participates in pop-up and vintage events in Madison, WI. In her [primary Etsy shop](#), she has achieved more than 5,000 sales, along with over 1,100 in her [jewelry shop](#), earning her the distinction of star seller in both. You will also want to follow [Timeless Treasures Vintage Clothing Boutique](#) on Facebook.

2025 VFG BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Vice President: CARYN MCGREGOR (furwise)

Secretary: SARAH COOPER (Shusteroo)

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MEMBERS AT LARGE

TERRI BROWN (VintageDevotion), JEN KARPIN (morning-glorious), SANDRA MENDOZA (Debutante Clothing), JESSICA PARKER (No Accounting For Taste), DIANA PELOZA (Poshthreads), HEATHER RAMEY (Noble Vintage Clothier)



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