

NIGHT OUT ON PENNIES

(things one likes remembering...)

The one piece of furnishings I most remember from all my pre-marriage years was a treadle sewing machine. It had a place in every home my parents made, from the San Francisco flat at Chestnut and Steiner streets (where I was born into the hands of a midwife); the flat on Pixley Alley before I began grammar school; the one-room and cellar quarters at an aunt's home, into which she took us when our sick Father couldn't work; after a couple of years there, the flat at the corner of Lombard and Webster; when I was in junior high school, the upstairs flat of a two-flat building (the first home my parents were able to begin buying); and, finally, the single-family Corte Madera home in what-was-to-me illustrious Marin County. From there, at age 18, I married....

I was about 7, during World War II years, when Mother let me sit at the treadle machine and, after she disengaged the driving wheel's cord, I would let my feet dance the treadle. It became obvious as years progressed that I'd been born with serious sewing potential. It went far beyond simply knowing how to work a machine: I sewed some of my high school clothes, and my graduation dress as well.

As newlyweds, my auto-less husband and I first lived in a boarding house in the city where he began studies toward a doctorate. I began secretarial employment and continued as a working mother after our first child was born. By that time, we'd moved into a flat near the University and, although our budget was spare, we made a major purchase: a Singer sewing machine--originally a treadle but electrified and in a portable case--\$46! *(Well, it was 1954....)*

The stitching made with that machine could circle the globe, I think. During all the years to this day, there are few fabric items that didn't pass under its' needle—curtains, baby clothes, children's school clothes, drapes, pillows, even a rug, besides shirts for my husband and work clothes for myself (*--and what about those leather trousers you made for him to wear to "Hair" in S.F.!*) Well, I prefer that wonderful long dress and matching 'bikini' I made for our very first vacation—12 years into marriage!—to Hawaii for a university conference.

Well, undoubtedly by now you understand why "Trashion Fashion" was a natural outlet for the sewing-Self. There was that fixed 'saying' by Psyche: *If it's made of fabric and you want it and you can't afford to buy it you can make it!* What may not be clear is the *family* connection....

Not every mother can be called *sainted*, but mine *was*: only-surviving-child whose widowed father labored to keep her in a convent from post-puberty to marriageable age and a suitable spouse chosen. Mother's expressed, most deep wish was that my three sisters and I *be friends*; and such *has* been my great good fortune. Now in our seventies and eighties, we know that in this impossible world we have and can in all ways rely on each other for company, comfort and support—a shared *consciousness* that extends through family and beyond, immediate *and* extended.

SO, here's what specifically ties this "Night Out for Pennies" to "trashion" fashions: the model!-- *sister Norma Camporelli*--in an outfit created of remnants and accessories from a favorite local thrift shop.