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*A glimpse into the creative heart of today's  
most talented sewing & quilting artists.*



*Martha  
Pullen*



Rhonda with Martha Pullen,  
2017 Sewing & Stitchery Expo, Puyallup WA

Does anyone have more passion, drive and sincerity for sewing than Martha Pullen? Martha, the PBS star of Martha's Sewing Room, Founder of Sew Beautiful magazine, author and international speaker has touched multitudes of lives through her love of sewing. Martha's enthusiasm is legendary, but don't be fooled. Martha's personal and professional journey has not been without challenges.

Rita Farro delves into Martha's life revealing a bumpy road blessed with resilience and love. As you read about Martha's journey, my hope is that you will feel less alone in your struggles and creativity. As Martha has demonstrated, you too can move forward with enthusiasm even as we face difficulties and life's uncertainties. Know that Martha with all her love and enthusiasm is your biggest cheerleader. Sew SCHMETZ & Grabbitt® Too!

*Rhonda*

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- 
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Sewing  
Star



PULLEN BUSINESS

Issue #96





## Martha Pullen

When Martha Pullen was in the 5th grade, a company came to her school to talk about selling magazines. Martha loved reading magazines! She sat up in her seat and listened carefully to what the man was proposing. By the time he said, *One of you sitting in this auditorium today will be the top salesman for the whole school, I wonder who it will be?* Martha wanted to jump up and shout, *It's going to be me!* She raced home that day and told her mother to call their family and neighbors to let them know Martha would be visiting soon and they should not buy magazines from anybody else! That day, 10-year old Martha strapped on her roller skates and started to visit every house in her neighborhood.

Young Martha WAS the top salesman for two years in a row. Nobody could know that her early success with selling

magazines would plant the seed that would eventually blossom into a sewing business empire.

The enthusiasm Martha had for selling magazines is just one of the lessons she writes about in her book, **G.R.A.C.E. Keys to Entrepreneurship** (God, Resilience, Action, Creativity, Enthusiasm).

When she was 14 years old, Martha started a dance school. By the time she was a senior in high school, she had 100+ students. Every dollar she earned was put in a local bank for her college fund. That money paid for the first two years of her college education.

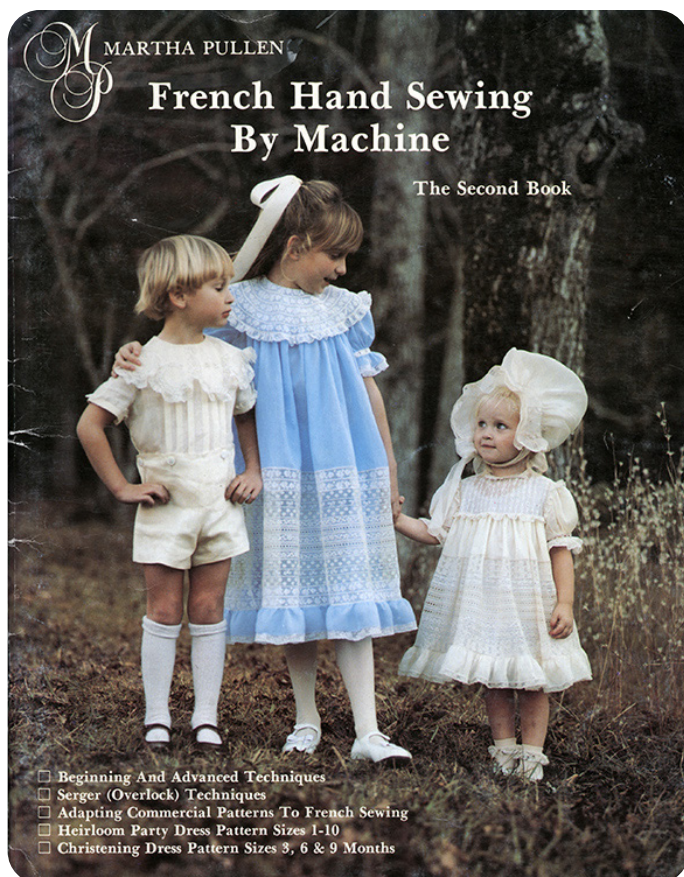


In her book, she writes, *The last four letters of the word enthusiasm, i-a-s-m, stand for 'I Am Sold Myself'. And I am absolutely enthusiastic about sewing. I love it. I get excited about it. If someone with just a little interest in sewing asks me about it, I can easily sell them on the joy of it, the sisterhood of the people involved, the passion, the history. I can sell you on the benefits of sewing because I am sold myself.*

Anybody who's ever worked with Martha Pullen or attended one of her classes can attest to her enthusiasm. It's beyond an attitude, it's more like a core value that informs her life. Her genuine smile and interest in people propelled the Martha Pullen Company from a one-woman store-front to a sewing industry corporation doing \$6.5 million in annual sales.

Martha is quick to credit her business success to her faith in God and the support of her late husband, Joe Pullen. But it's pretty clear she was the one with boots on the ground, coming up with ideas and plans, and then doing the work. And it was an incredible amount of work. If you look up the word indefatigable in the dictionary, there should be a picture of Martha Pullen.

When Martha married Joe, they each brought two sons into the marriage. It was the birth of their daughter, Joanna, that re-ignited Martha's love of sewing. In the hospital, after giving birth, Martha was dreaming of the beautiful Christening gown she wanted to sew for her baby girl.



At the time, she had already earned her PhD, and was a college professor, a job she loved! But that little girl who sold all those magazine subscriptions, and started her own dance shool at the age of 14, saw an opportunity. She could teach heirloom sewing, and wouldn't it be good to be her own boss? Wouldn't she have more time to spend with her own little girl?

When asked to describe herself, Martha will say she is an entrepreneur and a teacher. Teaching is definitely in Martha's DNA. She is proud to be a third generation Alabama teacher. Her grandmother was a teacher during the Great Depression, during a time Alabama couldn't even pay their teachers. Martha's mother had two graduate degrees from George

Peabody College for Teachers. Although she never would have boasted about her accomplishments, Martha is fairly certain her mother had more education than any other woman in Scottsboro, Alabama at that time.

In 1981, with Joe's encouragement and investment, Martha opened a small sewing shop next to Joe's dental office. In 1983, she wrote her first book, **French Hand Sewing by Machine**. Her idea was to take hand-sewing techniques and convert them to machine stitches. That book sold more than 50,000 copies. Martha knew she was on to something. Martha started *Sew Beautiful*, a bi-monthly magazine that brought new awareness of top designers to the sewing market. In



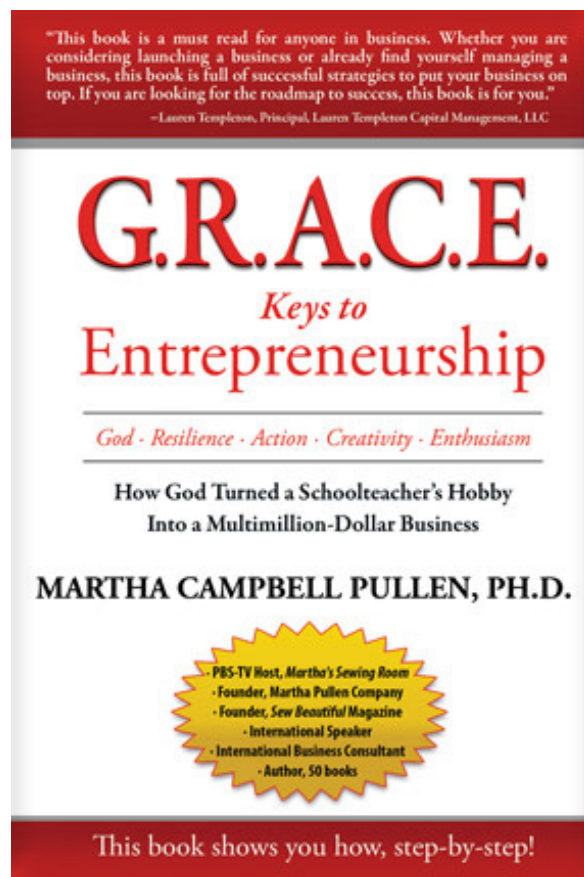
print for more than 27 years, this magazine was a staple in the homes of sewists who loved to make beautiful garments. Thanks to Martha, many designers got their start in the pages of *Sew Beautiful* and launched successful careers in the sewing industry.

She then had the idea to launch the Martha Pullen School of Art Fashion, which attracted hundreds of women to Huntsville, Alabama twice a year. The schools were so successful, she took her show on the road. She taught workshops in 47 States and conducted schools in Australia, England, Sweden, Canada, Mexico, and New Zealand.

Martha still wasn't reaching as many people as she wanted, so she began her PBS TV series, **Martha's Sewing Room**, which aired in all 50 states for 17 years.

While doing all this, and so much more, Martha also raised five children and wrote 70 books.

Martha Pullen is a legendary teacher in the sewing world. Her classes were always the first to sell out at any consumer sewing show. Her devoted students became loyal customers because she made them believe they could do anything, even the most intricate and delicate heirloom sewing technique. Her teaching methods were simple. At the beginning of every



class, she would say, *My name is Martha Easy Pullen. You all get an A plus in this class, and what you sew will be perfect ... and you all will GRADUATE with honors. Whatever you do, we'll have fun and I promise, you will learn something today. If you make a mistake, it's my fault, not your fault ... and I never made a mistake that didn't teach me a lesson.*

Joe Pullen was Martha's biggest supporter, and when she was tempted to quit, he encouraged her to keep going. For the first six years of the business, Martha didn't take a salary and the company wasn't making a profit. *I was working seven days a week, and could not make a dime.* Joe brought in some business experts who analyzed the business, and things soon turned around. Part of the problem was that Martha was trying

to be all things to all people. She brought in many products that simply didn't sell (like blue rubber bakeware). Martha says, *Joe always believed in me more than I believed in myself.*

After 34 years in business, Martha and Joe sold the Martha Pullen Company in 2005. But there was no way Martha could sit in a rocker on her front porch. Joe was sick and needed her. She was busy with her large family, volunteering in the community, and doing her church work. In 2014, she wrote her business book, ***G.R.A.C.E., Keys to Entrepreneurship***. She is as passionate about sharing her business knowledge and expertise as she ever was about teaching her heirloom sewing techniques.



**IN THE FAMILY**—Mrs. L. H. Licus (left), is a principal at Scottsboro. Her daughter, Mrs. Paul J. Campbell, is a teacher. And granddaughter, Martha, hopes to teach.



MISS MARTHA CAMPBELL  
NAMED 'MISS NATIONAL PRODUCE'



During the pandemic, she was busy curating her incredible body of work. Martha Pullen has received many honors and accolades throughout her life, but the State of Alabama is about to step up that game. The Alabama Department of History will mount an exhibit devoted to Martha Pullen's lifetime of work. They asked her to round up all the books she's written and provide them with one of everything. That's when she realized she's written 70 books. She gave them many of the prized dresses that were featured in *Sew Beautiful* magazine, including her mother's wedding dress. Her grandmother was a schoolteacher in 1906 for the State of Alabama, and she kept meticulous records of every penny she spent. Martha gave the Alabama Department of History her grandmother's diary.

The Alabama Museum of Archives and History is located at the Capital and the Martha Pullen Exhibition will be open to the public sometime in 2022.

When asked what's next for her, Martha indicated there is a whole new chapter coming. She said, *It's going to be a whole new Martha Campbell Pullen, and I think people will be surprised. I love learning almost as much as I love teaching, and it feels like technology has finally caught up with my desire to teach everybody in the world. Thanks to the wonderful people at Bernina, I'm going to have a professional studio built right in my own home. I'll be able to teach people all over the world without ever getting on a plane. Bernina has asked me what my favorite sewing notions are, and they think it's time for me to design my own line of fabric and lace.*



Martha's excitement is no surprise. It's a way of life for her. There are many things that set Martha apart. Her energy is legendary. When you talk to Martha, within the first two minutes, you feel like you are visiting with an old friend. Her eyes light up and her smile is genuine. Her depth and breadth of knowledge is simply amazing. Perhaps what stands out the most is her incredible work ethic. She gets up early and works seven days a week, often long into the night. It sounds like Martha is ready to do it all over again, in a different place, in a different form. But this time around, she probably won't try to sell blue rubber pots and pans to women who want to learn heirloom sewing.

The mission statement for the Martha Pullen Company was:

***To serve the sewing public in such a gracious manner that it brings glory to God, profit to the business, respect, and admiration to Martha Pullen Company and joy and enthusiasm to those who participate.***

Those two words pretty much sum up Martha's philosophy of life: Joy and Enthusiasm.

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— written by Rita Farro



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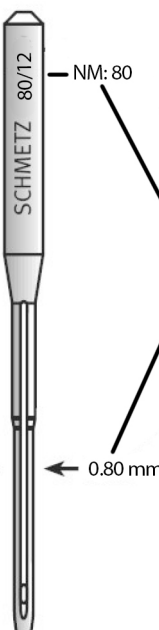


# Needle Points with Rhonda



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## Determine Needle Size with Rhonda's 80/40 Rule

	NM	SINGER/ Asia
	35	2
	40	3
	45	4
	50	5
	55	6
	60	8
	65	9
	70	10
	75	11
	80	12
	85	13
	90	14
	95	15
	100	16
	105	17
	110	18
120	19	
125	20	
130	21	
140	22	
150		
160	23	
180	24	
200	25	

The most popular thread used for all types of sewing, quilting, and crafting is a 40 weight thread. **When using a 40 weight thread, use a size 80/12 needle.**

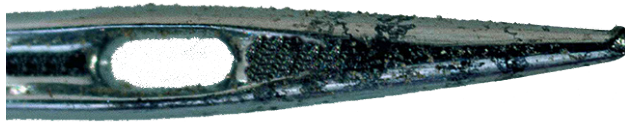
If using a thread finer than a 40 weight, such as a 50 weight, use a smaller needle size such as 70/10.

Micro threads use needle size 65/9 or 60/8.

**Again, using a 40 weight thread with a 80/12 needle as a benchmark, if using a heavier thread, move up at least one needle size.**

If using a 30 weight thread, use a needle size larger than 80/12. Use size 90/14 or larger.

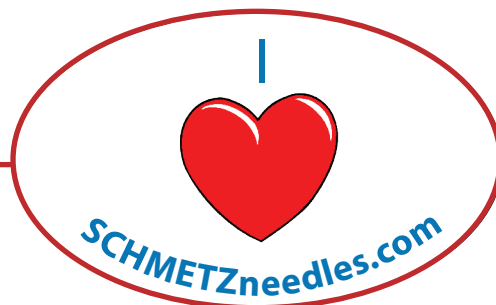




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