

A return to her roots proves fortuitous for designer

BACK FROM CALIFORNIA:

Designer's whimsical T-shirts are trimmed with new and vintage appliques, and her line includes custom pieces

In celebration of her Pacific Northwest launch, Lindsay Stewart's line of Maxwell Hudson Inc. clothing was on display, and sold at a discount, at a recent trunk show at Hip 'n' Humble in Centralia.

Having spent the past four years in Los Angeles, working her way up what she calls the fashion and gift industry's shaky ladders, Stewart has returned home to Centralia where she arranged to present her "whimsical clothing line" at the local salon.

Stewart grew up in Centralia and ended up in Los Angeles when her now-husband,

Josh Stewart, moved there to get a job. The two had been best friends since she was 13 and he was 14.

The fact that they would eventually marry, said Stewart, "was a no-brainer," because, for as long as she can remember, the two of them had been referred to collectively as "Josh and Lindsay."

Both graduated from Centralia High School — he in 1998 and she in 1999. She is the daughter of Jane and Jerry Stray, and is one of four children. She has a brother, Jordan, 14, and twin sisters, Jasmine and Jillian, 13.

His parents are Roger and Patty Stewart, who moved to Centralia in the early 1980s, and who for years owned Osborne and Stewart Jewelry on North Tower Avenue. Josh's grandfather still owns and operates the business today, keeping the family in the latest and best in jewelry, as well as provid-

ing them with the cleanest jewelry in town.

The young couple became engaged in May of 2000, when Josh flew home to ask for her hand in marriage. Unable to stand the separation, the two kept moving up their wedding date.

They married in September, instead of the earlier January date, and began their lives in the exciting, and at times intimidating, Los Angeles area.

"We drove to L.A. the day after our wedding," said Stewart.

Josh is, according to his wife, a self-taught computer genius who went to work for a computer firm and eventually enrolled in college to complete his education.

Before moving to Los Angeles, Stewart had attended Bellevue and Centralia colleges, where she studied art.

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When she moved to Los Angeles she found the door into the fashion industry opened to her through a temporary position that turned out to be anything but.

She said, "Most of what I learned (about the fashion and gift industry), was hands-on in L.A."

In what she calls a "fluke," she took a job at Wolf Designs, a leading manufacturer of fine leather products that specializes in jewelry cases and home accent products.

The then 19-year-old Stewart started as a receptionist and within three months had been moved to customer service. Before long, the gregarious Stewart began offering input.

She discovered that the more she gave, the more she "wanted to play," and feels lucky to have been allowed to help in many facets of the Wolf business.

Before she knew it, she began having even more input into such things as patterns, production and design prototypes, and then found herself traveling — a lot.

She stayed for two years at Wolf, and eventually found the travel to be too much.

"I was traveling all over the place at 20. It was like a kid in a candy store," said the young bride, who wanted to spend more time with her new husband.

"There was constant spur-of-the-moment travel. I was heading up the sales department and it was too much pressure," said Stewart, who returned recently to the area with her husband and nearly 1-year-old son, Maxwell Hudson, for whom she named her clothing company.

After leaving Wolf Designs, Stewart found another dream position, this one with Kathrine Baumann of Beverly Hills. Baumann is known for designing and producing exclusive limited-edition wearable and displayable art.

"She designs and provides crystal handbags to the world's elite. She sells to people who teach us how we know what to wear. That was a big deal to me — to work with this woman — and it was closer to fashion," said Stewart.

After leaving Baumann, Stewart launched Maxwell Hudson Inc. (a line of T-shirts) in

June of 2004 with her collection of "whimsical, highly personal pieces adorned with colorful sequined and beaded accents in a dizzying array of themes and styles."

"My fashions started out more romantic, fun and sweet," she said, "and turned into rock-star-wearing-whatever-the-heck we want."

The couple had grown to love Los Angeles, and the decision to return to Centralia was a difficult one for them.

Josh's college program at Santa Monica College, which would allow him to transfer to a major college, would no longer allow for that, leaving them with uncertainty about the direction their lives should take.

They were financially strapped, and, Stewart said, "We knew if we could just get back here, we could sort it all out."

And sort it out they did.

Josh will attend Centralia College for a couple of quarters and will then transfer to the University of Washington for a de-

gree in computer science. He plans eventually to attend law school.

Stewart will continue to focus on her fashion design business.

The trunk show at Hip 'n' Humble came about thanks to the friendship Stewart has with two stylists there — Shannon Guenther and Ali Calkins.

"They are fans," she said, "and wear Maxwell Hudson things. They said, 'We have clients that would be interested in these.'"

Hence, the trunk show.

Stewart sold many of her pieces during the show and took many additional orders. She also gained a wholesale contact, and was negotiating with The Apron Pocket in Centralia to carry her T-shirts.

"I know the stuff will sell," she said.

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