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Sew Good

Betty Matthews' silks are worn throughout North America

BY GARY McMILLEN

IT'S A WINDY morning in early spring and Betty Matthews is sitting on her porch swing, sipping a cup of coffee. A deep cushion of leaves from the hickory trees that surround the property have not been disturbed by a rake for months. Squirrels scatter and scamper in all directions when she gets up to fill the bird feeders. The daily routine of country seclusion in Haughton, La., looks casual but there are few loose ends in the life of Betty Matthews.

A self-taught seamstress, Matthews makes racing silks for a living. A trainer in New Orleans with a colt entered in the Louisiana Derby (gr. II) and an owner from New Jersey have faxed in orders. It's time to go to work.

Precise about everything she does, Matthews clears up the profile of her customer base.

"Of course everybody calls them jockey silks but my clients are owners and trainers," she said. "The jockeys can change from race to race but the colors of the owner stay the same."

The finished product from Matthews' sewing machines are shipped to stable owners in Maine, Maryland, New York, New Jersey, Washington, California, Texas, Florida, Arkansas, and Louisiana. International interest for Matthews' racing silks has come from as far away as Australia, England, France, and Italy.

"I've never done a set of silks for anyone



Betty Matthews at her home office in Haughton, La.; above, her handiwork on display at Louisiana Downs

NATALIE GLEYSAW PHOTOS



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2013 LEADING SIRES IN LOUISIANA

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB, Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2013 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	SONGANDAPRAYER (98, Unbridled's Song), Stallion Stn @ Copper Crowne	\$5,000	151/49	3/3	1/3	(Celtic Chant, \$71,790)	\$1,231,605	*774	30	1.24	1.63
2	CLOSING ARGUMENT (02, Successful Appeal), La Stallion Station North	\$7,500	80/31	0/0	0/0	(Determinato, \$106,950)	\$823,556	*327	14	1.28	1.29
3	D'WILDCAT (98, Forest Wildcat), Louisiana Stallion Station South	\$4,500	66/24	0/0	0/0	(Wildcat Lily, \$59,095)	\$579,427	*312	11	1.46	1.35
4	LEESTOWN (94, Seattle Slew)	Died, 2008	76/22	2/3	1/2	(Hit the Road Lee, \$104,800)	\$550,248	576	19	0.86	0.98
5	YANKEE GENTLEMAN (99, Storm Cat), Le Mesa Stallions	\$5,000	44/17	1/1	0/1	(Ive Struck a Nerve, \$248,000)	\$532,912	*361	17	1.39	1.32
6	GREELEY'S GALAXY (02, Mr. Greeley), Averett Farm	\$2,500	15/4	1/2	0/1	(Cluster of Stars, \$249,600)	\$440,672	75	1	0.94	1.21
7	TENPINS (98, Smart Strike), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	61/23	0/0	0/0	(Smart Tori, \$27,200)	\$378,999	*286	8	1.01	1.13
8	IDE (93, Forty Niner), Clear Creek Stud	\$2,500	55/14	0/0	0/0	(Sweet Ide, \$36,030)	\$304,978	525	16	1.17	1.11
9	GOOD AND TOUGH (95, Carson City)	Died, 2012	44/12	0/0	0/0	(Say Somethin Good, \$37,590)	\$301,956	*420	16	1.20	1.16
10	WIRE ME COLLECT (93, Clever Trick), Traders Rest Farm	\$1,500	15/6	2/2	2/2	(Wire Me Bessie, \$115,680)	\$288,546	162	6	0.81	0.75
11	PRIVATE VOW (03, Broken Vow), Red River Farms	\$2,000	35/8	0/0	0/0	(Skinny, \$74,250)	\$273,101	89	0	0.61	1.41
12	HALF OURS (03, Unbridled's Song), Clear Creek Stud	\$4,000	35/8	0/0	0/0	(Gentlemen's Bet, \$90,400)	\$272,703	*164	2	0.92	1.40
13	SALUTE THE SARGE (05, Forest Wildcat), Red River Farms	\$2,500	20/13	0/0	0/0	(Salutos Amigos, \$55,460)	\$264,674	*75	1	1.07	1.38
14	LION TAMER (00, Will's Way), Clear Creek Stud	\$2,500	32/4	2/2	2/2	(Heavy On Themister, \$121,800)	\$249,000	82	2	0.90	1.17
15	SUN KING (02, Charismatic), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$3,500	41/11	0/0	0/0	(Big Chief Deke, \$45,635)	\$243,899	195	0	0.77	1.08
16	MY FRIEND MAX (92, Danzig)	N/A	33/7	0/0	0/0	(Chargary, \$23,520)	\$227,670	202	10	1.07	0.92
17	GOLD TRIBUTE (94, Mr. Prospector), Red River Farms	\$2,000	40/7	0/0	0/0	(Nubin Ridge, \$35,610)	\$224,585	*450	11	1.00	1.12
18	GRAND APPOINTMENT (98, Unbridled), Fallen Oaks Farm	\$1,500	15/6	0/0	0/0	(Amanda Michelle, \$50,460)	\$206,756	53	1	1.08	0.95
19	WILDCAT SHOES (01, Forest Wildcat)	Died, 2009	32/9	0/0	0/0	(Lucky Shoes, \$28,080)	\$206,564	101	2	0.83	0.97
20	SEFAPIANO (89, Fappiano)	Died, 2010	25/5	0/0	0/0	(O P Nut Butter, \$51,360)	\$200,544	336	23	1.31	0.93
21	TETON FOREST (01, Forestry), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	35/10	1/2	0/1	(Forest Mouse, \$81,250)	\$191,343	*200	3	0.87	1.05
22	OLE REBEL (99, Carson City), Clear Creek Stud	\$1,500	13/6	0/0	0/0	(Hud's Rebellion, \$43,000)	\$185,697	52	0	0.76	0.86
23	OSIDY (02, Storm Cat), Elite Thoroughbreds	\$2,000	30/11	0/0	0/0	(Osi Posse, \$27,290)	\$165,251	95	1	0.75	0.89
24	RUN PRODUCTION (00, Saint Ballado), Louisiana Stallion Station South	\$3,500	26/4	0/0	0/0	(She Loves Runnin', \$38,350)	\$158,811	90	6	1.51	1.07
25	TIME BANDIT (96, Time for a Change), Heritage Stud	\$1,000	25/4	0/0	0/0	(Pocket Time, \$51,750)	\$146,177	229	3	0.86	0.93
26	SMOOTH JAZZ (99, Storm Boot)	N/A	19/5	0/0	0/0	(Jazzit, \$48,780)	\$134,246	119	3	1.20	1.08
27	BIG TOP CAT (02, Storm Cat)	Died, 2012	21/3	0/0	0/0	(Midnight Heist, \$49,930)	\$131,804	96	1	0.91	0.86
28	EASYFROMTHEGITGO (99, Dehere), Ryder River Ridge Farm	\$2,000	20/6	0/0	0/0	(Easy Jazz, \$50,460)	\$131,275	147	2	0.70	0.99
29	SNUCK IN (97, Montbrook), Matthews Thoroughbred Farm	\$1,500	25/6	0/0	0/0	(Hula Pie, \$24,586)	\$130,093	*292	5	0.89	0.95
30	PORTO FORICOS (95, Mr. Prospector), Clear Creek Stud	\$1,500	28/5	0/0	0/0	(Hickissippi, \$35,230)	\$123,266	210	5	1.17	1.16
31	PLACID FUND (92, Dixieland Band), The Stock Exchange	\$750	15/3	1/1	1/1	(Drinking Fund, \$74,460)	\$122,570	135	4	0.88	0.80
32	TOOLIGHTTOQUIT (92, Dixieland Brass)	N/A	13/6	0/0	0/0	(No Rules Now, \$34,200)	\$118,253	*181	8	1.01	1.00
33	HIGH CASCADE (98, Woodman), Becky Bynum, DVM	\$1,000	26/4	0/0	0/0	(Cupid's Hit, \$35,900)	\$114,957	*152	1	0.53	0.63
34	PULLING PUNCHES (96, Two Punch), Red River Farms	\$1,000	7/2	1/1	1/1	(Lasting Bubbles, \$90,200)	\$114,936	141	3	0.75	0.69
35	MR. LIVINGSTON (97, El Prado)	Died, 2011	20/5	0/0	0/0	(Livingston Street, \$44,635)	\$113,768	*155	1	0.61	0.98
36	HUFF (93, Strawberry Road)	N/A	9/5	0/0	0/0	(My Red Girl, \$30,375)	\$111,850	97	1	0.86	0.46
37	RAINMAKER (99, Storm Cat), All Star Thoroughbreds	\$2,000	29/4	0/0	0/0	(Raindropsafalling, \$32,200)	\$109,259	*177	0	0.58	0.83
38	CANADIAN FRONTIER (99, Gone West), Le Mesa Stallions	\$2,500	27/8	0/0	0/0	(Morality, \$11,715)	\$99,786	146	7	1.33	1.50
39	SORCERER'S STONE (03, Gulch), Louisiana Stallion Station North	\$750	22/5	0/0	0/0	(Sorcerer's Urge, \$30,700)	\$98,501	64	0	0.40	0.61
40	HONOR GLIDE (94, Honor Grades)	Died, 2012	15/4	0/0	0/0	(Go Joe Go, \$18,020)	\$97,683	166	2	0.72	1.06

in Japan," Matthews admitted.

It all started in 1986 with a friend's challenge and a leap of faith. Matthews had been the secretary to the racing secretary at Louisiana Downs for five years when the wife of trainer C.W. "Cracker" Walker barged into the office.

"Eileen got right in my face and asked when was I going to get out from behind that desk and going to get serious about making silks for a living," Matthews remembered. "She told me that once I decided to, I would be the best in the business. She gave me the confidence and backbone that I needed."

Matthews was out in the parking lot with jockey Ronald Ardoin the next day, taking measurements.

"He was picky," she said. "This sleeve needed to be shorter. The back had to be longer. It was trial and error."

After those parking lot fitting sessions, the backstretch network began to buzz. Wired for success and well-connected, Matthews' first set of racing silks were the familiar orange and green of John Franks.

"Word travels fast on the racetrack," Matthews said. "I knew all the owners and trainers and within two days I had orders for 80 sets of silks."

Matthews stayed on as secretary at Louisiana Downs until the end of the meet, then started her own business with one small Singer sewing machine that she nicknamed "home brew."

Twenty-eight years later and there is one industrial embroidery machine and five commercial sewing machines in Matthews' home and the adjacent sewing room dedicated to her mother. More importantly, Matthews is her own boss.

"There is no rhyme or reason to my work schedule," she said. "If I want to work today and take off Saturday to watch my grandson Kobe play baseball or go to church on

Special Note For Sire Lists:

For stallions that stand, will stand, or stood (deceased) in North America (stallions exported prior to the 2009 breeding season are excluded), and have runners in North America. All available statistics listed for the Northern Hemisphere through April 16, 2013. As supplied to *The Blood-Horse* by The Jockey Club Information Systems, Inc., earnings exclude monies from Japan and Hong Kong. Current year stakes winners include all N.H.-foaled stakes winners worldwide and any S.H.-foaled horses that won a N.H. stakes. *Foal counts include Southern Hemisphere. Cumulative stakes winners includes all countries. (A 1 indicates a sire represented by his first crop to race.)

*AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX and COMPARABLE INDEX: Lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX indicates how much purse money the progeny of one sire has earned in relation to the average earnings of all runners in the same years; average earnings of all runners in any year is represented by an index of 1.00; COMPARABLE INDEX indicates the average earnings of progeny produced from mares bred to one sire, when these same mares were bred to other sires. Only 32% of all sires have a lifetime AVERAGE-EARNINGS INDEX higher than their mares' COMPARABLE INDEX.

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Storm Cat-Key Phrase
Sire of 2013 G2 Risen Star winner I'VE STRUCK A NERVE
\$5,000 Live Foal payable when foal stands and nurses

Spring is Here and It's in Full Color

Filly by Yankee Gentleman out of Lone Star Quest by Lone Star Sky
3/23/2013
Owner/breeder: Sandra New



CANADIAN FRONTIER

Gone West-Borodislew
Sire of 2012 G3 placed winner, Canadian Mistress
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BEHINDATTHEBAR

Forest Wildcat-Rhiana
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2013 LEADING SIRES IN TEXAS



Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2013 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	TOO MUCH BLING (03, Rubiano), Lane's End Texas	\$4,000	28/13	2/2	2/2	(Texas Bling, \$65,200)	\$429,438	101	9	1.53	1.23
2	ORATORY (02, Pulpit), Eureka Thoroughbred Farm	\$3,500	27/9	1/1	1/1	(Tujoes, \$97,682)	\$307,596	*148	2	1.31	1.17
3	VALID EXPECTATIONS (93, Valid Appeal), Lane's End Texas	\$7,500	40/13	1/1	1/1	(Rock City Roadhog, \$52,250)	\$287,038	609	43	1.26	1.19
4	MY GOLDEN SONG (03, Unbridled's Song), Valor Farm	\$2,000	21/9	3/3	3/3	(Triumph and Song, \$80,400)	\$282,462	62	5	1.09	1.14
5	EARLY FLYER (98, Gilded Time), Valor Farm	\$3,000	46/10	0/0	0/0	(Flyer's Spirit, \$16,493)	\$201,424	195	11	0.87	0.89
6	WIMBLEDON (01, Wild Rush), Valor Farm	\$1,500	17/5	1/2	1/1	(Worldventurer, \$80,500)	\$181,139	100	4	0.80	0.78
7	SCRIMSHAW (00, Gulch), Double S Thoroughbred Farm	\$1,500	20/8	0/0	0/0	(Nikaluk, \$27,590)	\$161,462	*167	3	1.07	0.91
8	UNCLE ABBIE (97, Kingmambo), Key Ranch	\$2,500	24/8	0/0	0/0	(Lillie Abbie, \$16,162)	\$127,570	191	5	0.66	0.64
9	GOT THE GOODS (01, Pulpit), R&R Farms	\$1,500	13/1	1/1	1/1	(Goods Gone West, \$100,200)	\$117,890	38	1	0.57	0.49
10	PINE BLUFF (89, Danzig), Duncan 21 and Change Farm	N/A	12/5	0/0	0/0	(Up and Out of Site, \$28,380)	\$105,666	*579	35	1.52	1.62

2013 LEADING SIRES IN ARKANSAS

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	Cumulative				
							2013 Earnings	Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	STORM AND A HALF (97, Storm Cat), McDowell Farm	\$1,500	59/15	2/2	2/2	(Hatter Nu Nu, \$50,540)	\$430,960	395	18	0.83	0.96
2	BRAHMS (97, Danzig), Trophy Club Training Center	\$2,000	54/15	1/1	1/1	(Sunbean, \$70,600)	\$363,492	*605	16	1.10	1.20
3	PRIMARY SUSPECT (01, Hennessy), McDowell Farm	\$1,000	24/7	0/0	0/0	(Sashabye, \$54,400)	\$202,516	75	3	0.64	1.16
4	HESABULL (93, Dispersal), Lake Hamilton Equine Associates	\$500	27/9	0/0	0/0	(Tour de Rock, \$37,491)	\$187,162	174	5	0.95	1.08
5	THE DADDY (02, Valid Expectations), Trophy Club Training Center	\$1,500	32/9	0/0	0/0	(Just Win Baby, \$33,850)	\$155,609	*111	1	1.00	1.27
6	PORTOBELLO ROAD (04, Storm Cat), Anderson Farms	\$1,000	13/5	0/0	0/0	(Just a Wildflower, \$46,150)	\$149,977	45	0	0.86	1.05
7	PROUDEST ROMEO (90, Proud Truth)	Died, 2009	23/4	0/0	0/0	(Proud Mandy, \$24,890)	\$131,279	183	7	0.95	1.12
8	HARPERSTOWN (86, Devil's Bag)	N/A	5/3	0/0	0/0	(Merry Mittens, \$63,600)	\$124,718	103	2	0.78	0.61
9	CINNAMON CREEK (95, Darn That Alarm), Three Boys Stables	\$500	11/4	1/1	0/1	(Bikini Bella, \$39,400)	\$101,310	95	2	0.56	0.67
10	SOUTHERN FOREST (92, Seeking the Gold), Anderson Farms	\$1,000	10/5	0/0	0/0	(Roses for the Lady, \$23,000)	\$98,619	81	1	0.50	0.74

Sunday, I don't feel bad about it."

In 18th century England, jockeys began to wear jackets made of silk with a matching cap so that bettors could tell the horses apart. In today's modern world, racing silks are made from either nylon fabric or Lycra. The nylon material is similar to that used for windbreakers. The more recent aerodynamic outfits are made from Lycra, which is the same material used to make form-fitting bathing suits. According to Matthews, the two styles are about 50-50 as far as popularity.

Whatever the base material, Matthews makes it look easy. Unless a complicated pattern is requested, assembling all the moving parts (epaulets, collar, cuff, front and back facing, and bow tie) of a set of silks takes about 1½ hours.

"When you start putting diamonds all over the sleeve and a black cat on the back, it is going to take quite a bit longer," Matthews said. A trained eye can discern the signature trademark on a set of Matthews' "one size fits all" racing silks. "They are longer in the sleeve and longer over the butt," Matthews explained. "It gives



Matthews' tools of the trade

the rider free and looser movement."

A telling sign of country living—you don't need a key to enter Mama K's Memorial Sewing Room. The door to the small house named in her mother's honor is unlocked. The work table and shelves are equipped with the paraphernalia of a master craftsman: scissors, push pins, spools of thread, bobbins, pin cushions, tape, rotary blade cutter, tape measure, a portable scale taken from a pecan orchard, pens, pencils, markers, plastic pattern templates, clips, a steam iron, glue sticks, a Saturday edition of a *Daily Racing Form* dated July 2006 that Matthews uses as a cushion to center and stabilize cuts of material, Velcro strips, screwdriver, needles, piled layers of vivid color, elastic, and plastic hangers.

"I'm an organized hoarder. I never throw anything away," Matthews said. "I know it looks chaotic to a visitor but it's perfect for me."

If one sits in a barber shop long enough, you're bound to get a haircut. Years of experience told Matthews that certain patterns were repetitive so she devised an efficient time saver. In a six-drawer horizontal file cabinet, Matthews keeps an inventory of pre-cut circles, diamonds, hoops, blocks, chevrons, sashes, four-leaf clovers, eagles, roses, hearts, triangles, and stars.

The colors and patterns go through trends of popularity. A request for black and gold invariably points to a fan of the NFL's New Orleans Saints. Owners from Arkansas are stuck on red and white. If the request is for a lone star or a longhorn you can bet the return address is Texas. Those are the easy ones. Some of the more oddball requests have included Bart Simpson and Yosemite Sam.

"You name it and I've done it," Matthews declared, sitting down to her Serge Pro 191 Brother commercial sewing machine.

Orders for racing silks come from all directions: phone conversations; photos; fax; letters; e-mail; word of mouth; through Matthews' website (www.bettymatthewssilks.com), where an owner can use an interactive template to design his own set of silks; or from Matthews' favorite connection, the house visit.

"I really like talking to people face to face," Matthews said. "It's more personal. People can get a feel of the work. See and touch the colors. But the best part of it all is just making new friends."

There was no way for Matthews to prepare for the biggest order of her career. She was sound asleep on the night of Dec. 17, 1993, when the phone rang. It was a friend, telling her to get

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2013 LEADING SIRES IN OKLAHOMA Go to BloodHorse.com for daily updated sire lists

Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB,Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2013 Earnings	Foals	Cumulative Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	READ THE FOOTNOTES (01, Smoke Glacken), River Oaks Farm	\$3,500	41/13	0/0	0/0	(Readtheprospectus, \$117,000)	\$645,998	*239	9	1.39	1.21
2	LATENT HEAT (03, Maria's Mon), River Oaks Farm	\$3,500	54/22	0/0	0/0	(Petit Trianon, \$75,810)	\$540,533	*176	2	1.02	1.06
3	TOCCET (00, Awesome Again), Mighty Acres	\$2,500	52/21	0/0	0/0	(English Manor, \$37,000)	\$366,135	*296	13	1.18	1.27
4	KIPLING (96, Gulch), Mighty Acres	\$2,500	58/20	0/0	0/0	(Kiptastic, \$38,050)	\$298,689	269	8	1.22	0.90
5	DON'T GET MAD (02, Stephen Got Even), Rockin Z Ranch	Died, 2013	30/14	0/0	0/0	(Populist Politics, \$59,000)	\$274,440	*116	2	1.20	0.94
6	SERVICE STRIPE (91, Deputy Minister), Caines Stallion Station	\$1,000	24/5	0/0	0/0	(Smooth Service, \$57,600)	\$165,735	358	18	1.19	1.04
7	OMEGA CODE (00, Elusive Quality), Rockin Z Ranch	\$2,000	33/8	0/0	0/0	(Fashion Bee, \$16,734)	\$142,167	276	7	0.72	1.28
8	EVANSVILLE SLEW (92, Slew City Slew)	Died, 2012	37/13	0/0	0/0	(El Otro, \$22,080)	\$141,906	*497	34	1.12	0.92
9	TACTICAL CAT (96, Storm Cat)	N/A	22/9	0/0	0/0	(Tactical Gift, \$39,000)	\$139,091	506	24	1.09	1.29
10	ARTAX (95, Marquetry)	Died, 2012	19/5	0/0	0/0	(Gimme Credit, \$56,320)	\$131,147	*436	6	1.02	1.31
11	DIAMOND (95, Mr. Prospector), Oklahoma Equine	\$2,500	19/4	0/0	0/0	(Diamond Disco, \$18,512)	\$85,839	282	6	1.10	1.06
12	RUBIYAT (95, Rubiano), Spears Racing	\$1,000	8/1	0/0	0/0	(Danny Newman, \$61,250)	\$85,117	70	0	0.77	0.88
13	STATE CITY (99, Carson City), Caines Stallion Station	\$1,000	16/5	0/0	0/0	(Strong Response, \$23,460)	\$83,970	*226	1	0.69	1.01
14	WESTERN EXPRESSION (96, Gone West), Kirton Farms	\$1,500	14/2	0/0	0/0	(Aunt Topsy, \$29,620)	\$69,627	*305	5	1.15	1.32
15	FREEFOURINTERNET (98, Tabasco Cat), Equi-Center Veterinary Clinic	\$2,000	17/4	0/0	0/0	(Smoking the Field, \$27,103)	\$65,498	81	1	0.86	0.98

out of bed and turn on the television to watch the news. A seven-alarm fire that had started in the jock's room at Fair Grounds racetrack was burning the grandstand and clubhouse to the ground. The rest of the night and through the next morning, Matthews sat by the phone with a spiral notebook. Within three days, she had taken orders from owners and trainers for more than 900 sets of racing silks.

Matthews and her mother, Ettie, set up two sewing machines facing each other and started grinding out the work. With the songs of Kenny Rogers and Reba McEntire playing in the background, mother and daughter tossed spindles of thread back and forth to each other and sewed all day long and into the night.

"I was in a state of shock. The owners and trainers were in a panic. We were short on supplies," Matthews remembered. "I couldn't deliver fast enough. We set up racks and the silks were hanging all through the house. There wasn't hardly space to move from the front door of the house to the back, but you know a woman can always find her way to the kitchen."

So as not to get bogged down during the chaotic rush, Matthews would make one or two sets of silks for an owner and promise shipment of the remainder at a later date. Mistakes were made. Silks were shipped out to the wrong address. Two understanding Texas owners networked with each other and agreed to swap out their silks in the parking lot at Lone Star racetrack.

Earlier in her business venture, Matthews had made another rookie mistake. In the State of New York, silks had to be approved

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Matthews with a replica of John Franks' silks, the first set she made

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Rank	Stallion (Foreign foaled), (YOB, Sire), Where Stands	2013 Stud Fee	Rnrs/ Wnrs	Stakes Wnrs/ Wns	Rstrct SW/ BT SW	(Chief Earner, Earnings)	2013 Earnings	Cumulative			
								Foals	Stks Wnrs	A-E Index	Comp Index
1	DESERT GOD (91, Fappiano), A & A Ranch	N/A	41/15	2/2	2/2	(Rose's Desert, \$69,700)	\$442,750	244	24	1.51	0.72
2	ROLL HENNESSY ROLL (00, Hennessy), A & A Ranch	\$3,500	27/6	2/2	2/2	(Back Seat Roll, \$68,425)	\$288,642	104	7	1.09	1.07
3	ATTILA'S STORM (02, Forest Wildcat), A & A Ranch	\$2,500	18/4	1/1	1/1	(Hush's Storm, \$71,060)	\$194,172	67	6	1.53	0.95
4	GHOSTLY MOVES (92, Silver Ghost)	N/A	41/10	0/0	0/0	(Me Catchum, \$35,307)	\$187,407	229	22	1.10	1.07
5	PREMEDITATION (99, Afternoon Deelites), A & A Ranch	\$2,500	19/5	0/0	0/0	(Mr. Wizard, \$61,021)	\$174,063	69	4	1.18	0.80
6	MINISTER ERIC (01, Old Trieste)	N/A	25/7	1/1	1/1	(Manyriverstocross, \$30,000)	\$149,256	80	1	0.52	0.90
7	QUINTON'S GOLD (97, Carson City), Doubletree Farm	\$3,500	20/4	2/2	2/2	(Dandy Don Who, \$52,663)	\$149,230	73	7	1.82	0.89
8	DEVON LANE (93, Storm Cat)	Died, 2012	25/7	1/1	1/1	(Devons Ca Ching, \$51,850)	\$142,761	415	19	0.81	0.83
9	TO TERAS (00, Unbridled's Song), New Mexico State University	\$2,500	15/4	1/1	1/1	(Tyger Teras, \$87,011)	\$135,339	67	1	0.82	0.64
10	GOLD CASE (94, Forty Niner), Mesa Vista Stud	\$5,000	29/12	0/0	0/0	(Silent Purpose, \$14,692)	\$132,179	*568	21	1.07	1.12
11	YOUR EMINENCE (01, Saint Ballado)	Died, 2012	23/4	0/0	0/0	(Piratz Stash, \$23,618)	\$101,582	139	3	0.69	0.77
12	DOMINIQUE'S CAT (97, Storm Cat), McKenna Thoroughbreds	\$2,500	13/5	0/0	0/0	(Ryngela, \$31,493)	\$95,573	84	3	0.86	0.63
13	SILVER SEASON (96, Silver Ghost), Hourigan Horse Farm	N/A	10/6	0/0	0/0	(Silver Streakn Gal, \$19,191)	\$84,523	74	5	1.06	0.94
14	STORM OF GOSHEN (01, Storm Cat), Freda's Farm	N/A	8/3	0/0	0/0	(Naughty Storm, \$41,176)	\$78,024	50	0	0.74	0.89
15	THE WAY HOME (04, Giant's Causeway), Doubletree Farm	\$3,500	12/4	0/0	0/0	(Keagan's Way, \$26,413)	\$70,221	51	2	1.32	0.99

by The Jockey Club. Specifications on the colors and pattern designs are written in stone.

"I learned the hard way," Matthews said with a shrug of her shoulders. "In New York, certain colors are not allowed and the front and back have to be identical. Any other state you can just do whatever but in New York they are very picky."

Dogma would be a better description. Polka dots on silks in New York have to be 2½ inches in diameter. Any "yoke" design cannot be lower than 4½ inches down from the collar. Taped to the door of Matthews' sewing room is a flyer from The Jockey Club of New York, illustrating the 38 acceptable jacket patterns and the 19 approved patterns for sleeves.

Given Matthews' extensive knowledge of horse racing and her many friends in the sport it is no surprise that she makes many useful items other than racing silks. The product line includes blinkers, helmet covers, saddle towels, blankets, bandage holders, and paddock bags to carry tack, and barn and yard flags.

Customization, quality, and durability are stressed in Matthews' work ethic.

"I make the paddock bags and barn flags out of vinyl so they last longer," she explained. "You can just hose them off and go on with what you are doing."

The massive banners honoring past Super Derby winners that hang from the ceiling at Louisiana Downs are Matthews' work. The shadow boxes of owners' silks on display at Ruidoso Downs in New Mexico go on as far as the eye can see.

When it comes to technology, time has not passed Matthews by. After meeting a women's group of quilters, Matthews saw the efficiency of digitizing the embroidery process. She enrolled in a college computer class to learn the software and purchased a six-needle Baby Lock embroidery machine.

"I started off at the moron level," Matthews admitted. "Digitizing my designs made a big difference and the embroidery letters are more lasting on certain items. I guess you could say that I'm like the slogan from the Virginia Slims commercials. I've come a long way, baby."

There remains one throwback to the old school in the Matthews system. A cardboard box of 5x7 index cards serves as her data base record of past customer orders. Contact information (name, phone number, address, and e-mail) are at the top of the card. Everything pertinent about sleeve, collar, cuff, epaulet, saddle towel, and facing pattern on the silks are listed at the bottom of the card.

"I couldn't remember everybody's stuff off the top of my head," Matthews said. "Now, when they make an order I can look and see that they have red blinkers with white trim. I like it better than an Excel spreadsheet."

Matthews Racing Silks is a simple business. No mission statement. No corporate vision strategy or marketing plan. On the back of her business card is a map to help find her because the GPS stops working at the gravel road leading down through the pine woods to her house. And there is nothing notable about Haughton. It's just another rural Southern town that could feature a roadside museum for the World's Largest Ball of Twine: A small town with a big imagination.

"For my independence and happiness, this job is the very best thing that could have happened to me," Matthews said, looking up from her sewing machine while listening to an audio-book biography of Bonnie and Clyde. "It may look like this business is about making racing silks, but it's really about people and realizing that good friends make good customers." **BH**

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