

# Wearing mother's gown makes day special for bride

By NICOLE A. WEINSTEIN  
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Choosing a gown for her wedding day is something a bride-to-be looks forward to — the special feeling you get when you pick "The One."

For some brides, "The One" is an heirloom gown worn by their mothers or grandmothers — which makes their dresses even more special.

## Granting mother's wish

When Kerry Schuman of Troy married Philip Carhart on Aug. 1, she did so in the same gown her mother, Carole Schuman, wore 39 years earlier, when she married Kerry's father.

"I had already been looking for a dress and had even bought one from a company on the Internet that I was pretty happy with," Kerry Carhart said. "But my mother went up to the attic and came out with her dress and suggested I try it on."

"I had told her that I had seen pictures of it and it just wasn't my style," Carhart added. "But I could see that she really wanted me to wear it, so I tried it on. It fit like a glove."

The dress was made of satin brocade with a semi-cathedral train and originally came from Juliet's House of Brides in Latham. Carhart thought the style a little old-fashioned and asked her mother if she would mind if she changed it or updated it.

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**Kerry Carhart**  
bride

someone could wear it and get some happiness out of it, then it was all right with her," Carhart said.

She brought the gown to Ferri Formals in Schenectady. Lina Ferri runs the store with her daughter, Marylu Aragosa, a friend of Carhart's. Ferri took a look at the gown and made suggestions on how it could be changed and updated.

"She said the sleeves could come off and we discussed ways to change the neckline," Carhart said. "They took the bows off the back and added a waistband with rhinestones. She also took out the lining underneath the dress and replaced it with another lining so it wouldn't be so stiff."

## Pleasant changes

In addition, Ferri changed the bustle so it wouldn't "pouf" up in the back. Carhart was pleased with the results.

"Everyone raved about the dress," she said. "People were really impressed with it, how different it was. Lina really took a lot of time with it. She did it as a special favor to me and it was really nice."

"It was a beautiful floral brocade pattern," Ferri said of the

dress. "When we took off the extra stiff fabric, it made it nice and smooth. I enjoyed doing it for Kerry."

The dress was particularly meaningful, since Carole Schuman had just spent six months on a leave of absence from her job to care for Carhart, who had been treated for cancer and was recovering at home.

"I moved in with my mother and she took care of me," Carhart said. "I wanted to do something to make her feel good after all of that."

Carhart was wed in St. Joseph's Church in Troy — the same church her parents were married in — and was pleased when she walked down the aisle in her heirloom dress.

"It was very different and I was skeptical at first," Carhart said. "But when I got the dress back it was so different and that was what made it special."

## A bride-to-be

When Leslie Henzel marries her fiance, Mark, on May 22, she will be walking down the aisle in the same dress her mother wore 44 years before — well, sort of.

When she became engaged in July 2002, Henzel asked her mother, Gail, to take out her gown to see if Leslie could wear it.

"I had always loved my mom's dress," Henzel said. "But when we took it out it was yellowed. I told her that I would really like it if I could create a replica of the dress and, of course, she cried. She was very touched."

Henzel took the original gown to Janet Kaplan, owner of Sew Elegant in Loudonville, to see if she could re-create it. Kaplan had made Henzel's sister-in-law's bridal gown and several bridesmaids gowns that Henzel had worn in other weddings.

"We met several times and she has seen pictures and has the original dress," Henzel said. "I know she does beautiful work."

The original gown is satin with beaded lace appliques. Henzel said Kaplan searched for a lace that would look good in a re-created applique, but couldn't find one that either of them was happy with.

"Finally, she took one off and cleaned it with Oxyclean to see if she could get rid of the yellowness of the fabric," Henzel



Photos courtesy of Kerry Carhart  
TOP: Kerry Carhart in her mother's dress, which she re-tooled and wore on her wedding day in August 2003. BOTTOM: Carole Schuman, Kerry's mother, on her wedding day 40 years ago.



said. "It is amazing how clean the original applique came out. So, Janet is going to use the original appliques on the new dress."

The dress will have cap sleeves and a high waist, but where Gail Henzel's dress was wide with a taffeta skirt, Leslie's have a satin underskirt. Kaplan said the whole dress creation will take about 25 hours.

"The overlay and dress is two layers of silk organza," said Kaplan. "I will take the rest of the dress apart and use it as pattern pieces. Where the holes are on the original dress where the appliques were I will mark on

the new dress and then stitch on the appliques. It will be a duplicate of the original dress."

"I also will carry a bouquet of white roses, lily of the valley and ivy, which was what my mother had in her bouquet," Henzel added.

The dress is still in the beginning stages, but Henzel is looking forward to the finished product.

"What made this even more special for my mom is that her mother passed away when she was 3 and while she was raised by an aunt and uncle, she did not go through the whole process like she is with me," Henzel said.

"When I told her I wanted a replica of her dress, it made it very special. She looks at the dress and thinks of how long ago it was that she got married and she becomes very emotional. It is very special for her too."

"My sister is getting married in October, so this will be a busy year for her," Henzel laughed.