

# OUR TOWNS Cedar County

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## Sew What? Fordyce Couple Finds Business Opportunity At Home

BY LINDA WUEBBEN  
P&D Correspondent

FORDYCE, Neb. — Mary Ann Promes has loved making draperies even since she took a sewing class in high school and made a set for her mom's television room.

So now, almost 30 years later, Promes and husband Cyril are still making draperies, and Mary Ann's Draperies has filled a main street building in Fordyce for 20 of those years.

After high school, Promes took a class at Northeast Technical College (as it was known back then). She became fast friends of the teacher and, amazingly enough, also her employee.

Promes worked for two weeks for Marge Moreland who operated a drapery business out of her home in Norfolk. When Moreland's health deteriorated, Promes was there to work on all the orders. Moreland would leave notes on what to do, and when Moreland couldn't walk to the basement anymore, Promes would carry the work upstairs so Moreland could tell her what to do. So much hand sewing was completed in those days.

"I loved working on draperies so much, Marge's husband Bob would help me pack (draperies) up and I would take them home and pleat them in the evenings," said Promes.

Moreland taught her about fabrics, estimates and ordering and husband Bob took her along when doing installation.

As the orders for Promes' mentor were caught up, she began picking up orders of her own in the Fordyce area. She moved back to home to live with mom, who graciously gave up her 12-foot x 12-foot TV room with one large window. Promes went to work.

"Mom loaned me about \$1,000 to buy a brand new Pfaff in a cabinet," said Promes. The first day she pedaled her business, she garnered five orders. She filled the room with a 4-foot x 8-foot table, samples, her machine and a desk. It was a tight fit but she made it work.

Promes has never regretted her decision to return to Fordyce and has never been caught up on orders. Her mother even helped her do installation until finally she decided she needed stronger help. Husband Cy began doing installation on weekends until the orders became more than his wife could handle.

Cy was a car mechanic by trade but found he could sew with the best of them, thanks to the sewing talent he inherited from his mom, so quit his day job. The Promeses were lucky to find a house in Fordyce with an open basement large enough for

a work area. Their family grew and so did their house. Additions created more bedrooms for their six children — five boys and one daughter — and more workspace in the basement.

When one of the local main street bars decided to close its door, the Promes purchased the building and moved out of their home. They expanded to floor coverings and eventually her husband took a flooring class in home for two weeks. He began laying all types of floor coverings.

The business does residential window coverings but also has completed work for nursing homes, offices and stage curtains. The Promeses find everyone has a flair for design once they figure out what they like.

The biggest drapery job the couple completed was creating draperies for a Hartington funeral home. They made drapes for a total of 75 feet of walls. When they went to install the lined triple-draped wall covering, they were challenged because of the weight of one set that covered a 24-foot wall.

This year, the couple is moving their business to a country acreage near Crofton. They purchased the homestead where Promes' mom grew up. They have gutted the 100-year-old house and are building a 40-foot



PHOTO: LINDA WUEBBEN  
Mary Ann Promes, along with her husband Cyril Promes, have turned her love of making draperies into a successful Fordyce business.

x 40-foot shop. There will be plenty of space and a showroom decorated as a living room to display their line of draperies, sheers and top treatments in swag-style and lace. The floor covering displays will be there also.

"Many times customers will call us for ideas and we'll take samples to their home, to see what their setup is and their

likes," said Promes. She thinks that has been good for the family business and customers like that.

The Pfaff machine stills runs and Cy Promes said it has made miles of drapes. Other machines have been added through the years like a blind hemmer, ruffler and serger.

When Mary Ann's Draperies moved out of the former bar

building, they decided they would miss the occasional scent of a smoking cigar. It comes out of the blue and the couple wonders just who might be smoking it and what happened to them in the decades-old bar.

The business has moved to the new location 3.1 miles west of the Highway 81 and 12 intersection and for more information, call 402-841-6801.

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