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Snapshots

By Judi Kauffman



ANNA GRIFFIN

Situated on the outskirts of Charlotte, North Carolina, sits a small town called Marshville that proudly erected a sign boasting “Home of Randy Travis.” Fans of the equally talented and well-known designer Anna Griffin think the sign needs a slight alteration in wording. They’d like to see it announce “Home of Anna Griffin and Randy Travis”!

Anna is a big city businesswoman whose roots run deep. She says her family is “so small it would fit in an elevator,” but used the opposite imagery when describing the scale of the talent in her family.

According to Anna there was “so much creativity in the family the house could hardly contain it.” Her mother is an artist, while her father restores antique cars and worked in the building supply business. She and sister Melissa grew up with art projects overflowing the kitchen table on a daily basis. Anna explored needlework, painting, jewelry making, and just about every craft imaginable. Anna’s mother has carefully kept an archive of her

daughters’ projects, providing Anna and her sister easy access to childhood memories.

Thinking and talking in visual terms is very much what Anna Griffin is all about. She says she always sees things in her mind first, and loves to create “work that honors and reinterprets the art of the past.” Majoring in Environmental Design at North Carolina State, she graduated with a degree in graphic design and visual problem solving. After graduation, Anna moved to Atlanta where she worked as a graphic designer, followed by a job working in New York City for Vera Wang. She then returned to Atlanta where she opened her own business. At first she made one-of-a-kind and custom items, freelanced as a wedding planner, and worked as a jack-of-all-trades. But Anna decided to launch her own wholesale product line, Anna Griffin, Inc., when she came to understand the quote that states: “When you make one-of-a-kind things you make less than minimum wage.”

Right from the start, Anna’s product lines have been all about giving consumers a chance to create a “custom look without custom cost.”

It’s accurate to say that she single-handedly transformed the “imprintable” industry. Her first product lines brought affordable do-it-yourself, layered, embellished printable invitations to the market. Now, thanks to Anna, if you want to plan a wedding, host a party that looks like you were born rich, design a scrapbook page or greeting card that has a quietly elegant look, add beautiful file folders to your home office, stamp or stencil an item for your home, or simply feed your family birthday cake on



ANNA
GRIFFIN®



a fabulous paper plate, you can turn to her products and find everything you need.

Anna says it this way: “We put the craft back into crafting.” In other words, she has invented new ways for regular people to be successfully creative, and enjoy doing it at the same time. Anna pays attention to every detail so the rest of us don’t have to. One of her major criteria for the invitations she designs is that they be memorable, or as she puts it, “how good they will look on the refrigerator.”

A typical workday for Anna is about twelve hours. She lives less than two miles from her office. Single, she jokes that her company is her family, along with a cat named Sterling. In addition to running a business with about 40 employees, a 40,000 square foot warehouse and office, a staff of five in-house designers and a scrapbook design team, Anna also renovates a house every two years, moving when each project is completed and ready to sell. She credits her father for getting her started in this direction. Nineteen years ago when she moved to

Atlanta the two of them renovated her first house together; she has been at it ever since.

When asked what she does in her spare time, Anna admitted to loving reality television. She watches *Top Chef*, *Dancing with the Stars*, and *Project Runway*. She works out at a gym with a personal trainer who keeps her focused. She has taken on her health as a project and thinks of it as her own personal make-over without having to appear on one of those reality shows she watches.



When asked what she’d do if she won the lottery, Anna had a ready answer as it turns out she buys a lottery ticket every week and has given winning a lot of thought. She would plow the money right back into her business. With not one dream of retiring to an island, Anna would rather expand, hire, design, and have things made. Her company is privately held so she is always using her own money, and has to be cautious, taking smaller risks than she could with those lottery millions. But Anna said that in a very

real way she's already won a lottery by being able to own her company. Gratitude flows easily and often in her conversation, and nothing is taken for granted.

As if running Anna Griffin, Inc., and dealing with the dust and debris inherent in living through home renovations weren't enough, Anna also works with a variety of companies, through which she licenses her designs. Her quilting fabrics are available through Windom Fabrics. Anna Griffin papers, stamps, stencils, punches, rubber stamps, and Bucilla needlework kits (silk ribbon embroidery and cross stitch) are manufactured by Plaid Enterprises. You'll find custom cardstock and envelopes from Envelopments, Christmas ornaments from Department 56, photo albums, paper tableware and wedding accessories through C. R. Gibson. And there is a brand new line of dinnerware and glassware from Lenox.

What's next for Anna? Infant bedding, bumpers, and layette sets licensed through Crown Craft. And here's a hot scoop: Anna will soon have three lines of picture frames from Burnes of Boston, including a collection of scrapbook pages for the wall - just add your photos.

Anna is dreaming about craft storage made from her fabrics, a series of calendars, more gorgeous papers, and themed scrapbook collections including embellishments. She calls it "opening up that candy store."



It's a relief to know that somewhere in the midst of this whirlwind of work and productivity is a woman who puts her feet up to find out what's happening on Big Brother and the Real Housewives of Orange County though she's probably daydreaming about how to create a line of stickers while she contemplates the remote control.

For more information on Anna Griffin, please visit her at www.annagriffin.com ❖