



foxy lady

Founder Lorry Eible moved to Sarasota with her sons, Edward and Bryan, in early 1972. A third generation hairdresser and salon owner from Chester, NJ—her famous grandfather had styled the rich and famous on Fifth Avenue in Manhattan, creating the first highlighting bleach and making the pages of Vogue and Harper's Bazaar—Eible was looking for change. Despite the success of her salons, Eible had grown allergic to many hair products and tired of long hours. "I knew another career was waiting for me," she says.

Within her original salon, she had operated a small boutique. After enrolling her boys in school, she began to hunt for a possible location for a store. Poking around Siesta Key, she discovered a "cute little café," Anna's Deli, and next door to it, a dilapidated cottage. She queried the owner and found that it would soon be for rent.

She opened the Siesta Key store there on October 23, 1972, her younger son's birthday, and christened it Foxy Lady, after the famous Jimmy Hendrix song. Within a decade, she had outgrown the cottage. Builder John Walter, her then boyfriend who would later become her husband, constructed a new, bigger and better store. Two years later, he found a property on St. Armands Circle, an abandoned gas station, and built the flagship shop at 481 John Ringling Boulevard.

What was your vision for Foxy Lady?

My concept was to dress a woman from head to toe—bathing suits, shoes, trousers, sportswear. The first store was only about 1200 square feet, but it had a little bit of everything. That's how it all started. It just kept going until we had the bigger store, which was quite a bit bigger, about 3300 square feet. We incorporated a lot of other things—jewelry, more shoes, evening wear. Back then, a lot of professional women such as Realtors, doctors, and attorneys had no place to shop. We attracted more professional women—attorneys, doctors.

Who are your customers now?

I have customers who started with me in the '70s who are now bringing their granddaughters in to buy prom dresses. We have two and three generations of shoppers. People follow us on Facebook; they follow us on Instagram. They come down from other states for the season, and I hear, "Do you know that I haven't even gone to open my house yet? I came here first. I wanted to get a few things so I'll have something to wear this week." Anyone in business who stays in business has to have a loyal clientele.

What creates that loyalty?

A lot of things. But mostly it's the labels we carry, along with product knowledge and really good service.

We have a tremendous inventory, with new arrivals daily. Women know they'll see fresh items every time they shop with us. Having a hairdresser background really helped me to understand and hear what women want.

We always want to know where people are going when they are shopping for an event, whether it be a wedding, social event, or just traveling. I always ask the customer, "What do you envision yourself feeling and looking like?" Some answer, "I want to just blend in." Others say, "I want to wow the room." We listen to what they want so our service is on target.

I would say that 80% of the stores that I walk into, I'm totally ignored. Someone's on the phone. Somebody's talking to a friend or gossiping about what happened last night. This is a pet peeve of mine. Although we're not perfect, we monitor this carefully. As a result, we hear very often, "I love the one-on-one attention I got today" or "Your staff is so helpful." That's what I want to hear.

A woman should feel fantastic when she walks into a clothing store—and not intimidated. Stores are overwhelming. Our big things are making customers know that we are there to point them in the right direction and to help them find exactly what they're looking for. And they do know that. We hear it over and over and over again. We get letters all the time of how the wedding went and how fabulous everybody looked. And their trip to Italy turned out to be so great thanks to us and the beautiful wardrobe we've put together.

Sometimes we have three generations of customers in the store at the same time. We want everyone to feel welcomed and comfortable at Foxy Lady.

Can you say more about the "we" in Foxy Lady?

The "we" is all the support and relationships with customers and staff through the years. My mom worked with me in my first store and continued until she retired. When I grew into my larger Siesta Key store, I had 5-7 ladies working with me. After opening the St. Armand's store, we had 6-8 more. You can have the most beautiful clothes in the world, but if you don't have people who work with you who understand your vision and your expectations, you have nothing.

Our staff and management team doesn't change much. Some employees have been with me for 25-45 years. My son, Bryan, at one point was my partner at our Siesta store until his life did a 360 and he moved to New Zealand. But then came Lori Ann Steiner, who started with me at 18 and has been my partner for the past 14 years.

And not to forget the late John Walter, my husband, who supported me every step of the way. Without him I wouldn't have such beautiful stores.

I couldn't do any of this without my family and friend, who have been with me for every up and down through 50 years.