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RIDING IN STYLE WITH EQ WEAR

Unsatisfied in her search for the perfect riding pant, Beverly Anderson designed it herself.

by Stephanie Stephens

IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR HER, it's good enough for you. At EQ Wear, a new premium athletic riding apparel company out of Tulsa, Oklahoma, founder Beverly Anderson says she covets each of the garments that earns a permanent place on her hangers. "Everything I make is something I basically want myself, so I'm the test market." And she never settles for anything less than the best—in materials, fit, style, and functionality.

As a designer, Anderson is known for what she calls "function-first, patented pants with distinct fashion overtones." And after just three years in business, her practice and performance riding pants have earned a loyal following.

BORN IN THE SADDLE

A few years ago, when her son graciously returned an American Quarter Horse to her, Anderson happily accepted, having wanted to start riding again. But as she got back in the saddle, she found she wasn't happy with the current choices in riding pants. Checking in with her gal-pals at events, Anderson learned she wasn't the only one who sought a better way—and a better pant.

Her American Saddle-bred cronies wore jodhpurs, and she tried them. But they didn't seem right stuffed inside cowboy boots. Western riders didn't offer the answer, either. "I saw jeans, jeans, and more jeans, with every mom and her 13-year-old daughter dressing identically," Anderson says. "Every pair of

jeans 'balled up' or were too revealing or uncomfortable." So she then resorted to sportswear. "I even tried yoga pants," she says.

Among all of the women she talked to, Anderson found two commonalities, which would become her guiding principles: Riding gear didn't always integrate well with the rest of these women's lives, and they valued comfort above all else when dressing for the saddle.

So she put pencil to paper and designed her first pants in 2012, paying homage to chaps without making them too "chappy." For her palette, she looked to the natural hues of her home state. "My first pant matched the red dirt and blue sky of Western Oklahoma—and was named 'Queenie' after

"I love the fashionable side of EQ Wear, and that it stands up to riding and being around horses," [Margaret Burns Vap, owner of Big Sky Yoga Retreats] says. "Bee's attention to product detail is exquisite. Her pieces are a total splurge, and you get what you pay for!"



"The business has got its legs under it now, even though exposure has been rather limited," she says. "I haven't been able to blow a big gust of air yet, but I'm planning on that in the fall."

NOT 'JUST' PANTS

Anderson's designs are definitely not low-end. "I only use the top quality materials, such as stretch leathers from France and denims and knits from Italy. My buckskin is from the Choctaw Nation, tanned and dyed with nuts and berries in the 10,000-year-old tribe way, completely natural. I buy the Mercedes of zippers to avert any potential wardrobe malfunction."

The best materials deserve the best care and construction. Once Anderson has obtained her materials, she's laser-focused in the manufacturing room. "I look closely at every single thing," she says.

The pants have no inside seams to cause human or equine discomfort. With the exception of the leather and denim jean, which features a back zipper, they're all designed with wide elastic waistbands that make them easy to pull on and feature hidden pockets for cell phones or keys. The skinny pant offers a

the first horse I ever owned," Anderson says. She liked the look and utility of the initial design, but she wanted more substance to the seat, an element she's since perfected by tailoring the panel cuts for optimal precision.

The following year, the first EQ Wear collection made its debut at the Cheyenne

Rodeo. But the company really took off in 2015, when a Kickstarter campaign netted more than \$33,000. Anderson used the money for her first full production run and the establishment of her facility in her native Oklahoma, along with athlete sponsorship and product placement.

classic equestrian look, but the practice and performance bootcuts are most impressive. Featuring zipper gussets along the lower legs, they can be zipped down to create a straight-leg silhouette. Best of all, the various EQ Wear riding pant designs can be ordered in a variety of premium knits; stretch, washable lambskin; stretch suede; and leather combos. The piece de resistance of the collection: the Choctaw—a fitted bootcut pant perfect for riding that pairs panels of midnight denim with native buckskin tanned and dyed by the artisans of Oklahoma's Choctaw Nation.

KNOWS HER MARKET

Sure, she's a self-proclaimed horse enthusiast, but those who have watched Anderson grow her startup apparel company know she's also one very smart cookie. It's one thing "to like horses" and make riding apparel. It's quite another to be a former structural engineer who was the first female assigned to work in the Persian Gulf right out of university in 1982, and then in the British sector of the North Sea in 1985.

Anderson holds an MBA from the Stanford University Graduate School of Business and was president of a management consulting firm—a background that has equipped her with the savvy she needs to manage, market, and grow her own business. First and foremost, it's about knowing your audience.

Anderson believes that 60 percent of growth in the equestrian market is in the age 45+ demographic. "Those with disposable income want to spend money on the things they want and treat themselves—and their horses—well," she says.

She aimed straight for them and has hit her mark. Although, coincidentally, Anderson says more than 80 percent of her customers today never intend to get on a horse—they just like the tailored equestrian style—and that's fine with her, too.

In fact, Anderson has since rounded out her collection with a modest selection of coordinating "about-town" fashion-forward pieces—including leather jackets, stretch leather skirts, suede tops, and even a tweed pencil skirt. "My clothes are for women who feel like they have an active, adventuresome lifestyle. They want clothes that 'keep up' with them, are beautiful, but also need to work for them."

For Anderson, the focus remains on providing women with comfortable yet chic riding pants—the best any woman could hope for in style and performance. Avid customers attest there isn't anything like them in the marketplace.



WORD GETS AROUND

"The pants have a lot of give, but they're fitted and classic looking—great comfort and 'movability,'" says Melissa Moore, owner and a top trainer at Sunrise Stables, specializing in American Saddle Horses in Versailles, Kentucky. "People send me lot of jodhpurs to try, but I really like EQ Wear. When I wear them, clients ask me where I got them."

At Big Sky Yoga Retreats in Bozeman, Montana, owner Margaret Burns Vap recommends EQ Wear as standard packing gear for incoming guests. They work perfectly for her Cowgirl Yoga on the ranch, featuring—of course—yoga, as well as riding excursions, upscale dinners, and glam photo shoots, she says. A newbie to equestrian fashion, Vap's apparel taste wasn't hardcore English or Western. "I love the fashionable side

of EQ Wear, and that it stands up to riding and being around horses," she says. "Bev's attention to product detail is exquisite. Her pieces are a total splurge, and you get what you pay for!"

"I see the longevity in my brand, and would love to find ways to work with more tack stores," says Anderson, who also wants to do a children's line. "It's like Nike and Adidas—people who buy them for fashion don't always use them for performance, until later."

Store owners can gauge wholesale prices at half of the retail prices listed on the EQ Wear website, and there's no need to worry about order minimums. "I'm happy for retailers to try two or three pairs and see how they work in the store," Anderson says. Also ask her about custom pieces. 918.921.3533, www.eq-wear.com