



Ann's Fashion Station, located just off Highway 6 in Hearne is a hybrid gas station/clothing store.

Station mixes gasoline and fashion

By Nancy Feigenbaum
Staff Writer

The flat, straight road to Calvert holds few surprises, but the next time you stop for gas in Hearne, look twice at the Texaco station just off Highway 6. Are those dresses in the window?

Maybe not. It could be a Linda Barrett blouse or a few designer sweaters. All the same, not your standard gas-station fare.

Two and a half years ago Dee Weatherford, owner of the station, decided to bring his wife into the business.

"I got tired of her working in Bryan," he says.

So Dee and Ann pushed up the garage doors, lowered the car lifts and converted almost half the Texaco into Ann's Fashion Station, a small boutique

carrying women's clothing. Some of it is a bit more expensive than an oil change or brake check.

In the winter the store has carried fur vests which sell for as much as \$800 each, Ann says. Sweaters, which start at \$30, are priced as high as \$200 for a Colleen Toland, hand-knitted, mohair creation.

"We don't buy cheap stuff," Dee says. "We buy good stuff."

Good clothing is not the only expensive merchandise sold at the corner of Market and Third Street. Just inside the front door, above the usual selection of oil cans, hang Polaroid shots of seven airplanes and a helicopter. Six are marked "sold," including the helicopter which went to a man in Hawaii for \$25,000, Dee says.

Dee's planes sell all over the United States for \$15,000 to \$25,000, a price the average pi-

lot can afford, he says.

He anticipates aviation will take over the gas station part of his business some day.

In case it doesn't, he can fall back on the car and boat sales he conducts from the store's back parking lot. Behind a Buick and an Oldsmobile, he stocks a pontoon boat with a black and white striped canopy that looks like it should be transporting tourists down the San Antonio River.

Dee hedges when asked which part of the store does better, saying that the business' diversity keeps it going. The two businesses are financially separate, Ann explains.

"The only thing that connects us is the door."

The real connection is the Weatherfords themselves. Everything in the shop reflects the

personal interests of its owners, from the airplane prop over the window to the dresses below.

Ann wears the same style sweater hanging in her display window, and, like Dee, she likes to fly the planes they sell.

Dee and Ann have been known to fill in for each other, Ann selling gas and Dee clothing.

"He knows the stock," she says.

But she jokes that Dee brought her into the business because, "he didn't think he could sell dresses."

The store began as a gift shop for the first eight or nine months it was open. But Ann liked clothes and she wanted to use her experience working at two clothes stores in Bryan/College Station.

Besides, the gift store wasn't as successful as the clothes shop. The reason?

"How much a year do I spend on gifts?" Ann says. "How