

Adventures in McCloudland

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Chapter 15

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During the week in Oakland, I'd shop. I visited countless furniture stores, gathered pictures, prices, and began to sketch the lobby and some of the rooms; I never left home without my cloth book bag which held a notebook, tape measure, room and lobby dimensions and pictures torn from magazines of ideal rooms.

I found a wonderful discount place in Oakland called Angeles. What they didn't have on their floor, they had in books. I spent hours looking through catalogs from several of my favorite manufacturers. After deciding on two sofas, both of which came with their permanent covering as well as a choice of slipcovers, and five assorted upholstered chairs, I turned and faced a wall of fabrics. I was a bit nervous about being able to pull it all together and had been putting off this part of the decision making process.

Angeles had thousands of fabric samples. They were mounted on small hangers on two rods running the entire length of the building. They were generally sorted by dominate color. I could never have imagined such an array.

I approached the blurring patterns and started pulling out colors, prints and fabrics that caught my eye or was the mood I wanted. I glanced at the sofa where I had been tossing them and saw I had about 15 to 20 swatches. Surprisingly, most were in tones and mood that already complemented each other. The two summer sofa covers were the easiest. One was a deep rich purple background with big bold flowers. The other was a soft pale yellow with deep red apples, dark purple plums and green leaves of summer. The two pieces would be wonderful on opposite sides of a large room. The prints for the chairs easily followed. A red and white 1" check, a green and white smaller check design, a gold fabric with dark geometric designs, and a big bold mostly green plaid. I picked out another more subtle plaid for an ottoman to sit in front of the fireplace. I spotted a winter weight fabric with a hunting scene punctuated with red coated hunters and their horses on a muted mauvey gray background that would be perfect for the winter sofa. The second winter sofa fabric had dark green background with repeated patterns of animals, each animal in its own three-inch square. Both winter pieces looked terrible with the summer sofa covers, but they would never be in the same space together. All the chair fabrics went with both the summer and winter sofa fabrics. It would be perfect. It had taken all of about 15 to 20 minutes.

I made photo copies of the chairs and sofas from the catalog, and borrowed the fabric swatches to share with anyone who would offer an opinion. I still needed reassurance. Bad idea.

My friends would look at the array of fabrics flung out on our carpet while I waited for some positive comment about my creativity. Nearly everyone's reaction was one of doubt. Most commented something like "Hmmm it's very bold," or "different," or "are you sure?" Even my cousin, Brenda, looked for a long time and remarked in a slow deliberate manner "Well, ...if you like it, ...Marilyn, ...it should be very ...interesting." I began to doubt my choices. I'd look over the large swatches and they looked wonderful to me. But then, we're making this lobby for other people. Maybe other people won't like it. So what good is it if I love it and no one else does?

In the end I decided to go with my own instinct. Otherwise I was afraid we were going to end up with tweeds and oatmeal patterns! That philosophy would govern most of our decisions. We'd always come back to the question, "What would we prefer?" In the end all we can do is create what we like...and hope guests will like it too. It's personal. Maybe that's what chain motels miss. They're all the same.

I also visited some wonderful fabric stores. I had figured out how much each room would need for four long curtain panels, a covered cornice, headboard, dust ruffle, and pillows. I am not a seamstress. In fact I had made an agreement with my sewing machine years before. I'd put it in the closet and bid it farewell. I cook. My cousin sews. I don't need to feel guilty anymore. But I was determined to make the rooms look personal and coordinated. I wanted matching things without the Sears Catalog look where everything is the same. I figured out anyone can sew a straight line, and if I'm making curtains or dust ruffles, it doesn't have to look good on me; like a dress. So I imagined the possibilities. It was great fun to operate on instinct and look around the store, spot patterns that caught my eye, and say, "I'll take 45 yards of that one ...and that one ...and, oh look at that one. I'll take that too." If one fabric measured out a little short, I'd figure out what would be left undone and find a coordinating fabric to complement it. In a couple of weeks I had almost all the fabric I would need. All I had to do was make them.

About this same time I began noticing ads near the end of decorating magazines advertising places in North Carolina which sold name brand furniture from a variety of manufacturers at drastically reduced prices. Since I had the name of the manufacturers and style numbers as well as information from each fabric swatch, I called two of the advertised "furniture consolidators." They each explained similar policies. I supply them with all the information about the Manufacturer, furniture piece number and finish, fabric number and color and they place the orders and consolidate the shipment at a later date. They charge 1/3 the sales price on our credit card at the time I place the

order and the balance is due upon delivery. There would be a “small delivery charge.” That’s it. And it really saved money. The prices were 30 to 40% less than the discount house and much less than retail furniture stores.

I ordered the lobby upholstered pieces from Turner Tolsen in North Carolina, and began a two year relationship with Lisa. She couldn’t have been over 25 and had the sweetest southern drawl. She was my personal shopper and only contact at Turner Tolsen. Later, she would go far beyond the minimum services I’d expected and they’d restricted. She’d often research her catalogs and find an item I was having trouble locating. After I had moved to McCloud, I placed orders with her for the tall pencil poster beds, mattresses and frames.

I felt terrible that I had used Angeles Furniture Store’s resources and then ordered from someone else. But there were too many items and too much money at stake to order from anyone not offering the best price. I wrote the manager at Angeles a note of apology and included a gift certificate for a couple of complementary nights at the hotel when we opened. I never heard back from them, nor have they used the certificate.