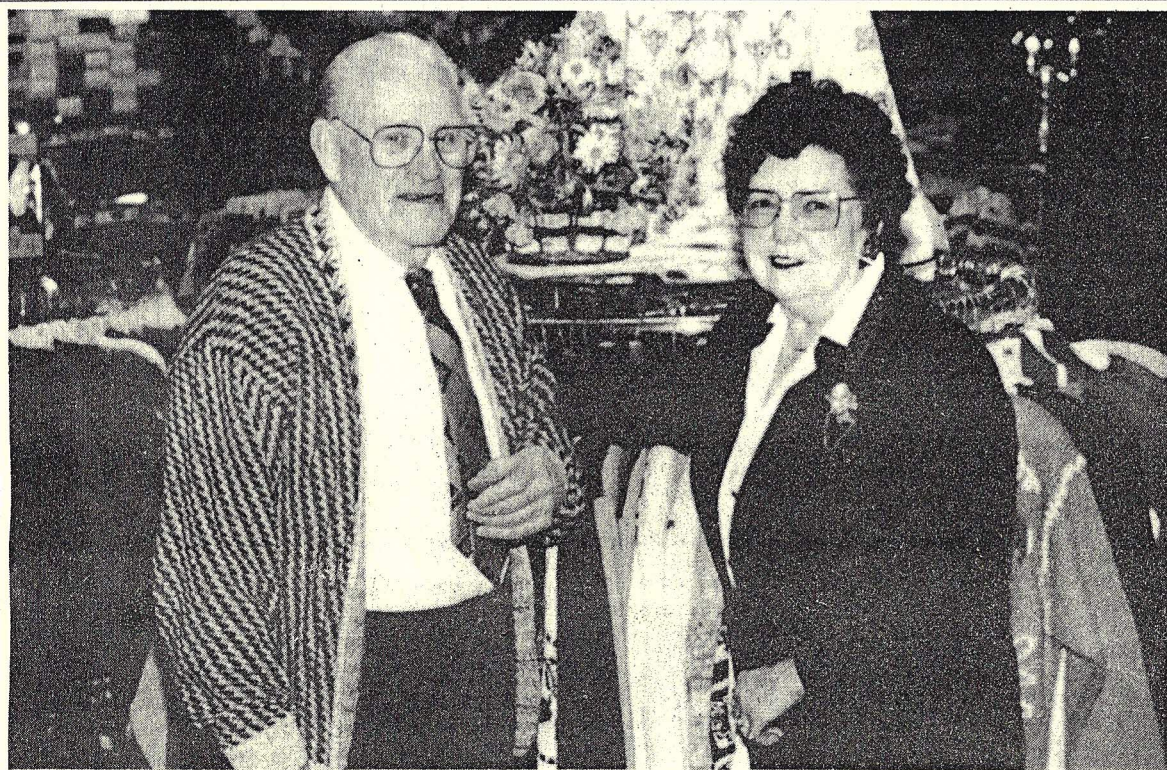




Thelma and Gerry Vandehey in the store they founded over three decades ago.

Thelma's remaining in the family *Vandeheys are retiring, but will stay active*

She has guided Antigo women through minis and maxi-skirts, tailored blazers and bell-bottoms, big hats and tiny pillboxes.

Now, Thelma Vandehey is turning over the reins of her 36-year-old business to her daughter, Judy Ebert.

"I'll still be involved," Mrs. Vandehey said. "This will be the same family store and we will honor all the same charge accounts. Business will continue as usual."

Mrs. Vandehey and her husband, Gerry, opened Thelma's in 1959 in the 700 block of Fifth Avenue, now the site of Gold Miner Jewelers.

"I did a little clothing sales at one time and I liked it," she remembered. "We decided to open a store if we could find a suitable building down-

town."

While Mrs. Vandehey has handled buying and clerking duties for decades, her husband has consistently been a behind-the-scenes force, handling all the finances.

"I couldn't have operated the store all these years without him," she stressed.

The 700 block building was suitable for over two decades before Thelma moved to a larger location a block down the street in the old JCPenney location. That move doubled the size of the store.

"We've done real well here," Mrs. Vandehey said.

Thelma's has always been the store where women have gone to purchase something special, whether it be a

new dress coat for winter or a mother-of-the-bride gown.

And the store has done very well, outlasting at least 10 other specialty clothing stores downtown. Over the years, the Bountiful Boutique, Our End of the Rainbow, Children's Shoppe, the Loft, Jeanne's, Lu's, Pries', Leroy's, Nancy's Shop and Mary's have all come and gone, while Thelma's continues to operate.

The Vandeheys have also established several of their children in the clothing business.

After the success of the Antigo store, the couple opened a Thelma's in Clintonville. Their daughter Shirley later bought the business and operated it for years.

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Continued

Thelma's

Thelma's in Merrill was also started by the Vandeheys. Now, the store, together with the Merrill's Guy's Shop, is operated by son Bill and his wife, Mary. It is considered the largest specialty clothing store in the state and regularly draws customers from throughout northern Wisconsin.

Judy and her husband, Charlie Ebert, operate the Guy's Shop IV in Antigo, another Thelma's outtake.

Two other daughters, Vicki and Connie, live in Marinette.

"We really started all of our children in the business," Mrs. Vandehey said with obvious pride.

The move toward retirement for the Vandeheys will likely be a gradual one. Daughter Judy has considerable experience in the clothing trade, including her work at the Guy's Shop, and will likely make some changes over a period of time, but Mrs. Vandehey and her husband will be common sights and the tradition of quality clothing, excellent service and fair prices will undoubtedly continue.

It will still be called Thelma's, and hopefully will continue to dress Antigo women for many more years.