

# Glass Butterfly

Outlook 12/7/2011

*Trendy women's  
clothing helps  
business survive  
changing times*

## More business

■ Business briefs are on Page 8B.

**By Anne Endicott**  
staff writer

One of Gresham's oldest independent businesses isn't as fragile as the glass butterfly on the outside of the landmark building on West Powell Boulevard.

For more than 40 years, the Glass Butterfly has been the local source for trendy women's and juniors clothing. Once the only clothing store outside of regional malls, the Glass Butterfly has weathered competition from big-name retailers and evolved

with the times to retain customers that now span generations.

"I'm happy that we've survived and our customers have stayed with us all these years," said Doug Chizum, the store's co-owner. "We have moms who bought their prom dresses here, and now they're bringing their daughters in to buy a prom dress. We've even had a few mothers-of-the-bride. It's an accomplishment to last this long."

Longtime Gresham residents Don and Geri VanZyl never imagined their small business plan would become a community anchor when they decided



# celebrates 40 years of fashion

(RIGHT) Doug Chizum is the owner of Glass Butterfly, a Gresham business for the past 40 years.

(BELOW) The stained glass namesake of the Glass Butterfly still adorns the outside wall.

staff photos by JIM CLARK

to open a clothing store in the early 1970s. With limited financial resources and during a questionable economic time for small business, they forged ahead remodeling a former auto repair shop and employing some creativity to get their dream off the ground.

Don worked as a salesman for the Lipman Co, traveling the country representing three lines of clothing. At the end of each season, Geri held a sample sale at the couple's home or Don's office to unload the older merchandise.

"Pretty soon, I was doing better than Don," Geri said, laughing. "So we decided to go into business, but we started very small. We hired architects to design the store, but a lot of the original furnishings came from our home. Don asked me once where he was going to put his clothes because I took the dresser. I told him, "I don't know. Apple crates?"

In August 1971, the Glass Butterfly opened its doors to customers, without so much as a name on the front of the building. A sign on the street identified the business as a clothing store, but real signage came much later.

"It took a long time until we could afford to put the awnings up with the store name on them," Geri said. "Up until then, all we had was just a sign."

Geri did the buying for the store, frequently traveling to



## If you go

**Who:** The Glass Butterfly

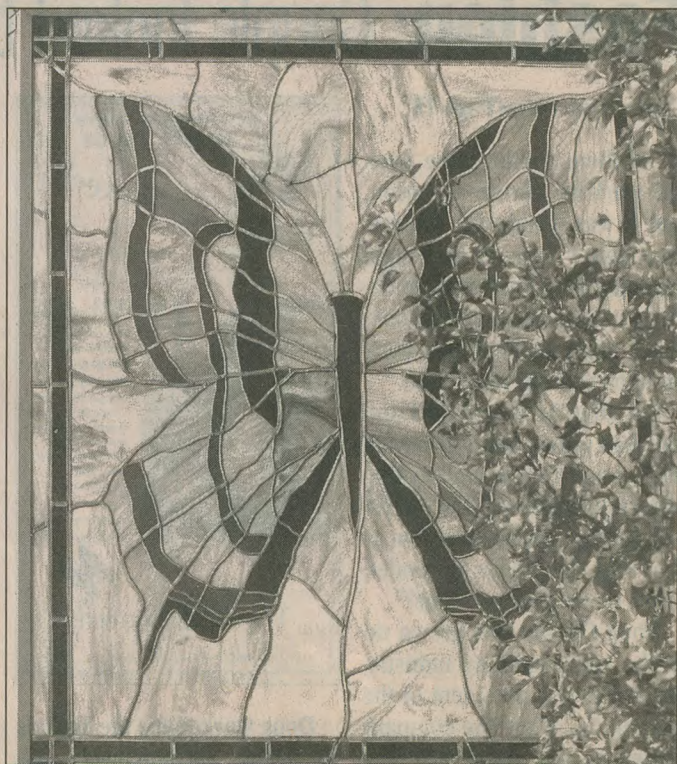
**Where:** 29 W. Powell Blvd., Gresham, 503-667-3600; 140 S.W. A Ave., Lake Oswego, 503-636-9043

**What:** Special occasion and prom dresses, career separates, swimwear, jewelry and accessories. Children's wear available at Lake Oswego location only.

**Hours of operation:** 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Friday, 9:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, noon to 5 p.m. Sunday.

market for new lines in New York and Los Angeles. In 1975, the couple opened a second location in Hood Center, off Northeast Division Street and Hogan Road. It too, became a mecca for trendy duds.

"At the time, the only place people could shop for clothing was Lloyd Center," Geri said. "Both locations just thrived for



us."

The couple raised three daughters in Gresham, all who worked in the store after school. And frequently, with some of their classmates.

"We went through the high

school to hire some of our employees," Geri said. "They were always juniors, and we worked around their school schedule if they had a test or something. A

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# Fashion: Couple looked to retire after 22 years

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lot of them would come back and work the Christmas season, and it was wonderful because they didn't have to be taught anything. They knew what to do. They were a wonderful workforce. Many of them have gone on to be very successful too."

But after 22 years, Geri and Don had grown weary of buying trips, hotel rooms and writing orders on airplanes. The couple was getting itchy to retire, but as Geri said, they began to wonder, "How do we get out of this?"

Doug Chizum had grown up in the retail clothing industry. His father was president of the Lipman Co. When the company closed in the mid-1980s, the senior Chizum went on to own three children's stores and a women's sportswear boutique in Lake Oswego. Doug knew of the VanZyls and the Glass Butterfly, but a chance phone call in 1992 provided the VanZyls with the opportunity to pass the torch.

"I had been running one of my dad's stores in Lake Oswego, and called the VanZyls to see if they wanted to purchase some fixtures we were getting rid of," Chizum explained. "They said, 'No, but we were going to contact you to see if you wanted to buy the store.' So my brother, Phillip, and I entered into negotiations with them to buy the Glass Butterfly."

Doug worked for the VanZyls for a year, accompanying Geri on buying trips and managing the store. In February 1993, Doug and Phillip officially became owners of the Glass Butterfly.

When the senior Chizum retired in 1996, the brothers bought their father's sportswear store in Lake Oswego, reopened it as a Glass Butterfly and included a children's department. But they did little to alter the inventory and selection at the two Gresham Glass Butterfly locations until the early 2000s. Both stores carried essentially the same merchandise, but some sizes were available only in one place. Staff spent a lot of time calling back and forth to help

**The Glass Butterfly advertised with The Outlook when it opened 40 years ago.**

from The Outlook Archives

customers find the right size, and eventually the Division and Hogan store became an outlet location.

"Retail became more promotional," Chizum said. "There were a lot of outlet stores opening, and it was sort of a big deal. We used the outlet to clear past season merchandise, and so both stores weren't the same (with inventory). Customers were actually buying our merchandise at a sharp discount though."

As outlet malls began to spring up and other retailers began opening discount stores, Chizum decided to consolidate the Glass Butterfly locations. The time was ripe financially, so the outlet closed and the building was sold in 2005.

But then the economy tanked, taking a toll on numerous small, independent businesses. Chizum admits the past three years have been difficult as consumer spending has gone from discretionary to necessity-only, but the Glass Butterfly has emerged as a survivor in part because of forward thinking and a solid buying reputation.

"It's much harder for a moderate store to compete with the

bigger stores," Chizum said. "But we're able to negotiate the same prices as the big store on our lines because of our long-term relationships with vendors. And we've changed with the times. We have found lines that other stores don't have, and we're known for our special occasion and prom dresses. Over the last four months, it seems people are coming in and buying again."

For the VanZyls, entrusting their labor of love to capable hands has allowed them to enjoy their retirement. Geri admits she still routinely scrutinizes junior clothing lines when she shops, but she doesn't miss those days on the road.

"It was a lot of fun and a lot of work," Geri said. "But it makes us feel so good. We didn't want to close the doors when we retired, and we were so fortunate to find two wonderful young businessmen to take the business. It was a perfect fit."





outlook - Mar 4, 1989



## FLOWER GARDEN PRINTS

Wonderful dresses and skirts with camp shirts or tops . . . in prints with the flower power of a tropical forest or in the delicate shades of an English country garden. An idea borrowed from the past but given a bright new life with the shades and shapes of spring '89. Making a choice is truly fun and exciting . . . in misses, petite and junior sizes.

# GLASS BUTTERFLY

SHAMOUTLOOK - Mar 4, 1984 MON.-FRI. 9:30; SAT. UNTIL 6:00; SUN. NOON-6:00

HOOD C



2003



# GLASS BUTTERFLY

Gresham's Largest Women's Clothing Store  
Misses, Petite & Junior Apparel

Famous Designers ~ Related Career Separates ~ Sportswear  
Dresses ~ Special Occasion ~ Outerwear ~ Swimwear  
Jewelry ~ Accessories



Convenient Parking ~ Complimentary Giftwrap  
Open Monday ~ Friday 9:30 ~ 9:00, Saturday 9:30 ~ 6:00, Sunday 12:00 ~ 5:00  
29 West Powell Blvd, Gresham 503-667-3600





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# Glass Butterfly opens Monday

The Glass Butterfly, a new woman's apparel store will open Monday.

It is located off Main between W. Powell and NW First in part of the old Hessel Motors plant which has been transformed.

The proprietors are Don Van Zyl and his wife Geri.

Mrs. Van Zyl said the name Glass Butterfly was chosen because they thought it signified fun. There will be an emphasis on older styles because kids now enjoy wearing long dresses and other items of a past era.

There will be a suggestion of history and nostalgia in the fixtures. For example some of stained glass came from the Aurora Colony, some of the wrought iron is more than a hundred years old and came

from a widow's walk. Other items came from Fort Vancouver and from old homes torn down when Portland State University campus was expanded.

The sales center is a replica of a small Victorian house. In the center of the floor area is a street lamp that came from the old Hill Military Academy.

There will be clothing and giftware to attract both the junior set and young married. It will be swinging, Mrs. Van Zyl said. There will be a kicky gift section.

Both the Van Zyls are graduates of Gresham High School. Don has a BS degree from University of Oregon and an MA in retailing from New York University.

Mrs. Van Zyl has been interested in civic affairs and has attended both the University of Oregon and New York University.

Don has had 17 years experience in retailing and has worked for Nordstrom Best, Lipman's, Rhodes and other major retailers.

The Van Zyls have three children. Two will be working in the store part time. Other help will include Jan Morgan and Abbie Welch.



# Brothers to take over Glass Butterfly stores <sup>2/2/93 Oregonian</sup>

By JENNIFER BRANDLON

Correspondent, The Oregonian

GRESHAM — Brothers who own women's sportswear shops in Clackamas County have taken over management of the two Glass Butterfly stores here.

Owners Don and Geri Van Zyl say they're retiring from the retail business they founded 22 years ago and turning it over to Phillip and Douglas Chizum.

The brothers plan to buy the business sometime in the future, Phillip Chizum said Monday.

Douglas Chizum, 35, has worked as a manager at the Glass Butterfly's Hood Center store for the past year, handling much of the purchasing and other aspects of the business. Phillip Chizum, 33, will share responsibilities with him while remaining involved in their Sportswear for Her stores in Clackamas Town Center and Lake Oswego.

The Glass Butterfly has 28 full-and part-time employees at its two locations, 29 W. Powell Blvd. and 1125 Northeast Hogan Road.

The Van Zyls started the Glass Butterfly — a name they chose to symbolize "something unique" — in a remodeled 4,000-square-foot building in 1971, Don Van Zyl said.

Within a few years, the business was growing so fast the couple had to start hunting for more space. They opened the Hogan Road store

“

*They've got their own niche out here, and we don't want to change that.*

Phillip Chizum

”

in 1976, then expanded the downtown store a few years later.

"When we first opened, Gresham was under 5,000 population and it was just exploding with young people," Van Zyl said. "We were basically a store that made its reputation by catering to the high school and college-age kids. Then we matured into a more general clientele as the years went on."

The stores are now popular institutions in Gresham.

Van Zyl said he and his wife wanted to devote more time to recreation and to a house-building venture on 60 acres of land they own fronting on Southwest Butler and Towle roads.

The new managers plan few changes in staffing or merchandise, Phillip Chizum said. "It's a well-established business, and we're excited to come into a new operation and start with a good base," he said.



ROGER JENSEN/The Oregonian

**Geri and Don Van Zyl, fixtures in the Gresham business community for 22 years, are selling their two Glass Butterfly stores and going into retirement.**

"They've really got their own niche out here, and we don't want to change that."

At 10,000 and 8,500 square feet, the Glass Butterfly's stores are slightly larger than the Sportswear for Her outlets, Chizum said. But they carry some of the same garments, such as the Liz Claiborne fashion line.

"We do not see the Glass Butterfly becoming another Sportswear for

Her, although there will be some crossover," he said. "They're a little more fashion-forward. They have a huge assortment."

The most obvious change for customers, Chizum added, will be a new merchandise return policy similar to Nordstrom's. "Customer satisfaction is the most important thing," he said. "We will stand behind everything we sell."





**Above:** Doug Chizum, owner of the Glass Butterfly clothing store in Gresham, works on a window display for a sale he is running this week. One of the three windows facing Powell Boulevard was recently knocked out by a truck driver who fell asleep at the wheel. Chizum hopes to get the window replaced within a few weeks.



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# SPRING-FRESH DRESSES

A whole collection of dresses styled with this season's soft look . . . shaped for newness and designed for wearing pleasure. Shown here: a one piece dress with shirred tie shoulders, pleated skirt and self tie belt in softly colored polyester onion skin. For misses sizes by Murray Meisner.

36.00

GLASS  
BUTTERFLY

GRESHAM

CLACKAMAS TOWN CENTER



*Oregonian Sept 5, 1978*

# GLASS BUTTERFLY





## DANCIN'... DANCIN'...

A notched collar soft blazer with one piece pant-and-top ... put together to make you look and feel just great at disco time. A double lined white halter blouson bodice tops an attached cummerbund belted skinny pant ... all in lustrous, luxurious Silesta® polyester (76.00) for junior sizes by Joy Rhodes.

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