

SAVVY CONSUMER

Dryers with the right fluff

Looking for a new dryer that can handle load after load of your family's clothes? The Good Housekeeping Institute's Home Care experts recently took a variety of dryers for a spin. They were impressed by seven heavy-duty machines that proved to be tough on wrinkles and gentle on clothes.

Best overall: If you want speed, the Whirlpool GEW9868K (manufacturer's suggested retail price: \$699) is your machine. In Good Housekeeping's tests, the Whirlpool dried large loads nearly 30 minutes faster than the models that didn't make the cut. Plus, it's speedier than all the institute's other picks — the testers were folding towels while the other dryers were still tumbling. And this dryer uses less energy than most of the other top-quality machines.

Quick cycle: Need to dry your daughter's soccer uniform right before her game? The GE Wizard Profile Performance DPSE592EA2WW's (\$649) speed cycle can have it ready to go in about 15 minutes. Other conveniences: an antibacterial cycle to kill germs that survived the wash and one-touch custom settings that memorize your most-used cycles.

High-tech tumbler: The interactive display panel on the Maytag Neptune MD7500 (\$799) flashes operating hints and useful tips. Example: When drying wet pillows, add a couple of dry towels to shorten the time. If you aren't able to remove a load right away, choose the "wrinkle prevent" option. Clothes will tumble intermittently for up to two hours without heat so creases don't set in.

Best value: An affordable top performer, the Amana ALB866SAW (\$539) has a unique stainless-steel drum that won't snag curtains or fine fabrics. Special feature: an oversized drying rack that holds four pairs of sneakers, instead of the usual three. Are your hands wet? No problem. The knobs are rubberized so they're easy to turn.

Easy loader: With the Kenmore Elite HE3t from Sears (\$799), there's no more bending and straining your back. This machine and its companion washer can each be stacked on top of a spacious storage drawer (a \$149 option that allows you to stash laundry supplies) to put the oversized door within easy reach.

Two in one: If you're in the market for a washer as well as a dryer, consider the innovative Whirlpool Duet, two machines that actually work together to save you time. Special heat and moisture sensors in the dryer (\$799) automatically adjust the temperature and drying time to coordinate with the washer's cycle time. This way, on a two-load day, by the time the second wash is finished, your first will be dry. The Energy Star washer (\$1,299) also saves on water and electricity.

Smooth operator: Set the permanent-press cycle on the KitchenAid Superba KEYS855JE (\$589) and forget about wrinkles. Of the 11 dryers tested by the Good Housekeeping Institute, this one removed the most creases from men's shirts. The drop-down door catches any clean clothes before they fall to the floor.

The Good Housekeeping Institute was founded in 1900 for consumer education and independent product evaluation. For more institute reports, go to homearts.com/gh/tocl/osinstit.htm



NEWS STAFF/BERNARD TRONCALE

Working out of a shed next to his home in Fayette, Jimmy Lee Sudduth has become an internationally known folk artist.

Here's mud for your eye



"I got started when I was a little boy, I'd say about 5 or 6 years old. I learned my own self how to paint."

Jimmy Lee Sudduth

Folk artist Jimmy Lee Sudduth's fame puts nary a smudge on his down-to-earth talent

By MICHAEL HUEBNER
News staff writer

FAYETTE

Jimmy Lee Sudduth is having a bad day. It's 1:30, and he has only finished one painting. Considering that Fayette's most famous resident has recently recovered from pneumonia, suffers from high blood pressure and a heart condition, and is 91 years old, it's certainly understandable. Still, Sudduth is apologetic.

"Usually by this time I'll have four or five pictures," he says in the shed-turned-art studio next to his home on the outskirts of this western Alabama town. A large bucket of mud sits in front of him, from which he has just applied finishing touches to the painting of a log cabin. Scores of paintings, mostly paint and mud on plywood, all shapes and sizes, lean against the walls of the tiny structure. Roosters, houses, Indians, the U.S. Capitol, horses, cows, his dog Toto, places he's been, people he's known.

He begins to sift through them. "That's the Washington Monument. I've been to Washington and Detroit and Canada. I've been in Windsor — went under the river," referring to the tunnel under the Detroit River that connects the Canadian city with Michigan. "That's the 16th Street Baptist Church."

He's looking at a portrait of the church where a bomb blew up in 1963, killing four young girls.

"Jimmy Lee said he was at that church the Saturday before the bombing," says Jack Black, director of the Fayette Art Museum and Sudduth's longtime friend. "He went to the bicentennial of the signing of the Declaration of Independence in Washington in 1976 and came back with a lot of

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Jimmy Lee Sudduth works with both paint (the log cabin pictured above) and mud (the Fayette County Courthouse pictured below).



DETAILS

- **What:** The 32nd Fayette Arts Festival.
- **When:** Saturday, 8:30 a.m. until 4 p.m.
- **Where:** Guthrie Smith Park, Fayette. To get to Fayette, take I-59 south to Tuscaloosa, then take Alabama 171 north about 50 miles.
- **Details:** Admission is \$2, which will benefit the Association of Retarded Citizens. Festival includes a hot air balloon exhibition, games, petting zoo, children's pottery tent and concessions. Call 1-205-932-8258.

Back-to-school fall fashions go back to '70s, '80s influences

By LAURA T. RYAN
Newhouse News Service

Forget pencils, books and rulers.

The absolute must-haves for this year's back-to-school parade won't come from an office supply store. You'll find them instead in boutiques, malls, catalogs and Web sites — wherever teens go to buy what's up-to-the-nanosecond fresh. And this year, that means a homage to decades gone by, with a 2001 twist.

Yes, the retro wave, a couple of seasons strong now, continues.

"There's a lot of emphasis on retro fashion with a decided emphasis on the '70s and '80s," says Karen Koza, spokeswoman for the New York-based Fashion Association.

Look for detail and texture on most fabrics — everything from rhinestones on T-shirts to heavy cables on sweaters.

We might even see — gasp — the return of big hair and shoulder pads.

Cast your memory back to the young women of the 1970s and '80s. In your mind's eyes, you probably also see:

► Plenty of denim, some that flares into bell-bottoms and boot cuts, some that hugs the hips.

"I would definitely say denim is important," Koza says. "We've been seeing it in the last few seasons."

We'll be seeing denim in all the old familiar places, and then some: knapsacks, shoes, caps. Also, look for lots

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Among popular back-to-school fashions are warm-up suits, left, and screened T's and cargo pants. The girl is wearing Jenny sweat pants (\$24) and a Jenny zip-up sweat shirt (\$32). The boy is wearing an AND1 long-sleeve T-shirt (\$17) and Plugg carpenter pants (\$42).

SUDDUTH: Will show work at Fayette festival

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images in his head." Sudduth will be among the artists showing their work at Saturday's Fayette Arts Festival, which will take place in Guthrie Smith Park.

Picture this

Black contends that Sudduth has a photographic mind. He describes a painting of a lumberyard that had burned down. "Jimmy worked in that lumberyard in the 1930s and '40s," Black says. "He painted it from memory in the '60s or '70s. It's a night scene, and the light is burning lumber, but it's bottom-lighted with all the smoke puffs. That's his memory. He gets these mental images."

Those images have catapulted Sudduth into the limelight of the folk art world. His works have sold for as much as \$1,200 and have been exhibited at the Festival of American Folklife in Washington, the art museums of Birmingham and New Orleans and the Corcoran Gallery in Washington. In 1980, he was featured on NBC's *Today* show sitting and talking in front of his Fayette home. Collectors from as far away as Germany, Sweden and Switzerland have purchased his works and several were exhibited in the national touring show, *Passionate Visions*, in 1995.

Sudduth has always painted obsessively.

"I got started when I was a little boy, I'd say about 5 or 6 years old. I learned my own self how to paint," he says. Beginning with stick drawings in earth, he graduated to the "cans" — corrugated metal, particle board, scrap lumber, other found materials. His "paint" consisted of mud with various pigments from coffee grounds, charcoal, turnip greens, canna leaves, pine needles, whatever came his way. Over time, the materials changed.

"For years, he didn't buy any paint. If anybody was painting their house, they'd give him the leftovers, and he'd mix that with mud," Black says. Although Sudduth still uses mud, it's getting more and more difficult for him to collect it, so most of his materials these days consist of acrylics.

See what sticks

As a painting medium, mud has a peculiar problem — sticking to a surface. Sudduth solved it one day when he was working at a sorghum factory.

"He said that some of (the



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"He was right there in my back yard for many years. I let him paint and paint and paint before I woke up to the fact that he could put on a good show for us. So it occurred to me, just for novelty's sake, maybe I ought to give him a show at the art museum."

Jack Black,
director,
Fayette Art Museum,
pictured at left



NEWS STAFF/BERNARD TRONCALE

Jimmy Lee Sudduth paints on plywood (such as the car pictured at left), and sometimes takes a break to play with his dog, Toto, right.



sorghum) spilled on the ground, so he began fooling around with the mud, and that's where he got the idea that there needs to be something in there to make it stick," Black says.

Adopting sugar (and later Coca-Cola) as an adherent, Sudduth began using up all the sugar he had in the house.

"His wife, Ethel, was trying to figure out how we could be using so much sugar. He didn't tell her for a long time," Black says.

In the mid-1950s, Sudduth, who had worked in the nearby sawmill and sorghum factory, moved with Ethel to the neigh-

borhood where Black had just built a house. He became a farmer and later Black's yardman.

Black had admired Sudduth's work as far back as the '50s, but this was long before the folk art movement took off.

"He was right there in my back yard for many years. I let him paint and paint and paint before I woke up to the fact that he could put on a good show for us," he says. "So it occurred to me, just for novelty's sake, maybe I ought to give him a show at the art museum."

That was in 1971. The guest

register showed 225 people for the opening, still a museum record.

"We haven't had a turnout like that since," Black says. "And half the people don't sign the register."

It was an important event, also, because it predated the folk art explosion of the 1980s. "The Corcoran Gallery in Washington had a show in 1982, the first in an established museum of contemporary folk art," Black says. "It took five years of looking back to know that it was a landmark."

Sudduth's fame doesn't seem

to have affected him as an artist. It does, however, raise the issue of whether commodification of folk art can denigrate it.

"The typical folk artist is someone like Jimmy Lee, who is living in a small town or out in the country, and they have no earthly idea what's going on in the art world," Black says. "They just like to paint and dabble around with things, so their isolation meant that they were totally original. When collectors started circulating and buying, that was the downfall of a lot of folk artists, who started thinking in terms of sales."

Sudduth's reaction to his

fame is simply jubilation and pride. As for why he thinks people like his work, he says, "I don't know. I'm not a mind reader. I can read minds, but not that way." He laughs.

"I can take warts off you. You got any warts? I can put one on you."

He can also play the blues harmonica, and Sudduth is more than happy to pick it up and play. He plays five songs, including "John Henry," "You Are My Sunshine" and "Pole Cat Blues."

"And this is on a bad day," Black says.

FASHIONS: Denim, once again, is big in schools

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of colors — shades of blue and primary colors, too.

"Denim seems to be really big again this year," echoes Suzanne Decker, a back-to-school specialist at Wal-Mart in Arkansas. "But it's even more popular if it has studs added to it."

Studs are part of a larger trend toward western wear — which might have started with Madonna's "Music" video, or simply the presence of Texans in the White House.

► Warm-up suits, with sweat shirts and pants, with racing stripes down the leg.

► Sweater jackets and coats. Sweaters of all types, including the fuzzy kind. Mohair and angora. And cowl necks.

► An infusion of preppy. Think plaid, lots of plaid. And knee socks. And collared shirts and turtlenecks under sweaters.

"When you think of that classic back-to-school ensemble, it's there," Koza says.

► Camouflage prints.

► Prints of all kinds. Flowers, etc.

► Screened T-shirts featuring logo-type designs.

► Ruffles, puckered fabric, lace and "fluttery" sleeves.

Other evidence of history repeating itself: wraparound skirts that tie, big belts with even bigger buckles, pinstripes and clothes with a glossed finish or metallic sheen.

Many of the same trends hold true for teen guys this fall, too:

► Denim, preferably in the carpenter and utility-pants varieties.

► Again, sweaters. Mostly tur-



Left: For fall, look for sweater jackets such as this lilac one from Blue Strike (\$59.99). **Right:** Teen guys will hit the hallways in long-sleeved T-shirts, such as this shirt from Ferruche (\$30), and jeans, such as his baggy-fit jeans from Nautica (\$54).



NEWHOUSE

tlenecks and crew-necks with bold chest stripes.

► Long-sleeved screened T's with logos on the chest and down the arm.

► Twill cargo pants, including the type that zips off at the knee to become shorts.

► Camouflage prints — in traditional green, as well as shades of blue.

And here's a fashion rule of thumb: If the big kids have it, the little kids want it in the worst way.

"Younger children, like, every-

thing else, they want to dress older," says Koza. "Parents want their kids to be comfortable, and they want their apparel to be playful."

So look for the grammar-school set to be wearing miniature versions of the styles strutting the high-school hallways:

► Screened T-shirts. While teens wear T's emblazoned with destinations, Western themes and logo-type designs, kids will have their own age-appropriate versions. Look for cute sayings, such as "Princess," for girls.

Boys will gravitate toward athletic images.

► Denim — hip-hugger styles for girls and traditional jeans (and carpenter-style) for boys.

► And a break from denim: Boys, like their older brothers, will be wearing twill (and cotton/nylon) cargo pants and zip-off pants.

► Sweaters. Stripes, ribbing, cabling and textures will be big.

► Track suits. Yep, the pint-sized pupils also will look for pants featuring side strips and jackets with hoods.

HINTS FROM HELOISE

Dear Heloise: For my wife's 50th birthday last year, I wanted to do something that would be unique and special. I decided to make up a list of the "50 things" that made her (Sharan) so dear to me. I included the things that she enjoys most in life: She loves Hollywood and movie stars, teaching school, family, friends, travel, Broadway musicals, etc.

I began to research how I could turn each one of the items into a gift. Since she was turning 50, I decided to have a casual lunch party at a '50s restaurant. I went to work on the creative end. I used the Internet and was able to find the addresses for the celebrities she admired most. (It took time to zero in on valid addresses.)

Then I composed a letter and basically told them all about Sharan and how much she means to me and all who know her. I wrote about her years as a teacher and how wonderful it would be to receive a picture or a note that I could frame and present to her at this milestone birthday.

I heard from Dennis Quaid (her favorite actor), Harrison Ford, Brian Boitano, Doris Day, Matt Lauer, Peter Graves, Michelle Kwan and others.

I framed all of the autographed pictures and put the personal notes in a binder with a copy of my original letter to the celebrities.

I then took (large) birthday cards to all of her favorite restaurants and had the cooks, waitresses, hostesses and managers sign them. Then I went to every doctor that she has been to that I could remember and had them all sign a birthday card to her. (That was really

funny.) I also got her movie scripts of her favorite films.

Everyone at the party brought a gift that was based on the '50s list that I developed from her "favorite things" category (gift certificates to restaurants and movies), and her generous brother gave her a trip to Europe!

Sharan had a great time and loved opening up all the pictures, letters and memorabilia.

The process took me about four months of planning and follow-through. It was well worth it, and it's amazing what you can achieve with postage stamps and an idea! — Neil Mandell, Metuchen, N.J.

Dear Readers: Neil is a friend, and when he told me this story, I asked him if I could share it with all of you. If this idea sparks your creative side for a very special gift or simply makes you smile, then it was well worth printing. Happy belated birthday, Sharan — you have one special husband, too! — Hugs, Heloise

Dear Heloise: I have always wondered why the buttons on men's shirts are so tiny.

My husband is a very muscular guy. His neck size is 19½, and he has large hands to go with his build. His shirts, even work shirts, have small buttons. Ladies' blouses have larger buttons, so why couldn't the men's shirts have large buttons, especially for large-size shirts? — Gisela Donia, Canada

Send a money- or time-saving hint to Heloise by mailing it to P.O. Box 795000, San Antonio Texas 78279-5000, e-mailing it to Heloise@Heloise.com or faxing it to 210-435-6473. Personal replies are not possible.