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Reader

Best Buys

—EVE KELLY

I have a humungous noggin. My father passed on his huge head size, and I in turn have passed it on to my kids. I like to think it means we all have correspondingly large brains. But for hat wearing, it is disastrous. Rarely have I found anything beyond a baseball cap to fit my head. This has become a pressing issue with my sister's wedding on the horizon. I am considering donning a hat for the occasion and am curious about my options.

I turned to Diana Cavagnaro, owner of Designer Millinery, located in the Gaslamp, who has been in the hat-making business for 25 years. When I told her my big-head woes, she smiled. "I got into hat-making because I have a big head. Hats in the stores are usually one size, size 22 or 22-1/2. People who have smaller heads or larger heads really have a problem. I worked at the Old Globe Theater doing costumes, and I asked them if I could go into the millinery department. At that time they had a milliner and an assistant milliner. So I became assistant milliner and learned how to do every kind of hat there was. And then I started my own kind of business. I thought, 'Well, people are always getting married, so I can always do brides' hats, and bridesmaids', and mothers' of the brides.' So that is what I did. Hats add so much personality; I go everywhere with my hat on."



"San Diego is kind of a T-shirt, shorts, baseball caps city, so hats are not big."

ered cord," explains Cavagnaro (\$190-\$220). "You can just squish them and throw them in your suitcase, and they come out just fine. I have a scarf on it today, but the next time I wear it, if I want to under dress it, then I can put nothing on it. Or to pizzazz it up, I can put feathers all over it. This hat takes about six to eight hours to make."

The raffia hat takes quite a bit longer (\$400). "I take the raffia and die it. Then I braid it, which is called plaiting. It takes about two days to do enough for a hat. Then I sew it together with a needle by hand. With raffia it takes about three days to make one of these hats. But they just last forever."

She continued, "I try to do things that would be different from hats that you would find in the regular stores, like this hat made from a potato sack (\$150). I also make hats from vintage ties (\$145). I coordinate them with the colors, all in navy blue or all red."

Cavagnaro carries a line of hats for cancer patients. "My father had cancer, his name is Robert, so I call them BobCaps (\$19). It is a cap made from fleece and it's been so popular with the kids that we have been selling them for snow boarding and skiing." She also sells a floppy beret-style hat in red, white, or black with a changeable scarf (\$19 plus the price of the scarf). "This hat has terry cloth inside so you can hand wash it, and they are cotton so it breathes well. All of these hats are so cute and stylish that