

# Horizon Fly

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## DEVELOPING DESTINATIONS

Big-league designs  
in Northwest resorts



# Custom Northwest

*Suits tailor-made for sartorial splendor*

**A** GUY KNOWS he's arrived when his boss hands him a business card and says, 'This is my tailor. Go see him.' There's a bit of appeal in that," says Gian De Caro, a custom tailor who can spot ready-to-wear suits even on television. "I look for the machine-made buttonholes on the lapel. That's a dead giveaway."

Since Seattle made the mountaineering look famous, it seems an unlikely place for such a man to set up shop. Who buys De Caro's basic Italian suit: wide soft shoulders, a bit of drapery at the chest, generous lapels, fullish trousers? Who snaps up his accessories: sport coats, bathrobes, dress shirts, top coats—everything but shoes? Self-made men for the most part, well-heeled men between the ages of 40 and 60. NBA players, writers, actors, artists, agents, fishermen, farmers.

"Seattleites have a lot more taste than most people give them credit for," says De Caro, who has one customer who spends \$30,000 a year on clothes. "And they tend to be well-built. I think that's because they're so outdoorsy."

From his downtown shop, Gian De Caro Sartoria, he has a street-level view of the local gentry and he thinks the picture is improving. "I'd prefer not to see that sea of navy blue blazers and gray slacks on middle-executives and sales associates. It's a great look, but badly overdone. But things are changing. Men here aren't afraid of color anymore. We're selling a lot of olive suits, a lot of stripes, a lot of double-breasted."

De Caro learned his trade literally at his father's knee in Eastern Washing-



JONATHAN BECKER

**Gian De Caro's Seattle custom tailor shop was recently listed as one of the most elegant on the West Coast by *Town & Country* magazine. Here, he's with his father and mentor, Silvio.**

ton. One important lesson was not to patronize or stereotype the customers who came into the family shop. "My father used to say, 'You take the guy in the suit. I'll take the guy in the overalls. He's gonna spend more money.' Farmers are incredible buyers of custom clothing. They have the best taste in the world. But where do they wear the stuff? That's what I want to know."

In Seattle, on the other hand, there are at least 10 occasions a year that demand a tuxedo: symphony openings, ballet fund-raisers and the like. De Caro believes a custom tuxedo should hang in any businessman's closet. In addition, he recommends the basic wardrobe include a navy blazer, gray slacks, khaki slacks, dress shirts, charcoal gray suit (plaid, solid or striped) and matching ties. Even at Sartoria, where suits start at \$800, the basic wardrobe can be assembled for about \$2,000 to \$5,000, depending on the fabrics.

For newcomers to custom tailoring, DeCaro is happy to offer advice. "We build wardrobes, not just suits," he says.

"A lot of men are not comfortable with stripes. They think it's hard to match stripes and patterns. It's easy." Others are afraid double-breasted suits are too extreme. "I tell them 'Look at Prince Charles. He always wears double-breasted. Old fogies in England wear double-breasted. We've got it reversed in this country.'"

De Caro thinks continental clothing will become increasingly popular in Seattle, even in businesses where the rumpled look is practically a badge of honor. "There were a lot of occupations in Seattle where you'd go to work in blue jeans and T-shirts. Computers especially. But now those guys are starting to come in."

Microsoft's Bill Gates, the local billionaire known for his sweatshirts and faded jeans, may still be a holdout, but De Caro's not discouraged. "If he came in here I'd start him out in a midnight blue suit. It's the ultimate power suit. Then, a crisp white dress shirt, an elegant tie and highly polished back shoes. He'd be ready for anything." ●

**By Candace Dempsey**