

Steven Bankler, CPA

Client Spotlight

Billy's WESTERN WEAR

Behind Billy's Western Wear is a woman named Sarah. At 17, Sarah married Billy Bishop and lunged headlong into a retail career that would take her and future generations to places dreams are made of.

Starting out in 1957 as a file clerk with Fed-Mart, Sarah became the first woman to manage its stores. After she spent 15 years learning the retail business inside and out with Fed-Mart, Sarah struck out on her own and opened her first western wear store in 1980.

A 600-square-foot shop in McCreless Mall in San Antonio, it featured fancy western hats adorned with colorful feathers and pins. "We made \$6,000 our first day!" Sarah recalls. Christened after her husband, the name of her new business materialized after a friend's prompting and mulling over ideas like Billy Joe's, Billy Bob's and Billy the Kid's. Thus, Billy's Western Wear was born.

By 1992, Billy's Western Wear was operating in six major San Antonio malls offering an array of western wear and averaging 2,500 square feet per store. Billy and Sarah's daughter and son-in-law, Debbie and Greg White, had joined their management team. To bring order and pricing consistency to the operational chaos, Sarah had purchased land in San Antonio and built a 5,000 square-foot distribution center and headquarters on it.

Four short years later, Sarah's vision craved expression once again. She left the San Antonio malls for strip center locations in the Texas Hill Country "where western wear is a lifestyle," she observed.

Billy's Western Wear opened in Boerne in 1997 with a 3,600-square-foot store, followed soon afterward with an even larger 4,365-square-foot store in Kerrville. Business at both locations began with a bang and by 2001 had far exceeded expectations.

It was then Sarah turned her thoughts to the next generation of the business. She decided to stop renting space and start developing her own.

In 2002 she purchased 0.9 acres on S. Main Street in Boerne where the first 9,000-square-foot Billy's Western Wear debuted in 2005. She also moved the distribution center from San Antonio to Boerne. Sarah designed the store herself from front entrance to

ambiance to product line to customer care. The store offers an ever-widening and varied assortment of western boots, clothing and accessories, including high fashion, for every member of the family and every budget.

In Fall 2008, the Bishops will open their second 9,000-square-foot store—in Kerrville. While the Boerne location caters to local families, the new one in Kerrville designed with a bit more chic will satisfy flocks of tourists who frequent the town year round. Still, the same impressive product lines and warm welcome prevails in both places. "Proper attitude is everything," says Sarah, who personally trains employees and regularly invites vendors into her stores to stay abreast of shifting trends.

Sarah met Steven Bankler in 1998 when a lawyer recommended he determine the value of a lease for buyout. "In the process, he looked at my financials and found my former preparer had incorrectly done my

taxes to the tune of \$35,000," recalls Sarah. "He recovered all of it for us. Steven is brilliant. He has since prepared our taxes and leveraged our assets, including setting up various entities to our best tax advantage."

Billy's Western Wear in Boerne is located at 1490 S. Main Street and is open Monday-Friday 10 a.m.-9 p.m., Saturday 9 a.m. to 9 p.m., and Sunday noon-6 p.m. [(830) 249-3843]. The new Kerrville store located at 1731 Sidney Baker [(830) 257-0505] will open Oct. 29, and its grand opening is planned for Dec. 6.



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