

## PETER NYGARD: DESIGNER FOR EVERYWOMAN

Originally published in *The Blade* on Sunday, April 22, 2007

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Wearing cowboy boots, jeans, and his trademark mane of hair, women's fashion designer Peter Nygard blew into town Wednesday to meet with customers at two stores that carry his lines of clothing.

Flanked by models, Nygard, who is chairman of Canada's Nygard International, visited the Dillard's stores at Westfield Franklin Park and Southwyck Shopping Center.

His fashion lines target women over 25 and include ALIA, TanJay, Allison Daley, Investments, and Westbound. He also has the upscale fashion brands Peter Nygard, Bianca Nygard, and Nygard Collection.

The Finland-born designer, who grew up in Canada but still speaks with an accent, sat down with *The Blade* for a few words during his visit in South Toledo.



Fashion designer Peter Nygard meets Darlene Paszko of Perrysburg at Dillard's. (THE BLADE/JEREMY WADSWORTH)

**Q: I understand you're visiting every Dillard's store in the U.S.?**

A: I'm on national tour to visit every Dillard's store in the world. That should take me about five years but we're gonna hit one city per month.

**Q: Why are you doing that?**

A: You know it's really a little bit like a politician. We go shake hands and kiss babies and work the grassroots and get the people out to vote, and in our case, we get the people out to buy. It's part of also the relationship that we want to build with the consumer, learn more about what they want, meet the sales associates, and just promote our business.

**Q: What kinds of things do you hear from customers when you meet with them here?**

A: The biggest thing that I hear is the word thank you. "Thank you for making this beautiful product." "Thank you for considering me being a size 14." "Thank you for considering me being a petit." "I'm so appreciative that you are thinking about us special customers and not only the high-fashion models that may be size 4, you know, or 6 foot tall."

**Q: Who is your typical customer? How would you describe them?**

A: We're really [an] everyday people supplier. Everyday people are size 14. Everyday people are 5 foot 4 or 5 foot 6. They do not have perfect figures. They want to be fashionable like the fashion models. They want to look slimmer, younger, prettier, but normally people don't cater to them. We cater to them.

**Q: How does customer feedback work its way into your designs?**

A: Many ways. We have a whole field network of ... excellent people who are experts in fashion. There's one [in] every city who are our eyes and ears, who work close with the store managers at Dillard's, who are every day on the floor talking to customers, talking to sales associates. They are required to feed back that information continually into our nerve center in New York. We have a fashion intelligence system, a nerve center, that's the most sophisticated system in the world that gathers and harnesses all the information — a lot of the best selling stuff, worst selling stuff, needs of customers, what the competition does, what's going on in Europe, what's going on in the Orient.

**Q: Some people may not appreciate the role of technology in fashion. Can you explain a little bit about why that's important to you and how you focus so much on that?**

A: We invented the word "Nygard: Where fashion meets technology" 20 years ago, almost before we knew what

the word technology was. For some strange reason, I didn't say "Nygard: It really makes beautiful products" or "Nygard: It really fits." I said "Nygard: Where fashion meets technology" and it is becoming the key competitive advantage for us. ... Now we have a new way of retailing and the technology part of it is like an assembly plant, bringing goods fast to the marketplace. ... It establishes a very, very speedy way of bringing the latest fashions product to the right place at the right time at the right price.

**Q: You had a chance to walk around the store here today and were looking at things. What were you looking for and what do you do with that?**

A: Oh, I look at everything. ... There's a saying in retailing. It says three things that are important: location, location, location. I'm first of all looking at where our location is and whether I'm happy with it. I'm looking about presentation, the way the product is presented. I'm looking specific products that may be catching the eye. I'm analyzing how our inventory was ending up on the floor. I was short a size 14 navy pants there. Upset me. I should not be. ... Besides meeting the customers, I have got my eyes open.

**Q: What are the upcoming fashion trends for your target customer, would you say?**

A: I'm in love with the tunic. I love bigger top and a smaller bottom so to speak. I like a narrower pant. ... It's all about the tunic. It's all about long leg looks.

**Q: Why don't you tell us a little bit about your own style here today as far as the outfit that you've chosen to wear?**

A: I think I invented casual Fridays 'cus I've been wearing this look now, I would hate to tell you, about 35 years, and not much changed from my point of view. I think everybody else is starting to wear the jean and the cowboy boots and the leather jackets. ... So I change the shirt and the sweater a little bit, you know, but, men's clothing at the end of the day is sort of boring compared to women's. ... You just think about men's fashion 2-3-400 years ago when they were dressing more like women, and it was glamorous and they had all the ruffles and everything else. Man, I don't know how we ended up having to have these penguin suits on.

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Models wear the latest line of Peter Nygard fashion designs.

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