



BEHIND THE SCENES OF SERVICE

## Rug expert restores textile masterpieces

by Amy Vaerewyck, freelance writer

**K**ate Van Sciver pulls into the circular driveway in front of her large, blonde-brick house and gets out of the car, calling “Good morning.”

“Just got back from some garage sales,” she says, slightly out of breath.

She hastily unlocks the door, and it opens into an enchanting entryway of immaculate ivory carpet, mirror-paneled pillars and lavish flower arrangements. However, up a twisting staircase to the right is a place even more enchanting: Van Sciver’s studio.

Here is where the oriental rug expert and owner of Textilian Oriental Rug Restoration Company performs her magic. In these two, softly lit rooms, she transforms 100- to 200-year-old rugs and tapestries into exquisitely restored textile masterpieces.

She sits down on an inviting, black velour couch and begins explaining the steps she takes to restore all sizes and shapes of rugs almost exclusively by hand.

The walls lined with a rainbow spectrum of bunched thread colors, corners filled with leaning rolled rugs, and textile-bedecked drafting table serve as evidence of her daily toil.

But this isn’t the first place the accomplished artisan has turned discarded items into loveable treasures. Since she was about 7 years old, Van Sciver says she’s loved to fix and create, spending hours in her cellar sewing and tinkering.

“I wasn’t into sports, and I didn’t even like to read,” Van Sciver says of

her childhood self, who, at the age of 8, mimicked her mother’s actions on a sewing machine, cranking out dainty clothes for her Barbie dolls.

Once in college, Van Sciver thought she’d become a painter but realized she had more of an analytical mind than an artistic one.

“I didn’t have that spark that makes you start with nothing and turn it into something,” she says. A course in materials and techniques finally made up her mind for good.

“I learned you can fix art. It’s like this bolt of lightning that hits you in the head; this is so much better,” she says. “It’s so satisfying to go in [to a rug] and see how it was made.”

And that is exactly what Van Sciver does to restore the Turkish, Iranian and oriental rugs that fill the floor space, walls and corners of her studio.

She gets down on her hands and knees, pointing to a spot on a Caucasian rug, where she’s recently finished repairing a hole.

“I try to imitate the size, material and tightness of the warp and weft (grooved inner structure), and the pattern, color and thickness of the pile (colored wool layer),” Van Sciver says.

Like most artists, Van Sciver sometimes works for weeks on a single project — but when she’s finished, like all artists, she must give up her masterpiece.

“You have to give it up,” she says of finished projects. “If you can’t do that, you have to go into another line