



PATRICK SULLIVAN / TIMES-NEWS

Interior designer Susan Drake Nilsson stands with some of her fabric samples in her Asheville office. Nilsson's work has been featured in national magazines.

Interior designer's work draws honors, publicity

BY PENNY LEIGH

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ASHEVILLE — Taking a hiatus from classes before graduating was one of the best career moves Susan Drake Nilsson made.

The 1969 Hendersonville High School graduate was majoring in home economics at Western Carolina University when she decided to take a break from school after her third year.

After exploring different jobs for a few years, she decided to return to WCU at night and complete her degree. But she discovered interior design was the only major in the home economics department in which you could take evening classes.

She completed a bachelor's degree in interior design in 1980 and says it must have been meant to be.

Eight years later she won a major award for her design work on Richmond Hill Inn in Asheville, and today her work continues to attract attention.

Two of her projects were featured recently in national and state

publications.

Nilsson's interior design business is based in Asheville, but she grew up in Hendersonville and is the daughter of Eula Drake of Hendersonville and the late Walter Drake.

Her work on a new Biltmore Forest home was featured in the Christmas edition of *Colonial Homes*, a national publication printed in New York.

The home, which was built over the past three years, is a 9,500-square-foot traditional home with Georgian architecture.

"When you have a major project, you would like to see it published so I submitted photographs of the project and hoped the magazine would pick it up. *Colonial Homes* called and said they wanted to do it in their Christmas issue. Once they made the commitment, we had to decorate and prepare the holiday decorations, in addition to furnishing the home."

The staff and photographers from *Colonial Homes* actually arrived in December 1996 to do the story on **DESIGNER** continues on page 9A