



I'm often asked how JMS got started. It's an unusual story that involves making the best of a hurt shoulder, burnt hand and saddle sore bottom!

I've worked since I was seven years old and learned as a little girl that I liked making people happy with good customer service, whether



delivering newspapers or mowing lawns. In my first year of college I sewed, and sold, fake fur Panda Bears to pay for my books.

After college I wanted a career more active than being a Secretary or Teacher, two that I had



already tried. So I became an Arizona Corrections Officer & Reserve Deputy Sheriff with Pima County. It felt good to keep people safe. Sadly, my chosen career was ended by a shoulder injury that sidelined me for nearly a year. While recuperating, I burned my hand on our car's shift knob in the hot Arizona sun. "Geez, I thought, people cover their steering wheels with sheepskin - why not these hard plastic shift knobs?"



One sleepless night, kept awake with shoulder pain, I got up and sewed a gear knob cover that would protect my hand from being burned again. An ad in a weekly paper yielded ONE order for my new "SHIFT MITT". That was disappointing. But I had prayed that if I got just "ONE ORDER" I would go ahead with starting my business. By this time I had one daughter and was expecting a second child. I needed a 'safer' line of work that would allow me to be home with my babies and be flexible around the shifts of my husband's law enforcement job. I quit my career - making the change from dealing with hardened criminals to surrounding myself with soft sheepskin!



In June of 1986 I named my company using my initials: **JMS Products.**



My first sales call to an auto seat cover store was successful. The owner liked my **Sheepskin Shift Mitt Cover** and asked for matching **Sheepskin Seat Belt Strap Pads**. At my next sales call to another store the owner was not nice. But, while mocking my products he gave me an idea for a new use of my sheepskin seatbelt strap pad - *on LUGGAGE STRAPS!* So, I went directly to a luggage store where a very kind manager introduced my "**Sheepskin Luggage Strap Pads**" to his buying group.



My first Christmas in business was hectic. A sheepskin supplier failed to deliver so I had to buy and cut-up brand-new car seat covers to fill orders. I didn't know what FOB or COD meant and hadn't a clue about product packaging or displays in stores. But through the kindness of the shops I called on and advice from other people in business ~ I learned.



By 1987 I was the mother of two little girls. One day, while riding our horses with my husband I complained that the saddle hurt my behind. He quipped, "*Cover it with some of your sheepskin.*" I did and it worked! Later, while competing in a rodeo, Riders saw my sheepskin covered seat and suggested I sell them to tack stores. The same thing happened as with the car accessories. Buyers wanted my **Sheepskin Saddle Seat Cushions** and they asked for more items like **Halter Pads, Girth Covers and Stirrup Strap Covers** to be made from REAL SHEEPSKIN instead of the fake fleece they were getting. I was going to need a steady supply of sheepskin hides!



That summer, a man came through Tucson offering a car load of sheepskin pelts from a close-out market. Immediately I recognized something special about these sheepskins. Putting my Deputy Detective training to work (this was pre-internet) I found the tannery in Australia that made these impressive sheepskins and became a lifelong buyer of ***THE BEST QUALITY WOOLSKINS*** in the world:  
***AUSTRALIAN MERINO!***

Now, when customers asked what "**JMS**" meant, I replied: "***Just Merino Sheepskin!***"



JMS Products started out in my house. The first cutting board was the top of our chest freezer. Before there were computers, every catalog was hand-typed and photo's were cut and pasted with real glue. I listened to one wise customer's suggestion that "***No matter how big you get never forget your Quality.***" Resisting the temptation to have my products sewn in foreign countries or punched out with cookie-cutter dies, each sheepskin product to this day is still **proudly hand-traced and hand-cut, and sewn by American labor in the U.S.**



In 1990, our family moved from the big city of Tucson to a rural area in Southeastern Arizona, where there are more cows than people. We bought ranch land and over 2 ½ years working on weekends we built our new home. A Passive Solar, stucco-ed straw bale



house using recycled materials. We even re-used my sheepskin wool scraps as insulation and sound-proofing inside the interior walls! It worked so well we now sell our wool scraps for

other builders. After nine years my business went from being around the kitchen table to having its own rooms! I hired more employees and expanded to new markets manufacturing pet toys, medical comfort items, and travel accessories.



My business was like a third child maturing with my daughters. Little steps became bigger steps. In 1991 I started attending trade shows where I could meet my customers face-to-face. JMS continued to grow with retailers and consumers' needs dictating new products and more colors.



In 1994 a NEW BUSINESS was created from the imagination of my children: **HORSEPLAY Rugs!** (1-800-323-9665) It was an exciting time with a horsey-themed pretend



playground play mat actually **Created BY Kids ~ FOR Kids!**

Available in 2 rug styles: **English Countryside** and **Western Rodeo** all completely made in the USA they were a hit! Giving kids a cushioned mat for imaginary play each carpet is specially printed with colorful scenery, realistic buildings, roads, riding trails and arenas. PERFECT for kids to play on with their toy horses, cars & trucks.



***Plus, each rug can be hand personalized with children's names!***



**In 1998 my company won the Arizona Small Business HOME-BASED BUSINESS of the YEAR Award.**

By 2000, JMS had outgrown the home office. A 3000 sq. ft. building was moved on to the ranch. My commute to work went from 10 feet to 300 feet. After 14 years the business was finally out of the house!



My daughters took turns traveling with me to the trade shows. They earned sales rep commissions writing Customers' orders and got to travel and have fun. In 30+ years, my baby girls are now grown women traveling the world in their own careers!

Growing a business today requires technology that didn't exist when I started: Computers, the Internet, email, websites and social media networks. My daily challenge is to learn new skills and promote business sales to a World Wide audience. Please "Like" us on Facebook and check back often to see what's new on:

[www.jmsproductsusa.com](http://www.jmsproductsusa.com)



**\*WELCOME 2021 ~ JMS's 35th Anniversary\***

**My company grew from one product to over 200; from 2 colors to 10; from just me to several employees. Proud that all our products are still MADE IN THE USA!**

**Who would've thought that a hurt shoulder, a burned hand, and a sore butt would have been the incentive to start a business that has lasted so long?!!!!!!**

**Thank-you to all the kind people who believed in me and particularly, OUR CUSTOMERS, who have made these years such an interesting journey!**

**Best Wishes, Sincerely and Always,**

Judith M. Sperling,

Owner, **JMS Products**

**DbA: Just Merino Sheepskin**

**1-800-323-WOOL (9665)**

Email: [jmsproductsusa@gmail.com](mailto:jmsproductsusa@gmail.com)

Website: [www.jmsproductsusa.com](http://www.jmsproductsusa.com)

U.S. & Canada: 520-364-7764

International: 011-520-364-7764

5090 West Horseshoe Lane, McNeal, Arizona 85617 USA