The Columbian

Life

INSIDE
Horoscope/D7
Puzzles/D8
Comics/D8
Television/D8

Today's weather picture by: Ben McMullen, 8, Washougal Elementary School

Section D
WEATHER
Forecasts for the region and the nation
Back page

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ANGELA ALLEN
Chic Talk

Neat cuffs, collars will snag job, author says

Two men with similar qualifications go for a promotion. Who wins it?

"The guy with the ironed shirt. It's as simple as that," says Steve Bowstein, also known as the Clothing Doctor and author of "The Ultimate Guide to Shopping and Caring for Clothing: Everything You Need to Know From Blue Jeans to Ball Gowns" (Penguin Books, LLC, 2002, $20.95).

Aside from writing books and working as a fashion and image consultant, the Washington, D.C.-based Bowstein until recently ran a high-end dry cleaner in Chevy Chase, Md., near Washington, D.C.

He ironed shirts for politicians, CNN news announcers and performers. He charged $4 a shirt, more than twice as much as the typical $1.50 fee. He pressed the collars of the powerful and the rich, and after years, he noticed the shirts of the private sector were far better quality than those of our elected representatives.

He argues that "if you want to make an impression, you do it in terms of the way you look. When you wear a shirt that's not ironed, it shows."

To get the scoop on shirts, have a heart-to-heart with your dry cleaner, Bowstein advises. They know how to make collars and cuffs look good, key to a well-pressed shirt.

The thinner or more delicate a shirt's fabric (and often that's $200 Britania and Pinks made of high-thread-count cottons), the bigger a challenge to iron.

"You can spend $200 on a shirt and it won't look as good as a $30 Oxford cloth shirt. An expensive shirt is like a linen blouse that has freedom in it, while a blue Oxford just goes on looking beautiful .... If you're tough on your shirts, wear the Oxfords" (though don't starch them too much).

Then again, if you love beautifully appointed clothing, "go ahead and get the Pinks. It's a man in control to dressing well, and makes a point of socializing in a higher strata, people will notice your collars and cuffs."

If they're not lying down properly, you're in trouble. A handsome wrinkle-free collar shows "what's a good dresser and who's not. A man's collars and cuffs are going to show sooner lately."

Collars can be fused or sewn. When fused, two or three layers are "glued" together with fusing, and this gives the collar a slight sheen, but it resists wrinkles of most non-science.

When you invest in a shirt, rub your thumb and forefinger on the top and the bottom of the collar. If the layers separate, "you're going to have a big problem with that collar."

A good collar, like a well-trained dog, unsupervised walks down, sat buckle, jump up and a date. Bowstein feels so strongly about this, he says, "Any man wearing a collar with a wrinkle is running the fashion heat."

When you're buying a shirt, order the collar one-half size larger than your neck to account for shrinkage, which happens to most shirts, even the custom-made types. If you wear a 15½, buy a 16. Once again, Bowstein says, "real men have been done on technicalities of depth on this."

Details, details! But in light of promotions, closing a deal or rocking at a date, collars and cuffs might be more than just name tapers.

ANGELA ALLEN writes

Sweaters & sales

... need I say more?

Sweater lovers, all over town (or the Internet), leftover wraps await your embrace

Illustrations by MARGIE LAM/The Columbian

By ANGELA ALLEN
Columbian staff writer

When you're a clothes lover, you can never own too many crisp, white shirts, black shoes or sweaters.

Which means today could be your lucky day. Retrace the stock, browse and the museum bathrobe with the funny fur cuffs, and you'll have enough to grab yourself a sweater — at a darn good price. All over town, shelves of sweaters are on sale, searching for lovers.

What better way to spend the day after Christmas? To build on a pre-season collection? To add to the piles of wool and cotton and cashmere spilling from shelves, nudging each other from drawers like eager puppies begging for affection.

If you suspect your soup wardrobe is well enough rounded, do what I do. For each new turtle-neck or cardigan, give away an old one. Sweetheart, I've given you about 20 sweaters, and I hold on to the ones I love dearly, sometimes after a moth burrows an unsightly hole, or a button falls off.

This season, sweaters practically have turned into dresses. The rage are of styles, necklines, fabrics, cuts and details are complicating the once-simple outerwear of the plain pullover and shell button-up set.

Notice the simple style sweaters for guilt sales, or the slim sleevers with the big bell sleeves that balance the influx of flared pants. With all the bells and trims, they could pass for coats. Sweaters, after all, are quite the bargain when they pass for more than sweaters.

As for the necklines — funnel, mock, cowl, boat, open, halter, V-neck, crewneck — you could say each is a reflection of the wearer's personality, but that would be a lie. Necklines are a reflection of the season's fashion whim.

How could we not hesitate in sweaters' rich textures, warm allure right at the spot behind a cute chin? It's not out of the question to roll around in them, or nuzzle them for comfort. With Italian merino wool, cashmere, faux fur, sequins, appliqués, silky crochet, velvet patchwork, waves of trim, rolls of cables, who needs a blanket?

Details have up an inner veil as buttons in a New York notion shop. You'll have to hunt to find a sweater without at least one pelmish it, pompom, wool ruffle, lace up back, leather-lined pocket, appliqué or sassy little bustle.

And then there's going giddy over an Icelandic lopapeysa, a cozy white, knit think small Australian bushfire creature), truffle, duvet, or mess with friends who. The very thought should leave you drunk with desire for our more sweater. Adding to the great season joy, you'll be hard-pressed to find one with an American flag emblazoned on the yoke, yelling out like a megaphone.

At this very moment, I happen to be excited about the grey/black/pink alpaca Calvin Klein "wrap-around" with the sleeves as tapered as Cruella DeVille's manicured nails. The last time I looked, it dropped from $360 to $240 at the Saks Fifth Avenue Web site. Maybe I'll wait for another couple hundred to melt from the price tag, though by that time, I will have found another I love almost as much — perhaps this apricot cotery cashmere with the tear-inch ribbed cuffs. This sweater possesses a fickle one, and button bounds surely hold out for long.

Even the thought of burrowing into the fuzzy folds of the Eileen Fisher funnel-neck is pulling me close like a lover on a cold night. Oh! Or the cozy cowl-neck

Turn to SWEATERS, D2