

# Women's fashions — a man's-eye view

BY CINDY BURLESON  
Battalion Women's Editor

It isn't every day that haute couture comes to a school whose fashion consciousness extends chiefly to the "goat-herder" and military-beige schools of design . . . neither one of which is noticeably heralded in Paris.

So I hoped to present the Neiman-Marcus style show, sponsored by the Host and Fashion Committee of the Memorial Student Council, as the truly remarkable event of the century it really is. But my husband was the only person available to cover the event . . .

As a former model at N-M and coordinator in the men's designer boutique there, I thought he had perfect credentials for reporting the show. (He even knows Ann Randall, which is no small feat since there are at least three ladies who answer to that name.)

But, without further apologies, here is Doug's somewhat candid view, in his own quaint phraseology, of the Fasion '70 show.

The "funky midi", he characterized is "something like a mini dress over a midi one", with a 1930-ish print overall. The country girl look of brown and white gingham with white skirt he liked. The bottom few buttons were left undone and "you got to see the legs."

The after-5 midi for jet-setters was "just like last year's

dresses", he said, except that "where they used to be chopped off, there was a ruffle."

All I could get him to say about shoes was that they all resembled "black-suede open-toed wedgies except some weren't black suede."

The mini outfits, which are back bigger than ever, were shown with puff sleeves and featured the same overall "tiny patterns" as the midis.

The funky necklaces, he said were made of wooden beads and some of "those colored jobs you string yourself."

The swimsuits, he said, were worn with the same black open-toed wedgies, the little crocheted hats and sometimes with a scarf.

"The shorts outfits were sexier than the swimsuits", he said. They were hiphuggers worn with halter tops.

Next they showed the 'skinny mini' which he admits he didn't understand the full significance of . . . "kind of flapperish" and "the old classic" knit pantsuit.

The 'Summer '70' portion was introduced with the words, 'You've never had it so good.' Never mind what he said about that.

"Actually, I was pretty surprised at the sensibility of the things we were shown," Doug admitted. "Everything looked simple and comfortable."

"The models were good, and the show was well worked out," he added.



FASHION '70—Mam'selles sporting shorts, sandals and clogs bring the summer look from Neiman-Marcos to A&M, compliments of the Host and Fashion Committee of the Memorial Student Council.

## Furniture comes in mini and maxi

Furniture now comes in mini, midi and maxi styles, a size to fit middle-sized, large-sized or tiny living quarters.

Bonny Olsen, Extension housing and home furnishings specialist at A&M, says the mini-scaled furniture is suited especially to young single persons who live in mini-size apartments.

Another answer is to buy furniture with more than one use . . . let one piece do the work of two. Interchangeable furniture permits more flexibility, promotes the uncluttered look and saves the young person money.

A low chest with drawers and drop-lid compartment can be used in the living or bedroom. It is

interchangeable as a wall chest or bedside stand and can hold books, magazines, records or shirts and sweaters.

A little table with a gallery on three sides could hold the hall telephone, a living room lamp or items used at bedside.

A wall unit which is finished on all sides can stand free as a room divider and serve as a storage unit to hold books and art objects.

A very unusual piece which is an ottoman that can be made into a single bed. It has a rattan base in two sections which telescope together so the two cushions stack for use as an ottoman.

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# Don't blame women, blame the designers

BY ARLEEN ABRAHAMS  
AP Newsfeatures Writer

That maverick of the fashion world, designer Mr. (Richard) Blackwell, says this year, for the first time in a decade, he suffered "terrible pangs of conscience" composing his annual list of worst-dressed women.

"Not that I worried about being outspoken or hurting anyone's feelings—I adore having people hate me—but I felt why blame the women," explained the flamboyant, handsome former movie actor. "The blame should fall on those designers who have intimidated and brainwashed these women into wearing their clothes."

As he paused to comb his graying sideburns and adjust the shawl collar of his black mink coat, he reflected upon the public figures he had named to the list this year: Queen Elizabeth II, Barbra Streisand, Raquel Welch, Jacqueline Susann, Goldie Hawn, Carol Burnett, Doris Day, Shirley Temple, Mae West and Ann-Margret.

"Let's take, No. 1, Queen Elizabeth," continued the Los Angeles resident. "Let's not blame the Queen; let's blame her dressmaker, Hartnell, who I feel is terribly antiquated in his fashion concepts."

"Granted the Queen's position influences her fashion choices, I agree with keeping her dresses to the knees but that doesn't mean the cut and line can't be modern. And protocol doesn't demand she wear only the one string of pearls. Nor does tradition specify millinery 10 years behind the times or call for the big, oversized satchels, which she calls a purse," he elaborated.

Balenciaga is the designer he would choose to dress the Queen. "He'd make her look like a royal lady, a royal figure who represents an extremely fashion-conscious nation."

Although Blackwell claims there is no one hard and fast rule for getting on his worst-dressed list—"the problem is individual"—he cites a woman's "to-

tal disregard for her own image, age and position in life" as being most offensive.

Elizabeth Taylor and Zsa Zsa Gabor, both named to his hall of fame for making the list three consecutive years, share a common disregard for individual figure problems, he says.

"Miss Taylor never acknowledged her size problem. For too many years, she's squashed herself into clothes too small for her figure."

Zsa Zsa, he points out, "over-dresses from the waist down and exaggerates her figure problems, instead of framing her face, which is beautiful, or emphasizing her jewelry, which is magnificent." If it were up to him, he'd dress her in very simple, uncluttered styles, "maybe emphasizing a special neckline or a vivid color."

A woman who wishes to be well-dressed, he says, must learn to disregard the dictates of fashion snobbery and be real, herself.

"She should concern herself with who she is, what she is, her particular figure problems and her position as a woman in view of her husband's role. No man wants to come home to Yves Saint Laurent's decision of what a woman should look like," Blackwell comments with a smile.

He insists, "For 90 percent of American women, the total concept of high fashion is wrong. Small portions of haute couture should be applied, however, so the woman looks as of today."

Blackwell, who says he loves making fashion sense even more than he enjoys collecting his beloved antiques, claims most designers have lost sight of their role.

"We're here to be of service to women, to make them more beautiful by dressing them in the best way possible. We're not here to set ourselves up as kings or judges or to appraise their measurements." His own designs, which take into consideration women sizes 38-46 as well as 6-20, are executed with one basic idea: A woman is a woman for a good reason and for a man to admire.

"And if a woman doesn't have a man around to admire her, then she's not a complete woman," philosophizes the never-married designer.

With the introduction of the midi for spring, Blackwell believes the haute-couture designers finally may have done themselves in.

"We're sitting at the funeral, businesswise, for high fashion. Stores, stuck with an abundant stock of minis, started advertising three skirt lengths and many women, adverse to the thought of instantly outdated their wardrobe, took to the idea. This may spell the end of dictates from designers."

Not that he is dead-set against the midi.

"I like what I can do with this length, particularly for after-dinner costumes, theater costumes and after 5 outfits," he notes. However, he doesn't feel the midi is a contemporary enough look for daytime.

"Fine fashion should be a total evolution of concepts," he concludes. "It should evolve very gracefully over, say, a 10-year period. Perhaps once in a decade we could have a smashing change. But why should a wardrobe be outdated instantly?" he asks.

Blackwell, who can neither sketch nor sew, fell into the fashion field by accident. At 14, he was offered a role in an off-Broadway production of "Dead End" and jumped at the opportunity to escape his Brooklyn slum background. Moving from Broadway to Hollywood, he appeared in more than 100 motion pictures as a child and later as an adult actor.

After World War II, and no longer in demand as an actor, he turned his attentions to personal talent managing. While trying to book his one client—a singer—he realized a striking wardrobe might enhance her appeal. He bought some remnants and began draping the fabric into an eye-catching gown. When the singer made her debut, Blackwell's creations elicited as much applause as his client's talent. Shortly thereafter, he banded together with R. L. Spencer to put their total resources, \$8,000, into an assault on the fashion world.

## Wives' board

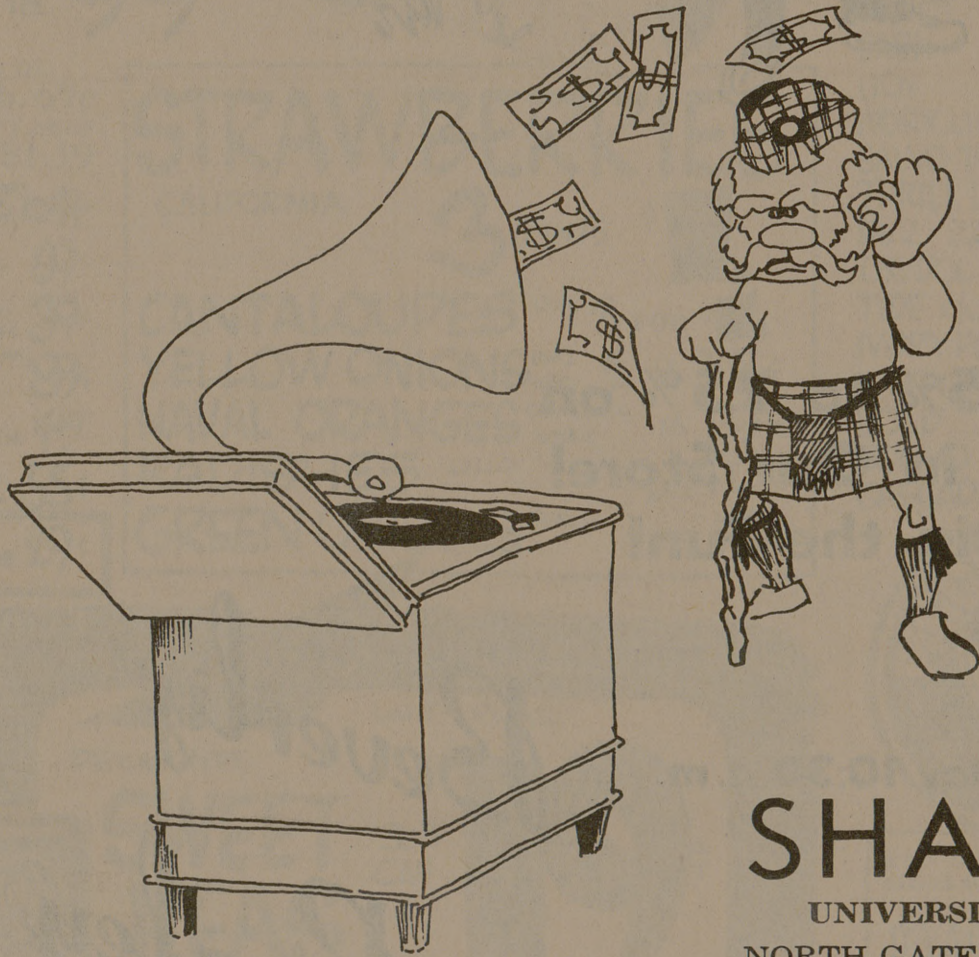
The slate for the 1970-71 academic year is as follows. Kathy Koch, from Geology Wives will serve as Vice Chairman. Bernie Webre, Electrical Engineering Wives, is Recorder. Linda Nixon, Civil Engineering Wives, will be Treasurer. Lenore Sherrer, Physical Education Wives, is Reporter and Anita White, Industrial Engineering Wives, is Parliamentarian. Mrs. Torno is a member of Architectural Design Wives club.

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