

The fashion plate

Polyester marks anniversary

By RUSTLE SHAND

Twenty-five years ago a guy jumped into a pool with his clothes on to officially usher in the wash-and-wear polyester era. We're not sure what happened to the fellow who flung himself feet-first into the drink. But his suit, or at least what it was made of, is celebrating its silver anniversary.

In 1953, the first fabric blends with a new fiber product from Du Pont called Dacron polyester were used in men's suits. Among these was the combination of 55 per cent Dacron and 45 per cent wool, a marriage of fibers that was destined to become the most popular tailored clothing fabric of our time.

The first such suit was made by Hart Schaffner & Marx. Since then, the prestigious Chicago-based clothing company has produced millions of garments in the now-fabled blend. Today, virtually every major men's wear manufacturer in the nation utilizes fabrics with Dacron.

ACTUALLY, THE suit that went into the pool back in the early '50s didn't make much of a splash. That particular suit was all Dacron and, says Gomer Ward, Du Pont men's wear marketing manager, "the concept was valid but before its time."

Apparently that time is now. The Disco generation has discovered the all Dacron Angels Flight pants. "It's what the young guys are wearing when they want to get out of jeans and into something more dressy", Ward says. "They're sexy looking, comfortable, easy-to-care for. And they're affordable, too."

Over the past year, leading fabric mills have been burning the midnight oil to develop a whole new generation of polyester clothing.

"If it's made by man, it can be changed by man" said Ward. "And that concept certainly applies to Dacron. For years, the shirt of 65 per cent and 35 per cent cotton was a mainstay in just about every man's wardrobe."

"That blend is still going strong, but we've come up with something new now, something that's really hit the consumer hot button as far as contemporary shirting fabrics are concerned."

THE SOMETHING NEW is all 80-20 Dacron polyester and cotton shirt.

"It has the rich look and feel of fine imported cotton shirtings" Ward said. "The difference is you



Dacron went the way of the wet look when it was introduced 25 years ago (left). At the right, it's shown in brand new separates including slacks and vest by Angel Flight and a silky fly-front shirt from Manhattan.

can machine wash and wear it without ever touching an iron. Try that with the fancy cottons."

Polyester doubleknits, a phrase avoided like the plague by many in the apparel industry got lazy for awhile and let itself fall behind on styling doesn't mean the concept isn't valid.

"Let's not get hung up on a word or phrase" Ward said. "The new doubleknits are totally different." The new "Dacron", Ward said, results in "goodbye shiny, plastic look; hello naturals." The

"naturals" include textured woven and warp knit fabrications as well as doubleknits.

Any management-level man who moves around a lot, in and out of planes and cars, and meeting to meeting, has appreciate the advantages of wearing a doubleknit suit," Ward concluded, "The new doubleknits are totally different."

So, for the past 25 years, Dacron polyester has literally been through the mill. Since its baptism in 1953, it's been available in more forms than Heinz has varieties. And the number is still climbing.

Volunteers

The Oakland County Volunteer Bureau, a program of the Volunteer Action Center of United Community Services, has weekly listings of agencies needing volunteer services. Further information about these and more than 200 agencies may be obtained by calling the bureau, 642-7272. Any non-profit agencies needing volunteer assistance may also call the bureau.

MAILING AND CLERICAL AIDE—Michigan Cancer Foundation in Berkeley needs two volunteers to work from June to December on its Christmas card program. Mailings are sent out in the summer months and orders are filled beginning in September. Hours are one six-hour day per week.

OFFICE ASSISTANT—Previous office experience and a love for the children are the requirements for this job with Waldorf Kinder House in Birmingham. Duties include answering the phone, and general office work. Hours can be flexible.

PHONE COUNSELOR—The Farmington Area Advisory Council is looking for volunteers interested in training as crisis intervention phone counselors for its RapiLine Program. Training is provided 7-10 p.m. Mondays and Thursdays. Volunteers will be prepared to listen to crisis calls, aid in exploring alternatives, teach problem solving skills, act as a referral resource person for crisis calls.

OUTREACH VOLUNTEERS—Adults with an interest in helping the elderly are needed by the Oak Park Senior Citizen Center. Duties include interviewing senior citizens in their homes or at the community center and filling out needs assessment forms. Hours are 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. two days a week.

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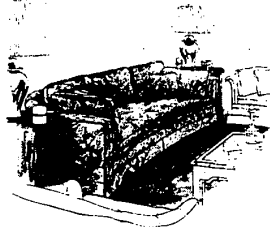
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