

Saving by sewing

High fashion parades with down-to-earth commentary

By LORRAINE McCLISH

Sewing students in Irene MacKinnon's Farmington Community Center classes turned models last week to stage their end-of-the-term fashion show.

High fashion paraded along with down-to-earth commentary by Mrs. MacKinnon who gives the twice-a-year shows "to turn non-sewers into seamstresses."

"The high cost of quality clothes today is all in the hand-work," she told the sold-out house. "This is why you're seeing suits today that would sell for \$200 my students are making for \$50."

All of Mrs. MacKinnon's students are savers of left-over materials. All are price-shoppers for fabrics, remnants and notions. Patterns are used over and over again. All are adept at mixing and matching and re-adjusting patterns.

One woman modeled a pair of slacks she made for a total of 73 cents.

Student Marion Hickey modeled a long dress she'll wear for the holidays that was made specifically so it could be cut down to street length after the first of the year.

Student Janice McCarthy got an ultra-suede look to an outfit (the fabric is up to \$45 a yard now) by cutting into the front panels of the vest from the

expensive material. She cut the back from the wool which matched her skirt.

STUDENTS hand-fringe their own scarves and make their own tote bags. One woman showed throw pillows made from scraps.

London Fog-styled raincoats were made for \$30.

One woman joked that she was wearing a \$75 pair of shoes to go with her paisley challis dress that had cost her \$4.

Scarves were made to double as belts. And scarves were tied in a dozen different ways.

Blouses were made to match the lining in a jacket or the lining in a wrap-around skirt.

Student Madeline Borman told about salvaging a wrap-around dress she made that split too high for her comfort when she sat down in it. She did this by covering the front panel of a half-slip with material to match the dress that she now wears with her party pink jersey.

Student Opal Turnbull salvaged a dress she made that had a V-neck cut too deep for her liking. She did this by fashioning a huge flower, made from matching silk material, which she placed at the bottom of the V.

"I always start my beginners with slacks," Mrs. MacKinnon said, "because there is nothing that looks as home-made, or as poor, as badly fitting pants."

At another time she told her audience, "If you think I'm out of my mind letting one of my beginning students start out on a velvet jacket, remember I have only eight in each beginning class."

WE PASS ALONG some of Mrs. MacKinnon's tips and hints, applicable for the woman who sews, as well as those who wish they did:

- Use long neck jewelry for a slimming look.

- Contrasting belts are only for the skinnies. Use belt to match dress otherwise.

- Make bound buttonholes by using graph paper and sewing over the paper. "It's impossible to make a mistake," Mrs. MacKinnon says.

- No matter what the pattern says, put the zipper in skirts and pants in the back. Side zippers add to the hips. Front fly zippers are for only those with no stomach.

- After you have made your basic seam in a terry cloth garment, double stitch and cut left over seam material as close to seam as possible to prevent unraveling.

- When working with plaid or stripes, cut all yokes and pockets on the bias. This will add detail to the garment, and you won't have any worries about matching up the pattern of the two pieces of fabric.

- Cover evening shoes with scraps of material left over from your newly finished dress. Cut pieces roughly to fit. Glue in place then tuck ends with knife between upper shoe and sole.

- Check out the Cric materials at Irvings in Chatham Mall if you are interested in making rainwear.

- Scotch Guard every garment whether it's coming back from the cleaners, out of the drier or off the ironing board. Mrs. MacKinnon suggests Scotch Guard for all items about the house that are easily soiled, such as wallpaper around the light switches, or throw pillows. Double doses are to be sprayed on self-covered bottoms.

- Recommended best wrap around skirt pattern on the market today is McCall's 6414.

- Sew drapery weights in the corners of wrap-around skirt hems. They will keep the skirt from flying on a windy day, and they will keep a taut line on your hem.

- If you aren't adept at measuring or fitting, don't bother making a jumpsuit. "This takes more fitting than any other garment and if you don't know what you are doing, it's not worth your time," Mrs. MacKinnon said.

- No big cowl necks for little people. "Makes you look top-heavy," said the instructor.

- Take wine and coffee stains out of a garment by soaking it in club soda water.

- For those who require half-sizes, recommended best basic pattern today is Vogue 7402.

- Recommended best shirt waist dress pattern is Simplicity 9164.



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Jackie Greit chose super-suede in teal blue for the simple yet versatile dress made from Butterick 5504. It is the first dress she has ever made and it cost \$15.50. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)



Jean Schurch fashioned a vest from the reusable fabric in a worn quilt, bound to match her blue jeans. Adept at needlecraft, Mrs. Schurch began sewing lessons to better transfer her needle art onto garments. The three-piece vest pattern is Butterick 6155. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)

- Beginners, stay away from gabardine. Mrs. MacKinnon believes that binding seams, because of the fabric's fraying quality, can discourage the novice.

DOOR AND raffle prizes for the show are all, for the most part, handmade by Mrs. MacKinnon or her students. The shows are always staged as a benefit for Farmington Community Center.

This time around Hinkels of Farmington added a gift certificate as a contribution to the seamstresses in the area.

New sewing classes, for all levels of expertise, begin in January in the center.

Dates and times are listed in the center's brochure, scheduled for a blanket mailing the last week in December.

Registration opens Thursday, Jan. 3.



IRENE MacKINNON



Ready for the holidays in velvet vests and slacks are Joan McCormick (at left) in rust and Linda Haaseth in rich royal blue. Mrs. McCormick's slacks are Simplicity 8831; her vest is Butterick 6513 and her man's shirt, Simplicity 8725. Ms. Haaseth wears a purchased blouse with slacks from Simplicity 9040 and vest from Simplicity 8702. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)



The grand finale and star of the show was the wedding gown worn by Roxanne Wiltzie on her wedding day. Mrs. Wiltzie's mother, Phyllis Foresman, did all the machine work on the gown, made from Vogue Pattern 1488. The bride hand-stitched the lace and pearls onto two layers of chiffon over peau de sole. Her hat was made by Detroit's Broadway Bridal and the dried flowers she carried two years ago still have an aroma, made by Status Shop in Plymouth. (Staff photo by Randy Borst)