

Corsets of years past: A pinch best forgotten

We've come a long way, ladies. For example, we've been spared corsets.

Women began encasing themselves in contraptions of solid iron held together with hinges as early as 1500. Such a necessity was known throughout Europe as a "Spanish body." Since Spain was in the midst of the Inquisition at that time, one can guess where the torturer got his idea for the Iron Maiden.

By the time of Elizabeth I, solid iron was out and cloth corsets, stiffened with iron bones, were in. Females were imprisoned from their fourth birthday until the day they died — except when they were pregnant. That may help explain the large families in style then.

A 17th century corset looked much like a stiff T-shirt, sleeves and all. It opened in the back and had like a shoe with long laces. How one got dressed without help is never mentioned.

By THE 1700s, corsetists substituted whalebone for iron stays. Whales were propping up a whole generation of females. And things got worse. Little girls were laced into wooden stays when they became four. When they reached school age, part of each day was spent strapped to a back board. This was supposed to give one an elegant carriage.

To add insult to injury, girls' feet were placed into "stocks." These were shoes nailed to a footstool in a fashionable position. It was thought seemly for a woman to sit and walk with her feet at right angles to each other. Young girls were given plenty of practice and must have promenade like ducks.

AS TIME progressed, the fashionable woman's



By
MARY
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waist size decreased until it became 13 inches around. Young girls were sewn into tight corsets by doting mamas, and only allowed out for one hour a week "to bathe." Their bodies became disfigured, child bearing became dangerous, and they grew to need the corsets to keep them propped upright.

And then came the early 1800s. The French Empire look was in. It was based on Greek and Roman statues which didn't wear corsets. Women were free for the first time in hundreds of years.

But not for long. By 1825 the 13-inch waist was as desirable as ever. These were the days of Scarlett O'Hara hugging the bed post while her Mammy tugged the corset strings. When those same strings broke, and they often did in company, the twang was loud and hideously embarrassing.

By World War I, Teddy Roosevelt's daughter, Alice Longworth, had a stroke of genius. Under her leadership, America's women donated their corsets to the war effort. Some 28,000 tons of steel were collected — enough for two battleships. It became positively un-American to appear corseted — and it still is.

Thank Heaven!

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Consumer mailbag

Concern invites all to food conference

This is more of a comment than a question. I have been reading your column ever since we moved to Bloomfield Hills from Dayton, Ohio, and I want to say thank you Concern, Inc. for making me aware of my responsibility as a consumer. The practical information offered by your organization has been just the kind of thing I needed to get my house in "environmental" order.

Please keep up the good work. P.S. I am looking forward to the conference on April 25.

Mrs. Alvin C. Bloomfield Hills.

Thank you, Mrs. AC, for your pleasant note. Concern Inc., Detroit gets lots of requests for information, dozens of questions on important issues, phone calls and occasionally a volunteer as a result of our Consumer Mailbag column.

But the reader who takes the time to write positively is the bouquet of flowers volunteers need to keep the juices flowing.

Everyone at Concern is looking forward to meeting you at our Consumer Conference.

Does your school offer enough for handicapped?

Parents of handicapped children can check the efforts of local public schools in providing an adequate education to their child by filling out a survey form provided by the National Committee for Citizens in Education (NCCCE).

Under the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142), each public school system is required by law to provide an adequate education for handicapped children if they are to receive federal funds. In Michigan, public schools are required to provide an education to handicapped students from 0 to 26 years of age.

Each handicapped child receives an Individual Education Plan (IEP) in school that is specifically designed. It is revised annually, and parents must

be notified of any program change. Parents will receive two copies of the survey form: one copy to be sent to NCCCE and the other for the parents to keep for their own records.

The results of the survey will enable NCCCE to make a national report on the cooperation of public schools in complying with P.L. 94-142 and to provide information to members of Congress and federal officials to enforce the law.

Parents of handicapped children may request survey forms by writing to NCCCE, 410 Wilde Lake Village Green, Columbia, Md. 21044, or by contacting the Detroit Association for Retarded Citizens, Public Education Director, at 831-0202.

Pioneer Women hear professor

Max Mark, professor of political science at Wayne State University, will speak on "Prospects in the Middle East" for the Israel Chapter of Pioneer Women, meeting at 12:30 p.m. Saturday, April 21, in the Labor Zionist Institute, 26555 Middlebelt, Farmington Hills.

Mark has served as a visiting profes-

or at Hebrew University in Jerusalem and has been active in national, national and international political science gatherings.

A social hour will precede the program, with Selma Korn, Freda Kutzen and Lillian Winkler serving as hostesses.

Girl scout troop plans a reunion

Members of Girl Scout Troop 411 that used to meet in the Cerveney school northwest Detroit are planning a reunion April 20. They also are inviting their former teachers from Cerveney — those who taught there before 1948.

The planning committee is seeking several former troop members, Dol-

res Jones, Nancy Lambros, Charlene Strong, Carol Schwartz, Carol VanDeSande and Carol Waite.

Those interested in attending the reunion may call Ann Olson Fishman, 885-2782 or Sue Stough Terman, 651-4995.

Pearl Harbor survivors to meet

The 13th annual reunion of the Michigan Pearl Harbor Survivors Association will be held April 20, 21 and 22 in

the Sheraton Motor Inn, Woodward. For further information, contact Stanley Niemara at 565-7081.

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