

Watch for elegance in simplicity this spring

BY SUSAN DEMAGGIO

Spending my teen years at an all-girls parochial school was not the most fashionable thing to do

The minute we tried to copy the latest looks in the glamour magazines (mini skirts, body-hugging poorboy sweaters, fishnet stockings, false eyelashes like Twiggy's, and pale frosty pink lipstick) Sister Silverius saw the need to call a schoolwide assembly and lecture us on the virtues of the wholesome, classic beauty of Jacqueline Kennedy. Some 30 years later, I still remember her words . . .

"Girls, you will always look best if you avoid faddish clothing and wear outfits that have simple, classic designs. Mrs. Kennedy wears very little make-up or jewelry. Her suits and dresses are stylish though reserved, yet she always looks the picture of grace and beauty. She knows there is elegance in simplicity."

Interviewing local fashion gurus for this publication, reminded me of that afternoon lecture in the school auditorium. Though "Mrs. Kennedy" died last July, her class and style is very much alive thanks to designers this spring.

"If you want to know what this season's fashions are all about, think Jackie O, think Audrey Hepburn, think Grace Kelly," said Mariana Keros of Hudson's. "The clothes are very feminine, very simple, fitted at the waist, glamorous. Many of the season's

components come from looks these women made famous."

Cheryl Hall of Saks Fifth Avenue explained that "Designers this season were inspired by the '30s screen sirens, pin-up girls of the '40s, and '50s and '60s legends like Jackie Kennedy and

Audrey Hepburn. The good news is that the season translates into one with a variety of fashion options. There is choice in lengths, spectrum of color, and new fabrics and textures.

"Absolutes include knit twin sets, skinny cigarette pants, self-belt little dresses, A-line slip skirts, and elongated jackets worn over short, fitted skirts or long slip skirts. Also, don't pass up the chance to wear shine before dark as well as after. Try a shiny stretch tank top or tee, sequin polo, lurex cardigan — all symbols of the new refined shine."

Arlene Goldstein of Parixian said spring's fashion message is: Femininity is back! "The season's styles reflect the glamour of the '40s with sensibilities of the '90s," she said. "Update your wardrobe with a fitted jacket, skinny belts, an A-line dress, skirt cut on the bias, patent leather handbag and shoes, cropped tops and something pink!"

Janice Hayes of Jacobson's suggested women focus on the waist. "Then buy something in pink," she said. "Skirts are short, A-line, tippy or pencil thin to the knee. Add a hat with a veil, or flower detail. Handbags in square or rectangle shapes are back. Stiletto heels have returned . . . and anything patent leather — shoes, handbags, belts! Fashionable accessories call for pins with faux gems and big cuff bracelets."

Colby McWilliams of Neiman Marcus talked about the spring season in the men's department.

"More linens than I've ever seen in my life," he said. "Linen blends, linen and silk, linen and synthetics. Very airy, very lofty. The suit comes in variations on the one button, two button jacket. The three button is great for a more casual presentation. There are even some six button jackets with Nehru collars. The suits are constructed, but softer. Pants are cut fuller, drawstring waists remain on the scene. The banded collar shirt is important, worn outside the pants under a vest."

"Colors are ecological — olive, pewter, gray, taupe, tan, sand, and beige. Browns are big. There are lots of options. Different pieces can be worn together to create an individualistic attitude. Remember, the right attitude is always your best accessory!"

Bruce Goldman of L'uomo Vogue in Southfield said dressing for the business posture is still traditional, but the business casual look requires a flair for layering unstructured sportswear pieces.

The next few pages provide a glimpse of what's in store for the warmer weather around town. Retailers agree this is one of the most exciting spring seasons in a long while. It's the season of the dress, the celebration of glamorous classics, the dawn of ease and comfort. Advances in the textile and manufacturing industries have given fashion designers interesting new materials to work with. And heeding the consumers' plea for good fits, collections come in proportions for petites as well as large-size customers.



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