

Former actress happy with fashion designs

By CHRISTINE WALDEN
Five years ago Jill Richards changed roles when she switched from show business to fashion designing. Now a top designer of "after-five" dresses, Ms. Richards wouldn't have it any other way.

"I can't imagine being in any other business," she said when she brought her collection to Claire Perone at Somerset Mall.

The collection, done almost entirely in matte jersey and chiffon, features an assortment of knock-out gowns.

A long apricot gown bares the neck with a v-cut and drops at the hip into a layered skirt. A matching scarf ties gently around the head or neck.

With designs of the Gatsby era she creates a yellow and white pants and sweater suit, complete with v-neck and soft lines.

AND A DRAMATIC chiffon pants suit begins with an oversize neckline ruffle on a short sheer blouse and ends with flowing pants.

Ms. Richards had been designing long before she made it a full-time job.

"I was an actress for a good number of years and I did a lot of entertaining. I never could find what I liked in stores so I would design my own gowns," she said.

When guests began raving about her clothes she decided to give the fashion business a try.

"We had a guest house adjacent to our house and I turned that into a workshop," she said. "We used to call it the Beverly Hills sweat shop."

HER FIRST collection consisted of 16 pieces, all done in the same philosophy she has now; a philosophy that looks toward good taste and clothes that enhance.

"Everything I do is soft. For summer I've gotten into chiffon," she said. "They are body clothes that flatter the lady. I try to do jerseys that any woman can wear. When you've been involved in the theater you concentrate on things that are flattering. I always use white as much as I can around the neck. It just brightens it all up."

Her advice to women is "dress in good taste. Women should wear what makes them look pretty. I have concentrated on feminine, sensuous clothing, sort of an understated look."

Being a California designer, Ms. Richards is set apart from the competitive trends of New York's Seventh Avenue. In California she

designs clothes by choice rather than dictates.

But a California location also has drawbacks. New York and fashion have become synonymous. Not so with California.

"I THINK what happened," she said, "is that New York is the parent that never let go of the child. And Los Angeles is the child."

That philosophy causes problems for California's designers. When stores face economic cutbacks, the first cutback is the elimination of California showings from their buyers' schedules. As a result, Ms. Richards must make seasonal sojourns to New York. And, ironically, buyers from Los Angeles stores, only a few blocks from her workrooms, buy her clothes there.

But the whole business, with its ironies, hectic schedules and whirlwind tours of various stores, makes it a business Jill Richards loves.



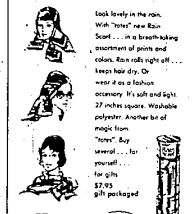
California designer Jill Richards

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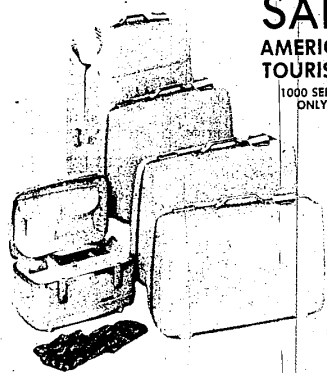
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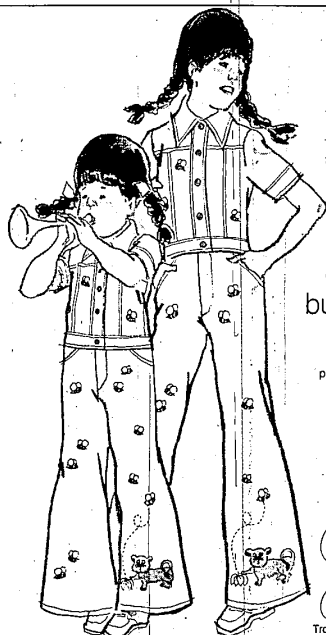
Nurses honor jubilee class

Providence Hospital Nurses Alumnae will meet May 19 to honor the classes of 1924 and 1949.

After an anniversary Mass at 10 a.m. in the chapel of Providence Hospital, Southfield, the nurses will meet for breakfast at 11:30 a.m. at the Mercy College Student Center, 8200 West Outer Drive, Detroit.

Esther Bushey, former instructor of science, now retired, is the guest of honor.

Reservations may be sent to Joan Vanasse Geyer, 19254 Beaverland, Detroit, 48219.



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