

# Suited look can work for business women

— Story: RUSTLE SHAND  
— Photos: DICK KELLEY

Whether a business woman's mode of dress should closely parallel that of her male counterpart has become a moot question in the last few years.

The most widely accepted answer is yes, thanks mainly to the national efforts of John Malloy's dress-for-success research, and to the local efforts of Suzanne Carroll, owner of a Birmingham haberdashery for women called "For The Prestige Woman."

Ms. Carroll recently conducted a seminar — "The Suited Look and How It Can Work For You." Business women, who attended the study sessions,

said they were interested in acquiring the look of business success because, "it is the first impression that counts."

Several told of having been passed over for promotions and the feeling their wardrobe selections had a lot to do with their stationary jobs. Others voiced concern about closets crowded with nothing suitable to wear for a crisp, business look.

"Professional women in conservative fields need no-nonsense, business-like clothes much like those their male colleagues wear," Ms. Carroll pointed out.

IT IS NOT surprising that women who work in traditionally male domi-

nated fields often have difficulty knowing what is expected of them when it comes to a dress code.

"Women haven't been in these work situations very long, nor are there many role models for them to emulate. So, their dress codes have never been defined," Ms. Carroll explained.

The shop's suited looks range from soft flannel to herringbones and tweeds and appear modeled after the man's business suit. They are actually separates.

Women's suits cannot be merchandised like menswear," Ms. Carroll said. "Because of the feminine dimensions, most women will vary one size from the jacket to the skirt."

The feminine tailoring includes notched collars, narrow lapels, and welted jacket pockets which may be worn with the flap out or tucked in. Jackets are short, ending at the hipbone. "Long jackets look like riding coats and are unflattering to many women," Ms. Carroll said.

The three skirt styles featured by the shop are a trouser skirt with belt loops, a camouflaged front zipper style and a vented back skirt.

Skirts are also slightly dirndled and many have front pleats. "Slit skirts are too sexy-looking for business," Ms. Carroll said.

A large selection of all cotton business shirts, silk ties, narrow belts and pocket handkerchiefs complete the necessary additions to the woman's suited look, she added.

"A CLOSED LEATHER pump, a good briefcase and a simple lapel pin are also a part of the suited look," Ms. Carroll said. "A switch to a dressier shoe, blouse and jewelry will carry a woman through the evening hours," she added.

For dressier evening occasions, Ms. Carroll suggests the woman executive would do well to tuck the perfect little black dress in her briefcase for a quick change in the executive washroom.

Other pointers on maintaining the business image include advice to, "wear rubbers over your shoes instead of boots. Wear a wool cape or raglan sleeve overcoat. Don't try to squeeze your suit coat under a set-in sleeve coat. Wear your shirt collar closed and keep it inside your suit coat. Raised collars and open necklines are for after-five wear, only."

Women who carry a brief case, she noted, shouldn't carry a shoulder bag or handbag, too. "Keep your clutch handbag inside your brief case."

She also advised women to take a cue from male workers. If the office is warm and "the men work without their suit coats, you may do the same."

Suzanne Carroll is a former practicing child psychologist. She is also the mother of four children, and was named "Miss Florida" in the national Miss America contest when she was 19 years old.



Necessary accessories for the business woman include a white Oxford cloth shirt, foulard silk bow tie, matching hankie, matching belt, gold lapel pin, cordovan closed pump and matching briefcase.



A black dress, all nylon so it won't wrinkle, can be tucked into a briefcase. Suzanne Carroll dons a high-collared dress with a black velvet tie designed for St. Gillian by Kay Unger.



## Where It's At

By JUDY SOLOMON

### Going In Circles

Here's a wonderful way to deck your halls this Christmas. Bloomies makes up charming wreaths that you can use in two different ways. When you lay them on a table and put a candle in the center, they make fabulous centerpieces. Then, of course, they also look great hanging on a wall. Consisting of a straw base covered all over with pouffy bows and trimmed with such items as straw flowers, red berries and miniature acorns, the wreaths cost \$35 each. Orders take four days. Bloomies, 222 East Maple (in rear of the Briggs Building), Birmingham, 644-8870.



### How Sweet It Is

Sydney Bogg Chocolates has lots of sweet ideas for you this Christmas. For example, 13-inch high glass Christmas tree-shaped containers that you can fill with your choice of red and white striped peppermint puffs (\$7), green and white striped wintergreen puffs (\$7), foil-wrapped chocolate bells (\$14.95) or Christmas tree chews (\$7.20). The peppermint-flavored chews have bright red rims plus white centers imprinted with green Christmas trees. The store also sells a combination of red and green Jordan almonds (\$3.75 per pound) and red and green mint juleps (\$2.25 per pound). Sydney Bogg Chocolates, Maple at Lahser, Birmingham, 646-0344, and Great Oaks Mall, Rochester, 651-0717.



### Wrap Session

When you use only one pattern of paper and only one color of ribbon to wrap your holiday gifts, it becomes boring to do and boring to look at. Keeping this in mind, you should know about Oogie where you will find the best selection of gift wrapping supplies in town. The store stocks ribbons in oodles of solid colors plus tartans, checks, stripes, polkadots, and prints. Some are made of acetate ribbon, others of velvet. There are also old-fashioned tinsel metallic ribbons and tinsel cords, as well as over 40 different patterns of Christmas wrapping papers to choose from. Oogie, Maple at Lahser, Birmingham, 647-0740.



### All That Glitters

It seems that platinum is an even more precious metal than gold. Platinum ingots are becoming the newest status symbols to hang from a chain around your neck. Made by Credit Suisse in Zurich, you can purchase them at Crowley's fine jewelry departments. Framed in 14 karat gold, the \$99.00 pure platinum ingots are in stock in five gram (\$325) and 10 gram (\$695) sizes. It's an interesting gift idea for the person who has everything, except perhaps status. Crowley's, 220 North Woodward, Birmingham, 647-2000, and 33250 12 Mile Road, Farmington, 553-3800.





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