

Fashion Isn't Everything, Says Designer Maxwell

By MARGARET MILLER
Women's Editor

Vera Maxwell is one designer who isn't trying to force the mid-century look on you.

In fact, the lady who introduced slacks, separates and the tee shirt can't see why you should adopt any particular "look" publicized by the fashion magazines.

And when you come right down to it, Mrs. Maxwell thinks American women have far more important things to occupy their minds than "constant preoccupation with clothes."

SO, APPEARING for the Farmington Town Hall open house last week, she recommended wearing the length skirt you like, making changes gradually and varying the length with the occasion because "it really doesn't make that much difference."

"Since women's skirts stopped sweeping the ground," she added, "there is no time in their lives when every woman has worn the same length all the time."

"I'm a conservative, in the conservation sense of the word. I'm disturbed by the mass-production of an overabundance of things. It's fun to have something new, but there must be a balance."

"If I can be identified with anything in fashion it's comfortable clothes that live the life you live."

THE SPEAKER criticized fashion magazines for pushing new fashion upon fashion, and said "in recent years we've been more hindered by the magazines than helped."

"Newspapers report fashion better than magazines," she added, "because they are more critical and sensitive. But you can see I've arrived, or I wouldn't be able to say that."

Urging women to "go along sensibly, reasonably," Mrs. Maxwell made a comparison



TWO FOR THE SHOW—Designer Vera Maxwell helps Sue Hahn, who modeled a frontier-style gown in a Farmington Town Hall show of Maxwell designs down the years. (Evert photo)

between Princess Grace of Monaco and "a certain President's wife who reportedly needs \$85,000 a year and six trunks of clothes to dress well."

SHE CALLED her close friend, the princess, a "reflection of integrity and discipline."

"As a young actress, she wore shirtwaists and white

gloves instead of flamboyant clothes because she was more interested in her acting ability," Mrs. Maxwell said.

"Recently I saw her pack three valises to go to the wedding of the Queen of Greece, and she always looked exactly right. She has style."

DRESSED IN BLACK with a high-necked shirt, above-the-knee a-line skirt, loose coat, mid-heel black pumps and gold jewelry, Mrs. Maxwell displayed in her talk in the Northland Theater some of her creations so classic they now are displayed in the Metropolitan and Smithsonian museums.

Serving as models were her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Rhea Maxwell, and four Farmington residents, Mrs. Claire Orians, who introduced the speaker, Mrs. Rosemary Fitzpatrick, Sue Hahn and Julie McKinnon. Among the costumes were a "weekend wardrobe" created for Best & Co. in 1955—"the first year we had a 40-hour work week and a chance to relax for two days."

In that set were a grey flannel suit with a skirt that looks like today's midi, the first pair of slacks designed for women, a pleated mini that was called a "jumps dress" then, and a tweed jacket with patch pockets.

MRS. MAXWELL, also showed "Roses the Flyer," jumpsuit she designed for Sperry Gyroscopes during World War II, a black and pink pants costume with the Persian influence, a loden cloth outfit with flight pants and

wrap skirt she designed for overnight trans-Atlantic flights some 20 years ago, and her first leotard outfit—1958 vintage—which also included a tweed coat and short skirt.

"The leotard was designed to be comfortable at home, and you could put on the coat to go for a walk," she said. This outfit is in shades of orange, "but I like the black leotard look best," she said.

There was also a collection of frontier and Indian styles, designed after historic models in Greenfield Village and marketed some five years ago by J.L. Hudson. "It wasn't a great financial success then," Mrs. Maxwell said, "but now the idea is being picked up by others."

BEFORE ENDING her talk, she reached into her ample black bag for separates and put on an instant fashion show, changing behind the podium into pants and a sporty jacket to go with her black skirt.

Questioned following the celebrity luncheon in Glen Oaks Country Club, Mrs. Maxwell said her clothes are sold in this area by Hudson's and Miss Julie, voiced a preference for "open and clean" hair styling, and said women with figure problems should stick to unbelted suits.

Asked about pants suits for office wear, she emphasized "it's not the pants but what kind and how you wear them." A well cut pant suit is perfectly suitable for the secretary, she opined, but added "if you don't like them don't be pushed into wearing them."



JULIE MCKINNON modeled Maxwell's loden cloth flight suit.

ROSEMARY FITZPATRICK in the famed Maxwell riding habit suit, complete with boots and walking stick. (Evert photo)

Disabled Sell Handwork

Early Christmas shoppers and those interested in the amazing abilities of handicapped craftsmen in Michigan will enjoy a sale in the Westland Shopping Center mall during regular store hours Oct. 28 to 31.

Unusual gifts and decorations, including hand-painting, decoupage, toys, jewelry and weaving, will be included in the show, sponsored by the Soroptimist Club of Dearborn.

This year's sale marks the 50th anniversary of vocational rehabilitation in the United States, a federal-state program that includes the Michigan Handicrafters who will be featured in the Westland event.

Curtis G. Payne, a home instructor in the Handicrafters program, said many of the 600 or more disabled craftsmen whose work will be on display and sale would be present to demonstrate their particular skill.

Among these, she said, are Karen Ballentine of Inkster—"I've taught her to weave and paint with her toes" and Florence Watkins of Royal Oak, an Indian who will have bead craft items for sale.

"All of these people are marvelous," said Mrs. Payne, who works through the Department of Education in the state

division of vocational rehabilitation. "They've taught me so much more than I've taught them."

She said persons on the program range in age from 16 to 75, and represent all areas of the state about 400 now are producing salable items and about 200 are in training.

Special sales are held throughout the state, with the annual Soroptimist-sponsored event at Westland the biggest of the year.

Ninety per cent of the sale price is returned to the producer, Mrs. Payne said.



HANDWORK OF HANDICAPPED—Gift items made by the disabled homebound of Michigan will be displayed and sold in the Westland center next week. Florence Watkins (right) shows her Indian bead work to young customers during last year's show.

Spotlight on Women

m. m. memos

We put in a fun evening with a stack of yellowed magazines and newspapers brought by visiting relatives.

Some of the publications came from an attic that's getting its twice-in-a-century cleaning. Some were purchased in the delightful country of the Pennsylvania Dutch.

All made me decide that the rations I regularly serve readers of this paper must be pretty dull reading compared to the delightful offerings of a few score years ago. So I share a few excerpts.

There was a wedding story in a weekly dated Jan. 1, 1896.

"On Christmas evening at the residence of the bride's mother occurred the marriage of Miss Emma May Smith to Edward Proctor," it read. "The bride is the sister of the Commissioner N.E. Smith and a young lady favorably known in this vicinity."

From the Women's Magazine of May, 1905, (a publication available for a penny a copy or 10 cents a year) came the following in a "Feminine Philosophy" column:

"The most successful preventative and cure for wrinkles is a sweet temper, but a woman can't have a sweet temper unless her dresses fit and are stylish. If husbands would pay more money to the dressmaker they'd have to pay less to the masseurs and beauty experts."

The great sums of money required, incidentally, ranged from a dollar for an embroidered blouse we'd love to buy today to \$2.75 for a linen suit.

And in that publication that preceded women's suffrage, there was a small item that might interest today's advocates of women's lib:

"There has been a great deal said about women having the right to vote," it stated. "If the women of America were kept reasonably well-informed of the great national questions of the day, the power of their still, small voice in the still of the night whispered into the ear of the lord and master of the house would have more to do with the election returns than all the yellow journals in America."

Well, on second thought, maybe I'd better stick to 1970.

—MARGARET MILLER



PROCLAMATION—Mrs. William White, a member of the Redford Toastmistress Club, receives a proclamation from Governor William G. Milliken proclaiming Oct. 25 to 31 as International Toastmistress Clubs Week in Michigan. Mrs. White, also Great Lakes regional chairman in the Toastmistress organization, comes from her home in Trenton the second and fourth Tuesday of each month to attend meetings of the Redford club. That group will host an all-day 20th anniversary meeting Saturday, Oct. 24, in Huck's Bavarian Inn, 27331 Five Mile, Redford Township, with former International president Vera Bennett as speaker. Visitors will be welcome and reservations can be made with Mrs. Stuart Schaefer, 532-5906.

Symphony Unit Plans Party

The Plymouth Symphony League will hold an afternoon card party, Tuesday, Oct. 27, from 12 noon until 3 p.m., in the Elks Lodge, 41700 Ann Arbor Road, Plymouth.

A luncheon will be served

for \$3.50, and tickets may be purchased at Melody House, at the Plymouth Symphony Concert Sunday, Oct. 18, in Central High School or by calling Dawn Gorney, 455-5295, Ann Krantke, 453-4654, or Harriette Stermer, 453-1588.

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32 yds. Olive gold 501 Nylon	129 ⁰⁰	12 ft. Olive gold Alex Smith Kadel	4.95	11x14.3 Black & Brown Nylon Tweed	59 ⁰⁰
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