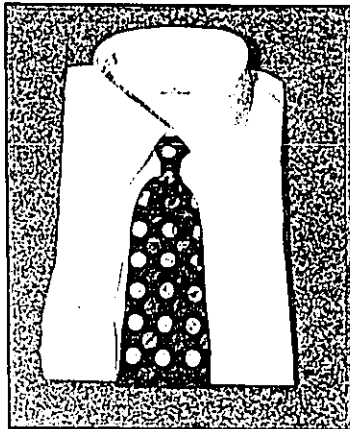


A tie doesn't have to be a cliché gift

The tie. It seems to be the old stand-by for dads, brothers, uncles, even husbands, who are hard to buy for. But giving a tie can mean more than you might think. As Oscar Wilde once said, "One should either be a work of art, or wear a work of art." The tie can make the man — especially if the man you have in mind is constrained in his wardrobe by a conservative profession.

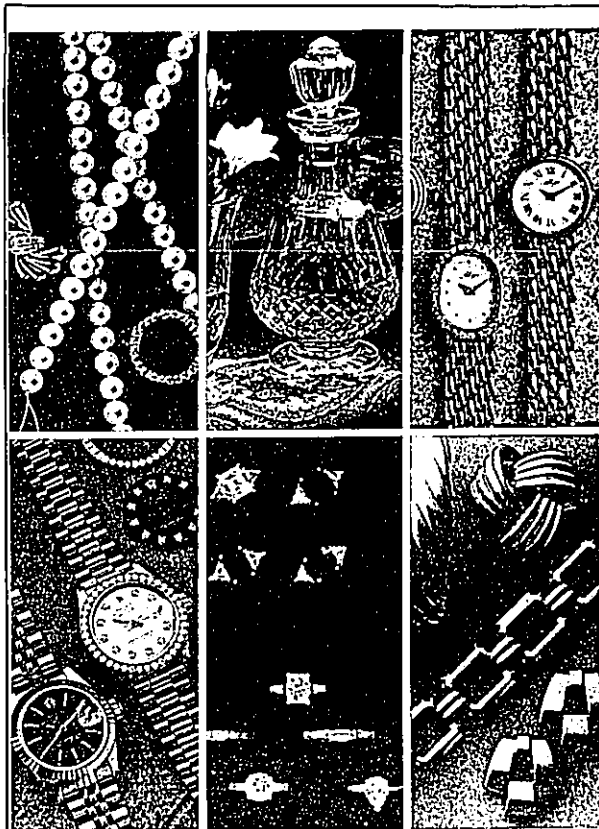


"If you have a classic suit, you can reaccessorize it with different ties," says Bob De Laura owner of R. De Laura Clothiers of Birmingham, "and each time you do, you have a whole new suit."

Especially in economic times like these, someone might not be able to buy new suits as often, but ties are certainly more affordable. And if De Laura is right, you don't have to be too concerned about giving a tie to a man who already has many. A dozen ties provides a man with a good selection, but many men have as many as 30 to 50. A tie, however, begins to look shabby after a few months,

however, from wear and skin oils around the neckline, so De Laura recommends continually weeding out ties which might be wearing out their welcome in the closet. So this might be just the right time to give someone a tie after all.

See Ties, 34



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