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WAYNE FULLER INC.

By CONNIE BURKE
sketches by Wayne Fuller

SATISFYING the whims of one woman is a man-sized job. Anticipating what those whims will be when milady selects next season's wardrobe is almost more than a mere man can manage. And yet, Wayne Fuller, '47fa, the first man to graduate from O.U. in fashion design, has mastered the art of dictating to millions of clothes-conscious American women.

Much of Fuller's success lies in his ability to gear his thinking to the quick-changing fashion trends as the focal points of dress design shift from one part of the body to another. In Fuller's designs for his afternoon and country club clothes, he tries to catch the latest ideas in the fashion world but to hold them tightly in rein.

"I try to develop my own touch," he explains, "and to put my own signature on each dress. Without this touch a designer becomes lost. The greatest compliment I've had was from a well-known buyer who told me she could spot a Wayne Fuller dress a block away. Perhaps Joe Taylor's sculpturing classes gave me this touch—a look most people describe as a sculptured-architectural feeling."

Getting into the design business is not just a simple matter of knowing the business and wanting to work. An established designer has to be willing to take you in, and the first years are a lot of work with little pay and little recognition. Fuller's career began in his family's small Waurika department store. There he redesigned

HIS OWN

clothes, replaced buttons and gave advice to customers.

"I was just a kid who got in everyone's way," Fuller recalls. "The town put up with me—and now when I look back, I wonder why."

In 1944 Fuller left Waurika for O.U. to major in fashion design and commercial art. He worked at the University Book Exchange and as night guard at the art building and also found time to serve as president of El Modjii, honorary art fraternity, work with Delta Phi Delta art group and the Union Activities Board.

When Fuller was at O.U., the Career Conference style show was the big event for design students, many of them getting their first opportunity to see their original sketches in a show. Some of this enthusiasm for the University shows still remains within several of these former students who have gone on to commercial success. In April an alumni fashion show, staged by Shadowbox fashion club, featured designs by Fuller as well as those of Clifton Wilhite, '40ed, who has clothed the contestants in recent Miss America pageants; Beall Ernst, who designs ties in San Francisco; Mayme Beecher, '46-'48, now with Jantzen; Frances Mahier Brandon, '30h.ec,

DESIGN FOR SUCCESS

fashions by wayne fuller are receiving acclaim from the critics in a highly competitive field

'34m.ed, of Natchez, Tennessee; Marlon Chapman, illustrator for Frosts of San Antonio, Texas; Nana Elwood, '56ba, assistant designer for Bonnie Cashin in New York; Margaret Clark Miller, '42fa, who designs Margaret Jerrold Shoes in New York; Zoltan Rakovsky, with M. Nadler of Los Angeles, and Wayne Reed, '58fa, of Dallas.

Success doesn't come suddenly for most designers; Fuller was no exception. After graduation he found that getting his designs into the California fashion salons wasn't as easy as getting them into the college shows. He pounded the pavement for weeks until a friend suggested that he place an ad in the *California Apparel News*. On the day that the ad appeared he was offered a job designing children's dresses.

"I hated the ruffles and frills," he remembers. "I stayed four weeks, then suddenly I realized that decorating cakes was not my forte, so I quit and started pounding the pavement again."

This time Fuller was lucky. He copped one of the few assistant designer jobs in Los Angeles, and the head designer helped him to span the gap between the home-made look and the professional touch.

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Fashion Designer Wayne Fuller and an assistant select fabrics for his new spring collection.

His Own Design for Success

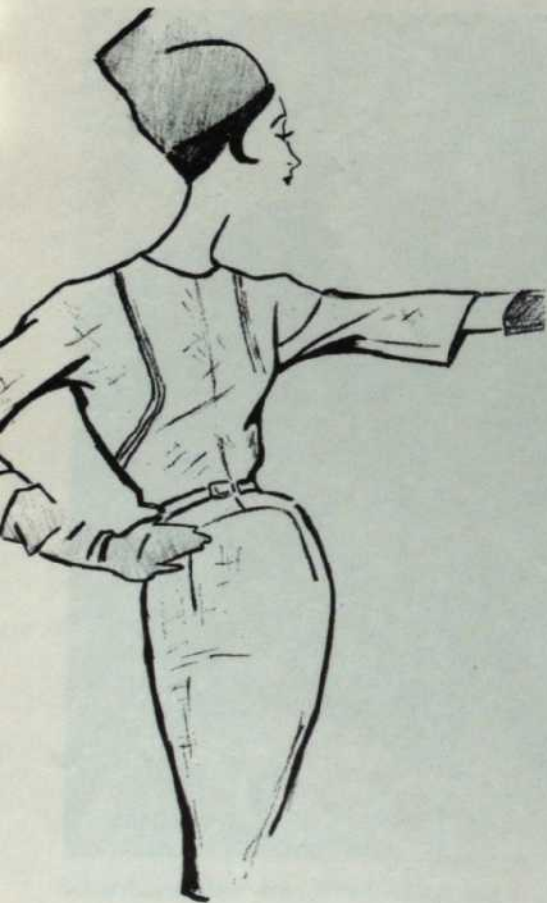
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Fuller learned the business well. He went on to become head designer himself, then went into a partnership and finally formed his own corporation about three years ago.

With his transition from designer to manufacturer, Fuller has proved that an artist can also be a good businessman. More important, he has found his work as designer-manufacturer very satisfying.

He has learned that the business is much more than just coordinating the feel of the season with a good business sense. The expert must master countless smaller skills to insure that his designs will sell. Fabric selection is just one of these. The designer must spend long hours searching through stacks of swatches brought in by the flow of fabric salesmen.

"My art training is very valuable when it comes to color and design of fabrics," Fuller says. "The nine art history courses I was forced to take at O.U. have really paid off. As my sales volume increases I can demand more from the mills, and, if necessary, they will develop a fabric of my own design.



"The disease of manufacturing," he continues, "is over-purchasing and over-enthusiasm for fads. Most designers work in a similar pattern. First we try to capture the impact of current trends by sketching and research—whether it be a stiff look, a soft look or a flowing design—and then purchase fabrics to suit this look, always keeping in mind the color changes that each new season brings. Last season's pink may be this season's dead issue since the lower priced houses have had time to flood the market with it."

During the week or so that it takes to receive sample cuts, Fuller sketches, drapes and experiments. The completed fashion collection must be spread out like a mural. Buyers want a "story" planned for them. They need clothes that can be advertised and promoted. The designer must present a well-planned color picture for windows, the latest ideas for story interest and the ever-important basics that live on season after season.

"I call these basics my bread and butter dresses," Fuller explains. "The consumer must be lured into the store by something new, but likely as not will consider the basic the best investment in the long run."

One of the essential elements in building a line is the hard work involved in meeting a deadline—that time when the country's buyers view the finished products. These buyers have only one week in California, so if the line is not ready for showing, the designer is skipped or forced to sell on the road.

During market week there are two shows a day. Shoes, hats and other accessories, worn to complement the design and complete the picture, are selected after the dresses are complete unless Fuller has designed the accents himself and has commissioned them to outside workers while he is completing the dress.

"Creating your own accessories is very expensive," Fuller says, "and can be done only if the designer has a big staff of assistants and a lot of money."

After the shows, the orders come in and work begins on preparing the product for marketing.

In accordance with the orders the patterns are graded from size 6 to 20 and the fabric is purchased. Markers are made in the cutting department and the dresses are cut 100 to 500 at a time. When the pieces are cut, they are bundled, assembled from four to eight at a time and given to an

operator to sew. At the same time special touches are being added. When the hand work is done, the dresses are checked on forms, inspected, belted and packaged.

"If the dress clicks," Fuller says, "re-orders pile in, and another season is under way."

The fashion designer pays no attention to the weatherman's concept of the changing seasons. The summer line is presented in January; transitional designs are brought out in April, fall clothes in May. Resort and holiday designs are shown in September, and the spring clothes in October.

What prompts the need for a certain "look" with each new season? Necessity, Fuller contends.

"Women need a change of style to boost their morale and to compete with other women," Fuller explains. "Most designers say women dress for men. I'm not too sure. I have seen too many women bypass a very flattering style for a fad or gimmick that does very little for them. But they feel secure in the fact that they are wearing the newest styles."

