1937

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Recommended Citation
Carroll, Gaynold (1937) "She Dresses for You," The Iowa Homemaker: Vol. 17 : No. 8 , Article 2.
Available at: http://lib.dr.iastate.edu/homemaker/vol17/iss8/2

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A fashion idol of coeds describes her original methods of designing

She Dresses For You
by Gaynold Carroll

THERE'S a trick in every trade! For Chicago's Louise Mulligan, one of America’s best known designers for youth, it is creating models, not on the usual dress form but on her own figure.

Unique in her designing methods, Miss Mulligan's dresses are universally becoming to most girls because she does not make the original dress from a form as many designers do. Instead, she sketches it. She has several skilled sample makers who put together, first, a muslin dress from the sketch. This dress Miss Mulligan tries on herself and with the aid of a huge three-paneled mirror and a mouthful of pins she changes it until she feels that the lines are most flattering and the silhouette correct.

On the fabric sample, which is copied from the muslin, different trimming, such as buckles, buttons and clips, are tried until the dress looks finished and right. When the fabric dress is completed, duplicate samples are made up for the showroom, salesmen's lines and factories. This painstaking care with the original dress results in a more becoming garment than could be had in any other way, Miss Mulligan believes.

A native of Minneapolis, she attended West High School and the University of Minnesota. After two years of college and a course in figure drawing, the young designer went to work for her aunt, Mary L. Cartwright, whose clever dresses are nationally known and who owned the Cartwright Company in Minneapolis.

Beginning as an assistant in the Cartwright shop, she later began to design dresses for Miss Cartwright.

"The first dress I ever designed came to me full fledged in a dream one night and the next day I worked it out exactly as I had visualized it," says Miss Mulligan.

Miss Mulligan has three tests she applies to every dress she designs. "First, if it looks nice on me, I know it will look well on a number of girls.

"Second, if it looks ghastly on me, I try it on my sister, who, although she is a size 13 also, is very dark and built differently. If it looks ghastly on her too, I know it will not become anyone, so I throw it away.

"Third, I try to make every dress one I would be proud to wear. I wouldn't want to go to a prom in a wissy-washy gown that made me look like a faded sweet pea. Neither would you. Every girl wants a dress that makes her stand out.

"In fact, I like to get an effect by setting off the good points of your figure to form a background for a dash of contrast at neck, sleeve or waist. This method sets off the girl without too much emphasis on the dress."

"Every girl wants a dress that will make her stand out—and a dress need not be a fireman's red to attract attention. A simple black velvet princess-line gown will do the trick and is ever so much more sophisticated.

"When I first started out I didn't know much about the business, but it seemed to me that designers did not pay much attention to young girls. Nobody seemed to realize that they wanted smart, grown-up, sophisticated clothes and still have that touch of crisp youthfulness that dresses for women do not have. Even college girls get tired of sweaters and skirts and pastel chiffons in the sweet and simple manner for evening. And they cannot pay a lot for clothes, either. So, I decided to design the sort of clothes I had always wanted myself.

"I am in the wholesale dress business now," she said, "with my own factories in Chicago. I sell in large cities as well as in small towns. My dresses are advertised by name and label."

Typically Mulligan is one of her recent dresses designed for those who love gay young clothes as much as she does. It is a dress to wear for dates, when going out to have the best possible time, but that's not all. It's so all-around that you probably could wear it completely out during any two weeks' vacation, if you wore it all you wanted to. It will dine, dance, take you to the movies, teas, and even make calling on your relatives less boring.

It is made in navy taffeta for sophistication, then Miss Mulligan makes it feel sixteen by putting ruchings around all the edges, with a gay, giddy little scarf tucked in at the neckline. However, it is the silhouette that attracts attention. Two-piece, the back of the petticoat blouse and the back of the skirt have small self bows that pull the fullness together over the derriere, so that the skirt swings out when you dance and flares out pertly when you stand. It exaggerates your almost invisible waistline at all times. Shoulders are built out for balance and the hemline is smartly bordered.

Blonde and blue-eyed, Louise Mulligan wears black and white practically all the time because, "I feel smarter when wearing these colors."

Miss Mulligan designs about one dress a day. In almost every large city there is a store featuring her neo-modern dream dresses. Sales girls report that their biggest selling point perhaps is that they were fitted to a real girl and not to a dress form that is supposed to represent the average figure.