1939

Biography of a Home Economist

Gaynold Carroll

Iowa State College

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Biography
of a Home Economist

Lovely to look at—delightful to wear, are the
dresses designed and created by Yolanda Prosperi,
'25. Miss Prosperi, who was born of Italian parents,
has been a designer for Nelly Don in Kansas City
since 1926.

Coming from Italy when 10 years old, Miss Prosperi
lived with her family in Boone and came to Iowa State
to major in applied art. Her father, who was formerly
a sculptor in Chicago, and her mother are now residing
in Italy.

One of several Iowa State graduates employed by
Nelly Don, Miss Prosperi has free rein in the selection
of materials she uses for her models with the exception
of the materials bought in large quantities on contract
by the company. Given a certain price range she must
select the materials, belts, laces, clips, buttons and orna-
ments of all kinds for the dresses she is designing.

If the cost of the materials is in line with a $6.50
dress, then the belt, buttons and any other decorative
trimming of the garment must be inexpensive so a
profit can be realized. The production cost of a dress
includes operations within the factory besides material
and notions, Miss Prosperi says. One of the biggest
problems of the commercial designer is to design a
dress and select materials, include production costs
and still allow the company a profit.

Good designers have learned to build labor and de-
sign to price, for it is only designers of individual types
who can do things with no price limitation.

Miss Prosperi advises designers to learn to take the
important fashion trends and check how they are
used. For example, the bustle has been modified so
it is becoming to everyone, and a good designer learns
to interpret such fashion to his needs.

"To be able to pick out a competitor's best seller is
as important as being able to design. This ability
shows designing judgment. I always shop the market
for new materials, new ideas, accessories and fashion
color trends. I also like to see what others are doing,"
Miss Prosperi says.

Having recently returned from Miami, she believes
up and coming designers ought to visit all the fashion
centers possible, such as Paris, Palm Beach, Atlantic
City and New York. Of Paris she says, "this city leads
in individual designing and bizarre effects. It is per-
haps better to go places where dresses are actually be-
ing worn to give one an idea of what is being accep-
ted." Playgrounds in winter show what will be worn
the following summer, she contends.

Miss Prosperi's European trips usually combine busi-
ness and pleasure. After viewing the foreign fashion
centers she visits with her parents in Italy.

In explaining the different methods of designing a
dress, this Iowa State graduate tells us that both drap-
ing and pinning produce good effects. Some designers
sketch, others pin and drape, still others work out a
flat pattern.

Answering the question of qualifications for de-
signing, Miss Prosperi says, "A good textile background
is necessary. Courses in art, drawing, instruction in
harmony, unity, balance and color combinations are
useful."

—Gaynold Carroll

The Iowa Homemaker