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They Made Their Bridal Gowns

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The thrill of winning sewing contests never quite compares to the excitement Jan Hoffman found sewing and fitting her own wedding dress. The convertible gown becomes a dance dress when she adds a cummerbund and a rhinestone clip.

Jan, with the help of a consultant purchased the material for her gown in her home town, Cedar Rapids, Iowa. She bought 6 yards of lace, 2 yards of organdy for the jacket, 5 yards of lining material, and 4 yards of pellon.

Ambitious Jan also made all three of her bridesmaids' dresses, her mother's dress, and her own going away suit. Swiss organdy in pale pink over pink faille was used for the bridesmaids' gowns, which were fashioned with waltz length skirts and sleeveless bodices. The slender waists were accented with red sashes.

She sewed most of July and August to finish the dresses for September 12, her wedding day. Jan also worked in a factory from three in the afternoon until midnight, so most of the sewing was done in the morning and early afternoon. Mrs. Noll helped with hems and seam finishes.

Costs were kept at a minimum. Jan's veil was readymade and cost $15, her gown, $35. The bridesmaids' dresses which required $17 each.

Both Jan and her husband are students here. Ray, an Industrial Education senior, will graduate in December and will go into the air force. Jan, majoring in home economics education, plans to get her degree.

Martha King Gibbens fell in love with a dress she saw in a magazine and used her knowledge of flat pattern to make it her own. Martha graduated winter quarter with a degree in Textiles and Clothing, and has been making most of her own clothes since she was a sophomore in high school. She combined crysaitte, an increasingly popular material of rayon acetate, with traditional Chantilly lace and satin. The bouffant skirt worn over a hoop and crinolines has three circular tiers of crysaitte which forms a sweeping train in the back. The bodice, also of crysaitte, has princess lines, comes to a V in front,
and buttons up the back with thirty-six tiny buttons. Pearls and sequins trim the scooping neckline.

Martha's gown required 40 yards of material. She found the satin and net in campus town; the crystal-ette, taffeta, and lace were ordered in St. Louis.

The bodice of the gown was first made in muslin to get the desired lines and correct fit. Martha's mother helped make the dress, do the fitting, and also some of the hand sewing. An estimated 75 hours in actual sewing time was needed to complete the gown. When finished, Martha had a gorgeous $60 copy of a $225 original.

BECAUSE SEWING is her hobby, Evie Rapus Burnidge designed and made her own wedding dress. Evie chose parchment blue nylon, nylon marquisette, and ice blue nylon voile. She had wanted a brocade but found that the parchment nylon and marquisette when sewn together gave a softer, more youthful effect. The dress features back interest in a ruffled bustle and blue nylon train. To compliment the back, the bodice is quite simple with a high neckline, Peter Pan collar, and long tapering sleeves with turnback cuffs. With some alterations, Evie plans to wear her dress for other occasions.

Evie fulfilled a dream she had had since childhood by using a Peter Pan collar and tiny pearl buttons.

The blue gown (blue is Evie's favorite color) required 6 yards each of the taffeta and marquisette, 18 yards of tulle, and 42 tiny pearl buttons. Her mother and sister helped with the actual fitting and gave Evie the bustle idea. Counting the time she spent cutting, fitting, and pressing the dress, Evie estimates she spent on her gown an equivalent of 2 weeks, working an average of eight hours per day.

Evie, a Textiles and Clothing major, and Jim, a student in Farm Operation were married September 11. Both will graduate in June, 1956.

Here are three examples of gowns made by the brides themselves. Careful planning was involved and many hours required, but the great saving in cost and the thrill of a perfect dress was theirs. The most important dress, their wedding gown, was truly as each dreamed it would be because each made her own.

Heavenly blue nylon, crisply tailored, billows from beneath the open cut skirt of Evie Burnidge's wedding gown. The open cut of the skirt was inspired by a gown from a Paris fashion magazine, and the bustle was added after the dress itself was made.