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Move Over for The Muumuu

Susan Sweet
Iowa State College

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These genial "tutus" or grandmothers wear old-fashioned, comfortable cotton muumuu and fragrant fresh plumeria leis. They have replaced the short sleeves with three-quarter leg-o'-mutton sleeves and added a frilled yoke to make this variation known as the Tutumuu.

The Muumuu!

by Susan Sweet
Science Sophomore

LONG BEFORE the current fashion magazines began featuring the sack dress, Hawaiian women were wearing the sackiest sack of them all—the muumuu.

This shapeless, ankle-length, sack-like garment has been worn by Hawaiian women for over a century. Co-eds who attended University of Hawaii summer sessions recently introduced the muumuu on American college campus.

The origin of the muumuu—pronounced MOO-oo MOO-oo, or more popularly Moo Moo—is obscure. Some histories say the early missionaries to Hawaii were shocked by the islanders' clothes—or lack thereof—and therefore forced upon them some all-enslaving Mother Hubbard dresses which eventually became the Hawaiian muumuu.

Other histories firmly state the opposite—they say it was the Hawaiian lady herself who was utterly captivated by the white women's garb, and decided to have something similar for herself.

Cotton Hawaiian prints, chiefly of floral design, are used. Sleeves, neckline and hem frequently are trimmed in contrasting colors. In Hawaii, they are worn with sandals on bare feet and a flower tucked behind the ear and perhaps a lei of seeds, shells or flowers.

Through the years there have developed many variations of the original theme. One of the most popular is the Tutumuu; Tutu is the Hawaiian word for grandmother. The Island grandmothers have replaced the short sleeves with three-quarter puffed sleeves and added a ruffled yoke and hem.

The fitted Holokumuu is a muumuu with style. It has a train, and when made in satin is worn as a wedding dress.

The muumuu is immensely practical—serving as an overall apron, a sports dress, lounging robe, nightgown, a beach garment, and is certainly handy as a maternity dress. It has been adapted for many purposes in this country and is growing in popularity, particularly on college campuses.

Select one of the variations or make up one of your own, but do make a muumuu. It will be among the most unusual and comfortable garments you own.
The directions which follow are for the simple, unadorned muumuu used for nightwear. With a little knowledge of sewing, you can add variations such as long, cuffed sleeves or a yoke. But even if your sewing knowledge is slight, it should take you no more than 2 or 3 hours to complete your muumuu.

1. GATHER MATERIALS. You will need 2 yards of material for a "shortie" like the one shown on the facing page; 3 yards for one of ankle length. Assemble — scissors, thread, needles, pins and rickrack (1 package) or any other trimming you would like.

2. CUT OUT A PAPER PATTERN. You can use brown wrapping paper, newspaper or any other suitable paper that is handy. You need only one large pattern piece, and it will resemble a commercial pattern for a dress front to be cut on the fold. Cut the neck opening large enough to fit over your head; leave plenty of room for movement on the arm and sides. (See picture for step 3.) Don't worry about the short sleeves, for you can make extensions from the scraps.

3. CUT OUT MUUMUU. Fold your material twice — once each way. Place the pattern so the center front and shoulder are on the fold; cut.

4. CUT OUT NECK FACING. Using the piece that you removed for the neck opening as your pattern, cut a 2-inch facing. Allow for shoulder seams. If you want the sleeves longer, cut a strip twice as long as the width of the sleeve and as long as you want the addition to be.

5. SEW ON NECK FACING. Place right sides together and stitch. Trim the seam; turn the facing under and press. Turn facing edge and machine stitch to garment.

6. STITCH SEAMS. Sew on sleeve extensions and press. Stitch the side seams. Stitch the under-arm section three times for strength. Clip around the curve.

7. TURN HEMS. Turn a half-inch hem on the sleeves and on the bottom of the muumuu and stitch.

8. STITCH ON RICKRACK. Sew rickrack around sleeves, neck and hem. A neater appearance is achieved if you place the trim over the hem stitching in each case.

Many materials are suitable; the standards are flannel for winter and cotton for summer. Use your imagination and add variations to this basic pattern.