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The Threadbare Thirties: Research for a Costume Design for Kaufman and Hart's You Can't Take it With You

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**The Threadbare Thirties*: Research for a
Costume Design for Kaufman and Hart's
You Can't Take it With You**

Lauren Hansen

April 30, 1997
Senior Research Honors

*(Howell, p.57.)

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I. Design and the Design Process

"Each element has its own particular relation to the drama and plays its own part in the drama. And each element-the word, the actor, the costume-has the exact significance of a note in a symphony. Each separate costume we create for a play must be exactly suited both to the character it helps to express and to the occasion it graces."

Robert Edmond Jones
The Dramatic Imagination
(Ingham, p.5)

Just as a playwright crafts his abstract ideas for a story into a play with his use of concrete language, a costume designer must craft abstract thoughts and images of color, style, and texture into concrete items of clothing. This product helps to give the audience insight into the characters from the moment they first appear on stage. In order to manufacture such a product, the designer must choose a process.

The costume design process used for IWU's fall production of Kaufman and Hart's You Can't Take it With You was organized

according to a series of steps.

The first step involved several readings of the script. The first readings were to familiarize the designer with the story and the characters. The next reading allowed the designer to gather information about the setting, time period, and specific requirements the script may indicate for each character; for example, it was indicated that Penny was wearing an artist's smock and beret in Act II.

A script analysis in outline form was the following step. This included information answering the questions where, when, what, how, who, and why. This analysis can be seen on pages 4 through 8.

From the above information, a thematic statement was derived: One should live life in a way that makes one happy...be yourself. This thematic statement is a culmination of the previous steps that helped to summarize the theme of the play. It served as the basis for various costume design decisions.

The next step was to gather information and research of the given time period. The research for this production can be seen from pages 9 to 49. You Can't Take it With You is a comedy set in the 1930s. Because it is a period production, research of the time period was crucial to the design. The heart of the research depended on mediums such as books, magazines and photographs of the period in order to understand the historical, economical and social concerns of the time. From the research and study of the fashion of the time that is outlined in the rest of this paper, roughly sketched costume renderings were generated to inspire

feedback from the rest of the production team (the director of the play and designers of the set, lights and sound.)

After gathering feedback at several production meetings, final renderings were presented which incorporated the suggestions and comments of the production team. Once the director had approved the final costume renderings, the physical costumes had to be created. These were actualized through a month of concentrated work involving patterning, building, fitting and altering. Then the costumes were ready to be added to the rest of the design elements of the production during technical rehearsals. These rehearsals brought together design elements of costumes, set, lights, sound and actors. Dress rehearsals, three in all, were the opportunities for the production team to see the costumes and other designs all together on stage before the show opened. Once minor changes to the costumes were discussed and incorporated, the designs had passed the figurative "point of no return."...the show was ready to open.

II. Analysis of You Can't Take it With You

Where, When, What, How, Who, Why

I. The Given Circumstances: *Where and When*

The play takes place in New York in 1936, in the home of Martin Vanderhof; just around the corner from Columbia University. All of the action of the play takes place inside the home of Mr. Vanderhof. The play opens on a Wednesday evening, in the early summertime. The second act takes place a week later, and the third act takes place the next day.

II. Plot Summary: *What and How*

The story concerns Martin Vanderhof and his extended family. All of the Vanderhof family live in Mr. Vanderhof's home; but they are not the average American family. Ballet dancing, painting, xylophone playing, candy making, fireworks, raising snakes and running a printing press are everyday occurrences in their living room. The youngest granddaughter, Alice, is the only member of the family who holds a steady job outside the family home. Her ambitious ways separate her from the rest of the family and she is the only one who spends most of her day away from the family. Although she loves them dearly, she is embarrassed to introduce them to her fiancé, Tony, who is the "boss's son." The play focuses around Alice's struggle to make her family appear stereotypically storybook perfect to her potential in-laws who are everything her family is not:

conservative, proper and socially elevated.

After a few uncomfortable gatherings and unfortunate experiences, the young couple have doubts as to whether their marriage could work considering their familial differences. However, Mr. Vanderhof convinces them such differences are unimportant. He explains that the young couple's happiness is all that really matters.

III. Characters (In order of appearance): *Who*

Penelope Sycamore is Grandpa Vanderhof's daughter who writes plays and likes to paint. She is a round little woman in her early fifties, comfortable looking, gentle and homey. She seems to have a placid exterior confining passionate ideas. She is married to Paul, and is mother to Essie and Alice.

Essie Carmichael is married to Ed, and is the eldest daughter to Penny and Paul. Twenty years old, she is very slight, almost pixie-like, and wears ballet slippers throughout the entire show. Her favorite pastime is dancing about the living room.

Rheba is the Irish live-in maid in her thirties*. She is a bit sassy, but takes loving care of the family.

Donald is Rheba's Southerner boyfriend*. He is on welfare, so his economic standing is lower class. And it is obvious he loves Rheba very much.

*Ethnicity changed from black actors for the purposes of this production.

Paul Sycamore is husband to Penny, and father to Essie and Alice. He loves to make fireworks, and dearly loves his family. He is a bit detached from the happenings of the household because he spends all his time in the basement working on improving his method of making fireworks.

Mr. DePinna is a middle-aged man of no relation to the family. He is a delivery man who just happened to have ended up staying at the Vanderhof home. He came several years ago to make a delivery and never left. He has lost his lean shape, and has a bit of a pot belly.

Ed Carmichael is married to Essie and is a nondescript man in his mid-thirties. Ed constantly plays the xylophone for Essie to dance to, and prints menus, flyers and business cards on the printing press. He is definitely a very loving, big-hearted man, but is somewhat simple-minded. He and Essie are inseparable.

Martin Vanderhof is a wiry, little man, seventy-five years of age, has a kindly face and heart, and his eyes are full of life. He is father to Penny, and Grandfather to Alice and Essie. The playwrights describe him as a man who "made his peace with the world long, long ago, and his whole attitude and manner are quietly persuasive of this." (Kaufman and Hart, p. 130.)

While **Alice Sycamore** is a lovely, fresh young girl, (about twenty-two), something sets her apart from the rest of the family. Even though she is comfortable in the home, she isn't as eccentric as the rest of the family considering she has daily contact with the outside world. She loves her family whole-

heartedly.

Mr. Henderson is a government IRS man whose nerves are shot. It is quite possible he will become the next stranger to reside in the Vanderhof home.

Tony Kirby is a personable young man, just out of Cambridge, and is the "boss's son." He is idealistic, handsome, and Alice's fiance.

Boris Kolenkhov is a Russian man who thinks he is a ballet master. Boris is a huge, hairy, loud, and stereotypical Russian. While at times he is overbearing, he is a source of delight to the Vanderhof family.

Gay Wellington is an actress who comes to the house to read one of Penny's plays. She is a rude, flamboyant sexually driven woman who constantly has a drink in her hand.

Anthony Kirby, Sr. is a conservative banker in his fifties who raises very expensive orchids. His elitist hobby helps to set him apart from people like those in the Vanderhof family. He is Tony's father and Alice's boss. Mr. Kirby is a very proper man, with excellent social standing, and a more than substantial salary. He heartily disapproves of the young marriage.

Mrs. Kirby is a conservative housewife who is married to Anthony Kirby, Sr.. She believes in spiritualism because it is fashionable and disapproves of the proposed marriage.

Three Men (G-Men). These are indistinguishable government men who come to arrest Ed for his illegal printing.

Grand Duchess Olga Katrina is an eccentric yet amiable woman who visits the Vanderhof home in between shifts of waitressing at

a local restaurant chain. It is never said in the script whether or not she is a real duchess. It is important however, that it is obvious that she believes she is royalty.

IV. Thematic Statement: *Why*

One should live life in a way that makes one happy...be yourself.

V. Personal Design Objectives: *How*

Since the thematic statement focuses on "being yourself," the costumes needed to show each character's individual personality. By following the guidelines concluded through research of the time period, and character descriptions along with the given circumstances, decisions for each character's costuming were determined.

III. Overview of the Effects of the Economy on Fashion

After a decade of boyish essence in the 1920s, (a complete rejection of curves and feminine flounce), the women's fashion industry opened its eyes to charm and subtle innovation. It mastered the art of timeless elegance and brought a mature image of womanhood into style in what has become known as one of the decade-between-the-wars; the 1930s.

The economy took a plunge due to the Stock Market Crash at the end of the twenties, and the thirties was a time to work toward a recovery from the Great Depression. Uncertain foreign relations and the fluctuating exchange rates made deals with Paris designers rare, so the U.S. looked to its own talents. Lack of materials and funds forced the fashion industry to adapt to the limitations of the time.

The use of plastic and synthetic materials that developed in World War I for things like airplanes and parachutes provided solutions for the fashion industry. Artificial silk, elastic, and the late nineteenth century creations of nylon and rayon provided inexpensive alternatives to high fashion fabrics. These synthetic creations were so ingenious that women who could afford silks and satins or diamonds and pearls, actually preferred to wear artificial glitter and glamour. After all, it wasn't chic to look rich in a time of economic struggle; it was an age of modesty.

IV. How Social Changes Affected Fashion

The extravagant lifestyles enjoyed by the wealthy families in the 1920s had to adjust to the economic realities of the Depression era. For example, these families' homes no longer had numerous servants; some were lucky to keep on one cook. Well-off families closed off sections of homes as it became increasingly more expensive to maintain large estates. Weekend entertaining such as celebratory cocktail parties and black tie events consisted of small "snack" dinners or casual gatherings in the thirties. It was no longer necessary to have an extensive wardrobe for frequent social affairs.

But the blow of the Depression hit the middle and lower classes the hardest; in the U.S., the middle-class basically disappeared. Once comfortable homes were deserted, or several families would reside in the space together. Families would cling to each other for support and found diversion in the time they spent with each other. At this point in history, the radio brought the family together. The Vanderhof family is an example of a middle-class family banding together in one home to survive. They find their diversion by pursuing happiness through dancing, painting and xylophone playing.

V. The Look of the 1930s

Spanning the years of apparel, the 1930s seems to be the only decade in which it was obvious there was to be a new look, immediately. Notice the difference in silhouette from the 1920s to the 1930s on page 13. In the twenties, the "garconne" look was very popular for women. This look had no waist-line, a knee-length hemline and hid the curves of the feminine figure. But this 1920s style seemed forced on the masses; it was frivolous, and not necessarily as flattering as women desired. The style led women to feel ashamed of their shape.

While the style of the thirties had a lower hemline, it was figure-hugging, with a defined waist, accentuated shoulders, and an overall subtle charm. It enabled women to feel feminine with a simple style. Achieving this silhouette wasn't easy: people's budgets determined how fashionable they could be. Whatever it was they bought had to wear well, and stand up to the ever-changing laws of fashion. So fashion simplified to fit the budget and found a timeless style.

This was the first era where completely different lengths of skirts were worn at different times of the day. The standard day-dress was mid-calf, while the evening dress remained at least ankle-length, and floor-length was reserved for black tie and formal dinners. The typical day dress consisted of a skirt with many gores, a sashed waist, or the use of a fabric belt, a draped neckline or turned-back collar. Otherwise, a woman might wear a

modified shirtwaist dress with a fairly straight skirt, or a slim suit with a fitted jacket. Note these shirtdress styles on the characters Penny, Rheba and Essie in the provided examples on pages 14 through 16. Also note the jacket and skirt combination Alice wears on page 17, and the suit on Mrs. Kirby on page 18. Considering that the Vanderhof family was not wealthy, choices were made to put the characters in a thrifty, budget-conscious fashion that included the use of mix and match ensembles.

Evening wear usually depended on the interesting back detail, like a cluster of small flowers or beads at the neckline or the waistline. But the most popular looks were dramatic, backless gowns. These gowns became so extravagant, critics joked that a lady should enter the room backwards. Note the example on page 19 of these gowns. In Acts I and II in the play, Alice wears a bias-cut, white evening dress, as shown in the picture on page 20. Since she would not have had the money or maturity to wear a dramatic, backless gown, her dress is simple, with shoulder interest and a small rose at the bustline.

All of the extravagance of the evening gowns allowed day wear to remain simple and functional. A lady could show her flair and exotic tastes while socializing or entertaining, and be practical and comfortable during the day. This decade concentrated on combining glamour and practicality, sophistication and simplicity. The ultimate goal for everyone was elegance.



1920s Style



1930s Style

You Can't Take It With You

Penny



You Can't Take It With You

RHEBA



YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

ESSIE



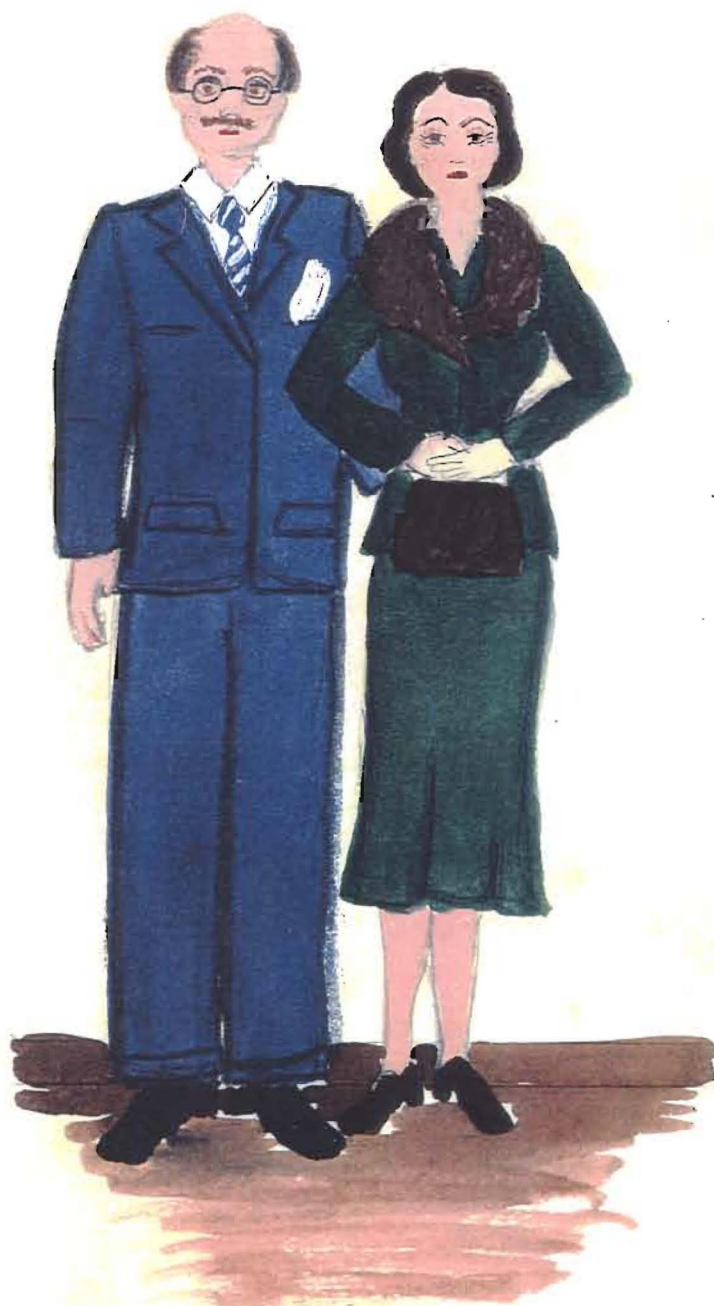
You Can't Take It With You

ALICE



you CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

MR. & MRS. KIRBY



Evening Wear 1930–1934





VI. The Fantasy Trend

And the Designers Involved

Another view of the time reveals flashes of diversion, silliness, and amusing fads. One designer who was known specifically for creative and innovative design was Schiaparelli. Hand-mirror buttons on the front of suits, huge butterfly details on the shoulders of gowns, and newspaper print fabric hats were some of Schiaparelli's most memorable creations. Schiaparelli was the top fantasy designer of the thirties and her work was sensational; some pieces were so outrageous they even inspired jokes. Page 23 shows Schiaparelli's infamous butterfly design, a perfect example of the fantasy trend. Going along with this fantastical fad gave people a chance to escape the grim realities of their lives.

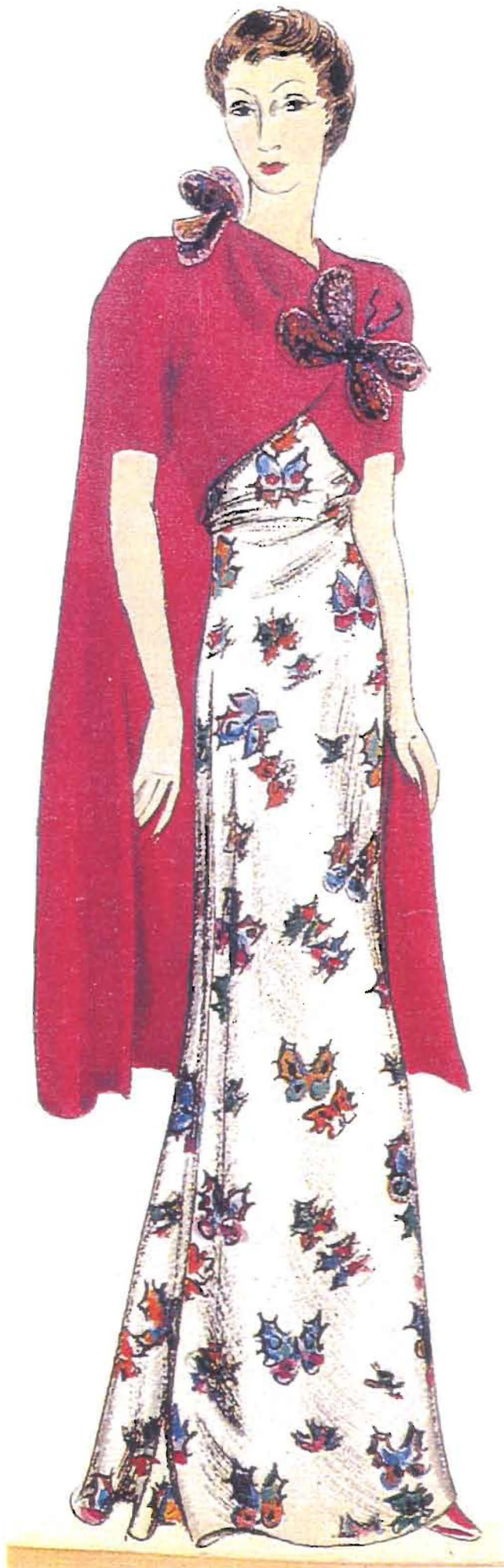
Other designers began to bring touches of exotic apparel to the public as plane travel became more accessible, and they were able to reach new cities, and import new looks. These new looks transformed into exaggerated ethnic styles which became popular in Paris and the U.S.: oriental necklines and fabrics, harem trousers, Russian coats, peasant blouses, dirndl skirts, serape shawls, kimono wraps with obi sashes, even sombreros and turbans.

These exotic looks were what Gay Wellington's flamboyant dress and accessories were based upon in the design of her costume. Her rendering on page 24 shows the bright, almost gaudy style of her character. Being an actress, she would have been

very conscious of the image she portrayed, and would have wanted to stand out from a crowd. These fads allowed the individual, like Gay Wellington, to be daring, diverting, and different.

Two other characters in the play, Boris Kolenkhov and the Grand Duchess Olga Katrina required fantasy in their costume designs. Being portrayed as stereotypically Russian in the show, they needed costumes that set them apart from the Vanderhof family. Kolenkhov was dressed in a peasant blouse - which was actually a style being sold in the thirties - and a vest with a bright scarf to give him a dramatic look. Olga Katrina wore a gown reminiscent of the days of the Czar with an empire waistline and a long, clinging skirt with a train. These choices were influenced by research about Russia in previous centuries, but were also plausible in the play because the 1930s had such a strange, fantastical side to it. Note their renderings on pages 25 and 26.

Among the designers in Paris, Schiaparelli and Chanel were the biggest names and competition. While Schiaparelli's innovative use of detail brought popularity that only lasted the decade, Chanel created a style of timeless elegance which is still in vogue today. Chanel was famous for effortless simplicity. Page 27 has an example of Chanel's style; notice the vast difference between Schiaparelli and Chanel's styles. These two designers exemplify the range of styles in the thirties.



GAY W.



You CAN'T TAKE IT WITH You

KOLENKO

YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU



OLGA

You Can't Take It With You





*The eagle eye of
Coco Chanel, 1939*

Page 27

Coco Chanel's timeless elegance.

(Howell, p. 63.)

VII. The Ready-To-Wear Lines

Active Wear for Women and Men

For many women, much of the look of the decade was developed through lines called "ready-to-wear." Since it was impossible to spend the money on Paris originals, simpler, easier designs were created to be sold off the rack at department stores in generic sizes small, medium and large. Through these lines, sportswear earned its place in society. Since the 1930s styles focused on a beautiful figure, health and beauty, people were inspired to be more active in order to achieve that look. Now men and women alike required active wear.

For women, designers created feminine knit separates, relying on Lastex, a brand-name elastic element that was woven into knits to keep their shape. These separates expanded the wardrobe and made it versatile. Instead of owning only one dress, one could have several skirt, blouse and sweater combinations. The excerpt from a 1930s Sears catalogue on page 29 shows these styles. New daring bathing suits, pants, shorts, flared skirts, and bare-midriff tops were popular for holidays to the beach or out to sea.

Men were able to wear looser trousers, or short pants with pullover sweaters or vests, like those shown on page 30.

Setting the pace AND VALUE in Sports Apparel

Ahoy
There!

See my
3-PIECE
MARINE
OUTFIT

BLOUSE
SLACKS
HAT

\$1.49

New
SWEAT
SHIRT

85¢

SLACKS
\$1.19

(A) Washable Cotton Linene middy and slacks. Tie and hat included. Sizes: 8 to 16 years. *State size.*
27 E 5185—White with Navy. \$1.49
Not Prepaid. Shpg. Wt., 1 lb.

(B) Sports "Sweat" shirt in light weight cotton terry cloth. Lisle knit cuffs, neck and waist band. Can be worn tucked in or as overblouse. *State size.*
27 E 5187—Fancy Stripe. 85¢
Not Prepaid. Shpg. Wt., 10 oz.

Washable Cotton Jean Slacks
Elastic in waistband. *State size.*
Sizes: 12, 14, 16, 18 and 20 years.
27 E 5190—White with Navy. \$1.19
Not Prepaid. Shpg. Wt., 10 oz.

(C) Regulation Riding Shirt
Washfast Cotton Broadcloth
Sizes: 32 to 40 inches bust. *State size.*
27 E 5191—Solid White. 98¢
27 E 5192—White with Blue Stripe.
Not Prepaid. Shipping Weight, 8 oz.

The three items described below are sent direct from New York to you . . . but you pay the postage only from our nearest Mail Order Store.

(C) Excellent Quality Cotton
Whipcord Jodhpurs
Leather knee reinforcements, foot straps. Sizes: 24 to 34 in. waist measure. *State waist and inseam.* Measure inseam from crotch to point just below ankle bone.
31 E 8131—Tan Whipcord. \$3.48
Shipping Weight, 2 lbs., 2 oz.

(D) Sleeveless Riding Jacket
Smart, popular! Fine quality, washable Cotton Gabardine. *State size.*
Sizes: 14 to 20 years.
31 E 5193—Natural Chamois. \$1.98
Shipping Weight, 1 lb. 2 oz.

POLO SHIRT

85¢

IT'S SHORTS
for Sports
98¢

Polo shirt
(E) For all round sports this dashing Shirt of fine Cotton Mesh. Lisle knit cuffs and waist band. Sizes: 14 to 20 years. *State size.*
27 E 5194—Maize. 85¢
27 E 5195—White.
Not Prepaid. Shipping Weight, 8 oz.

Cotton Jean Shorts
Introduced by famous tennis stars. Fine, washable Shorts. Contrasting belt and side stripes. *State waist measure.*
Waist measures, 26, 28, 30 and 32 inches.
27 E 5196—White 98¢
with Red Stripes.
Not Prepaid. Shipping Weight, 10 oz.

(F) Wear it everywhere—wear each piece separately! It will answer a dozen "clothes problems" in an economical way. Three piece Cotton Corduroy knit in gorgeous summer colors. Slip-over sweater in soft, subdued stripes. Cardigan and skirt. \$2.98 in solid color.
Sizes: 14 to 20 years. *State size.*
31 E 5197—Maize.
31 E 5198—Copen.
31 E 5199—White.

Sent direct from New York to you . . . but you pay the postage only from our nearest Mail Order Store. Shipping Weight, 1 lb., 4 oz.

Save at Sears on
STYLISH RIDING TOGS

WHIPCORD JODHPURS
\$3.48

RIDING BREECHES
Whipcord-Gabardine
\$2.98 \$2.69

JACKET - SHIRT
\$1.98 98¢

TWIN
SWEATERS
With
Matching
SKIRT—

Summer's
Indispensable

\$2.98

IN THE 1939 SPOTLIGHT...

NEW..PRACTICAL..SMART

Summer Togs

Everything at Sears Sold on Easy Terms...See Page 5



Now—Matchea Outfits! New Style and Comfort!

Ⓐ "The Ensenada"

\$188 Sports sensation from fun-loving coast of lower California. Nationally advertised last summer at \$2.95 to \$3.50.

A cool, airy weave of natural tan shade porous cotton. Sanforized-Shrunk for lasting fit. Maximum fabric shrinkage 1". Easily laundered at home. Shirt with wooden buttons, two pockets. Slacks have setdown belt loops, self belt with rings, pleats.

Shirt size: 34 to 44-in. chest. Pantwaives, -in.

88

ble

es,

in.

19

Ⓑ "The Riviera"

\$395 Lustrous Herringbone Deerfield suiting—featherweight, colorfast, finely spun of superb quality cotton. Self belt has eyelets and buckle.

Matched outfits are sweeping the country, and Sears give you the smartest to be found at savings of at least \$1.50 to \$2.00. Jaunty, short-sleeved Polo coat-style shirt, worn in or out. Trousers are swagger slack style; self belt, double pleats, 20-inch cuffs. Pockets and waistband lining of durable twill. Sanforized-Shrunk (not over 1% fabric shrinkage no matter how often they're washed). Handsomely designed, made to keep you cool. Available only in matched sets of shirt and trousers.

Sizes for "Riviera" and "Pasadena"

34 to 44-in. chest, 28 to 40-in. waist, 29 to 34-in. inseam. Be sure to state chest, waist and inseam measures; also age, height and weight. Shipping weight, 2 lbs. 6 oz.

45 L 7380 - Tan

45 L 7382 - Light Blue

45 L 7384 - Gray

45 L 7390 - Light Tan

45 L 7392 - Light

Gray

\$3.95

\$2.98

Ⓒ "The Pasadena"

\$298 Attractive Basket Weave (self check) cotton suiting.

A light, breezy summer fabric—easy to launder... Self belt with rings.



Cool Sports Coat of "Sportflash" Cloth

\$349

Famous cotton fabric in popular checks of bright new summer shades... Sanforized-Shrunk for permanent fit (1% Maximum fabric shrinkage)... Unlined... Sportback, Smart with odd slacks.

Colorful woven-in pattern. 2-button notch lapel model; 3 patch pocket.

Sizes: 34 to 44-in. chest. State chest and sleeve length measures as shown on Page F in back of book. Shipping weight, 1 lb. 5 oz.

45 L 7377 - Brown

45 L 7378 - Green

\$3.49

3.49



Newest All Wool Sports Coat

\$795

Luxurious All Wool Cassimere in striking Hounds Tooth check with overplaid... Latest 3-button notch lapel model with flapped patch pockets, "Free Swing" back.

Beautifully tailored and lined with Earl-Glo rayon. Wear it with sport slacks for an ensemble outfit.

Sizes: 34 to 44-in. chest. State chest and sleeve measurements as shown on Page F in back of book.

45 L 7375 - Spring Green. Ship. wt. 2 lbs.

45 L 7376 - Medium Brown

\$7.95

7.95

VIII. Undergarments

The basic silhouette of the woman changed from the boyish style of the twenties to a more attractive, curvaceous line in the thirties. Many women achieved this line through corsets which transformed from the stiff, confining contraptions of the 19th century. They began to use elastic instead of boning, and they decreased in size, therefore becoming more comfortable. Some corsets only cinched the waist, or moved lower to cinch the hips to create a smooth line from the waist to the hip.

Brassieres lifted the bosom to make it full, and defined, improving the natural contours of the body. Women wore underwear briefs in the thirties because they were stylish and simple, although, some women still preferred to wear knickers, or bloomers of the past decade.

With the growing popularity of rayon, it was easy to obtain slim, bias-cut slips and knickers, or cami-knicker combinations. Not only were they lower in cost, but they were looser and easier to wash and maintain. Women became liberated with the changes in undergarments. Less binding and more choices allowed women to wear what they liked, and be comfortable. This comfort helped to give women the confidence that was so important to the look of the thirties.

IX. Accessories

Because the look of the day-dress remained simple, women relied on their accessories to show their personality. Examples of these accessories are on page 34. On page 35, Alice's ensemble is a perfect example of a simple spring day-dress brought to life by accessories: a neat, little hat with accents of color that match her dress, coordinated gloves, shoes and handbag. With accessories, she has a sharp, fashionable look.

Earlier in the century, accessories were expected to be in the best of taste, but in the thirties they were witty and daring. Amusing, flashy pieces of costume jewelry were items that added fantasy to a simple ensemble. Women knew that in order to be fashionable, they needed to have gaudy, eye-catching jewelry. Even designer Chanel agreed, "It does not matter if they are real...so long as they look like junk!" (Howell, p.63.)

Along with jewelry, other accessories changed. Gloves were a longer length, and the gauntlet flare at the elbow of the glove mirrored that of the pant leg. Designers started to use a variety of bright, new colors and textures. In correlation with the element of fantasy of the decade, milliners worked to use these colors to find new and crazy interpretations of more traditional styles. What developed was a flirtatious, truly frivolous decade of hats: Persian turbans, Henri III hats, Arcadian Shephard hats, newspaper bicornes and tricornes, quaint pillboxes, and wide brimmed garden hats. These

designs added finishing touches to the fantasy high fashion trend.

The daily-wear millinery was less exotic, somber and plain. Most hats were soft-crowned, soft-brimmed, and some of the most casual styles ever seen. Soft hats with small crowns and modest brims were what women wore daily. As styles began to be more exaggerated, flat hats with enormous brims which covered half of the face became fashionable.

As the decade went on, smaller, "toy" hats appeared. These miniature hats were no more than a cluster of flowers or band of velvet and some netting, and were consistent with the simple look of the day. To finish the look, women carried coordinated pocketbooks, which, like the earlier hats, were a flat envelope shape. These pocketbooks later became more sculptural with shoulder straps. Tying this outfit together was a pair of platform shoes. For summertime, shoes had complicated sandal straps and were made of bright colors, sometimes with decorated platforms. High fashion trends depended on detail. A lady needed to have the perfect set of accessories to complete her outfit.

Accessories 1930–1934



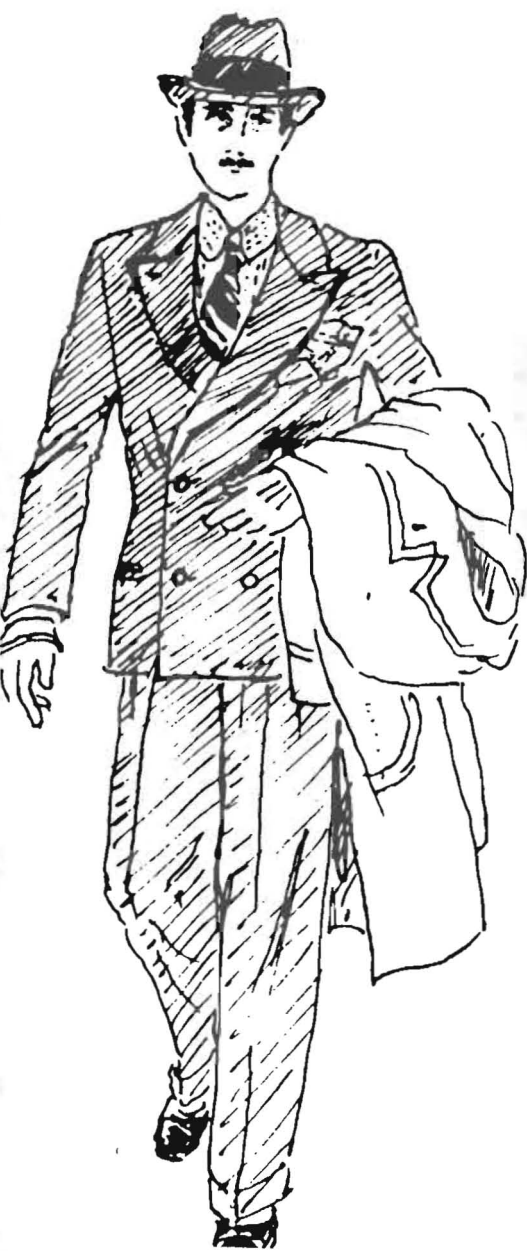


X. Men's Fashions

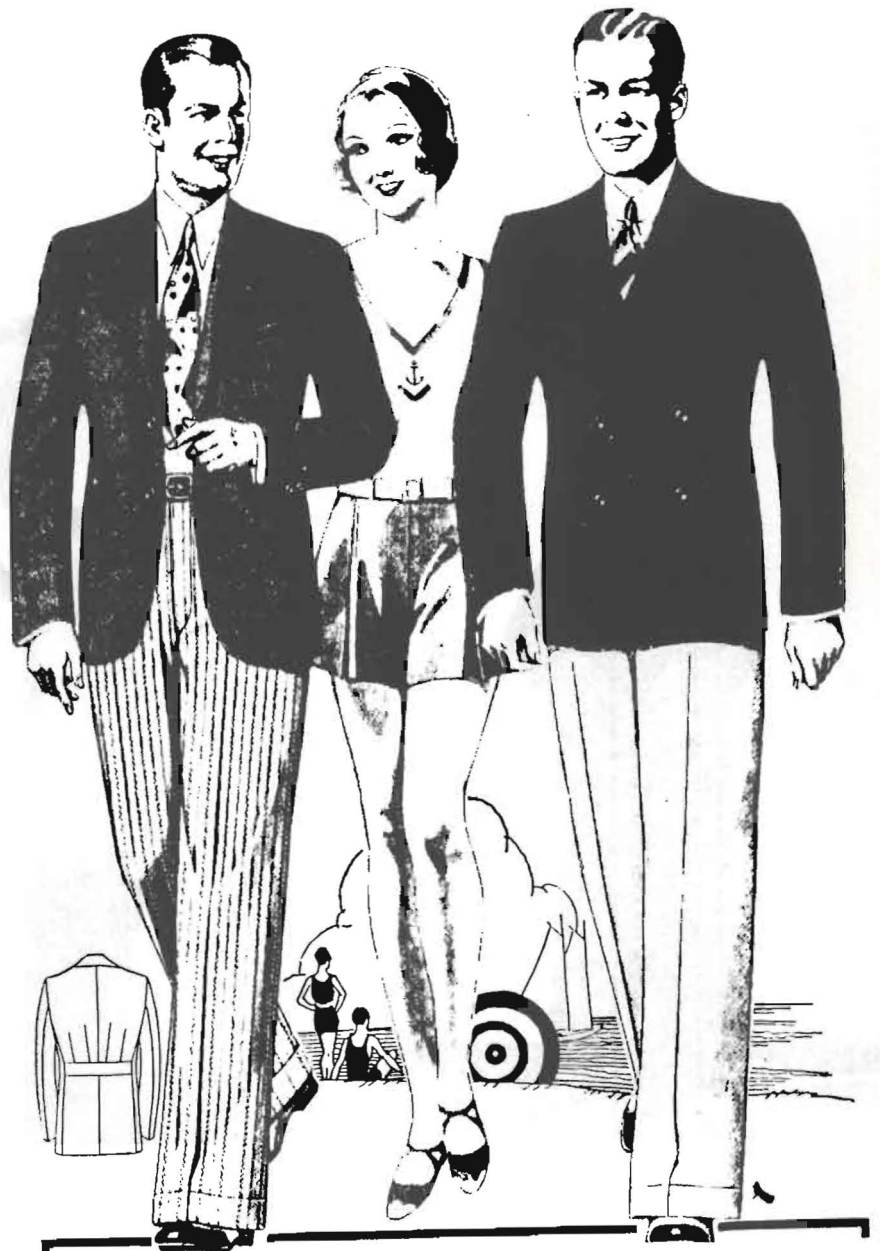
Men's fashions of the thirties didn't make any dramatic transformations from those of the twenties; The silhouette . remained the same. The comparison of 1920s vs. 1930s men's silhouettes can be seen on page 37. The broad, straight, smooth shoulder line, narrow waist and straight leg has lasted even into today's fashion; Timeless elegance.

Whether it was a dark, double-breasted, evening blue suit, or pleated trousers with a sweater vest and shirt, the look was easy and attractive. Most of the costume design choices for the men in the play were based on these styles. They can be seen on pages through . Tony's photograph shows a beautiful, navy blue, double-breasted evening suit that he wears for a night at the ballet. Most men found it inappropriate during the economic decline of the decade to wear the tuxedo styles so popular in the twenties. Rarely could one afford such formality.

The rest of Tony's outfits consisted of the relaxed trouser and sweater vest combinations, or simple, lightweight suits. This showed his sense of style, and easy-going nature. As a contrast, Tony's father, Mr. Kirby, wore only conservative three-piece suits. Characters such as Paul, DePinna, Donald, Ed and Grandpa spent much of their time at home, so it was appropriate for them to be in shirtsleeves and trousers.



1920s Style



1930s Style

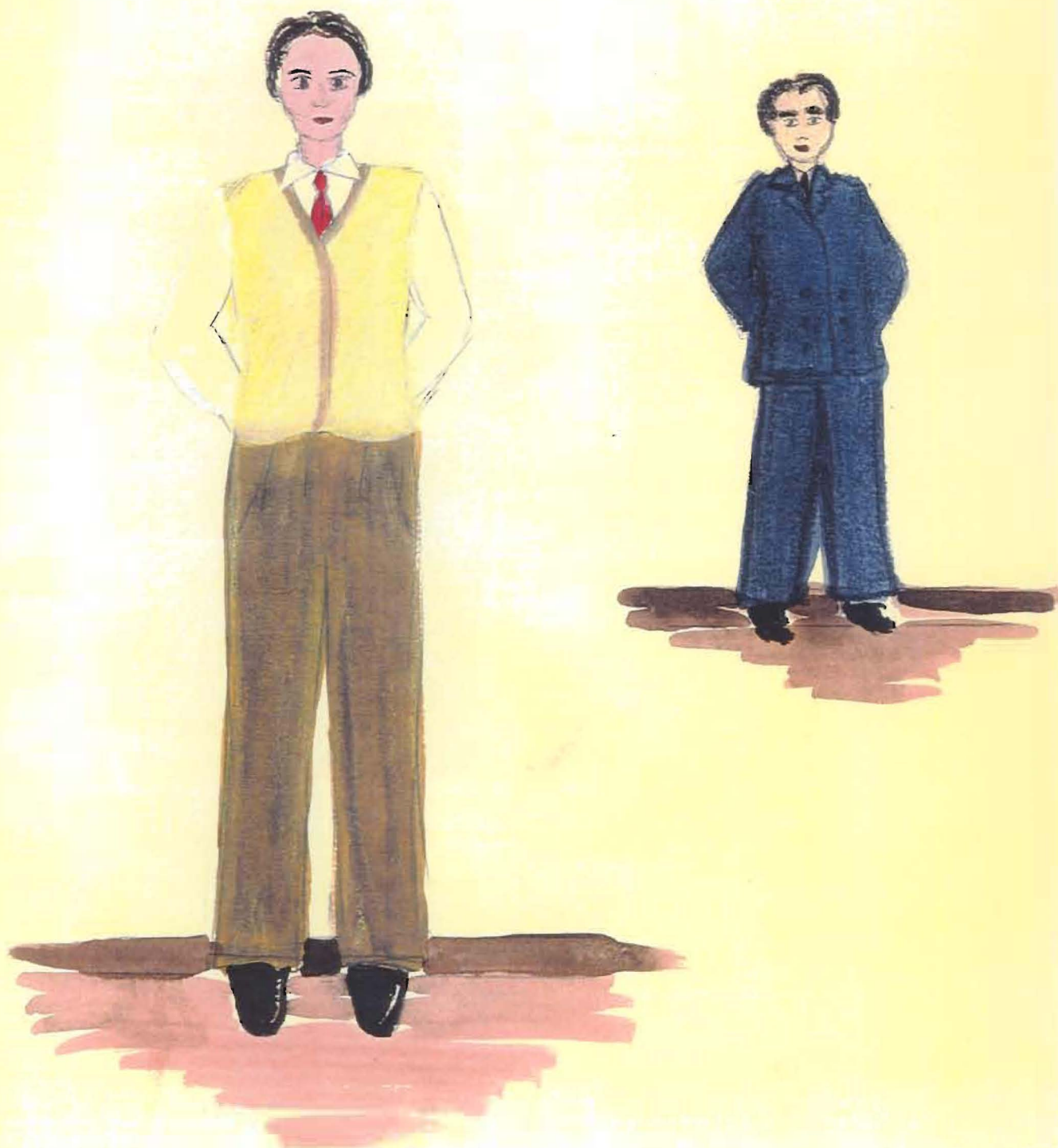
Page 37

(Nunn, p. 190)

(Blum, p. 35)

You Can't Make It With You

TONY



you CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

MR. & MRS. KIRBY



YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

PAUL #3
DEPRINIA



you CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

DONALD



YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

ED



GRANDPA

You Can't Take It With You



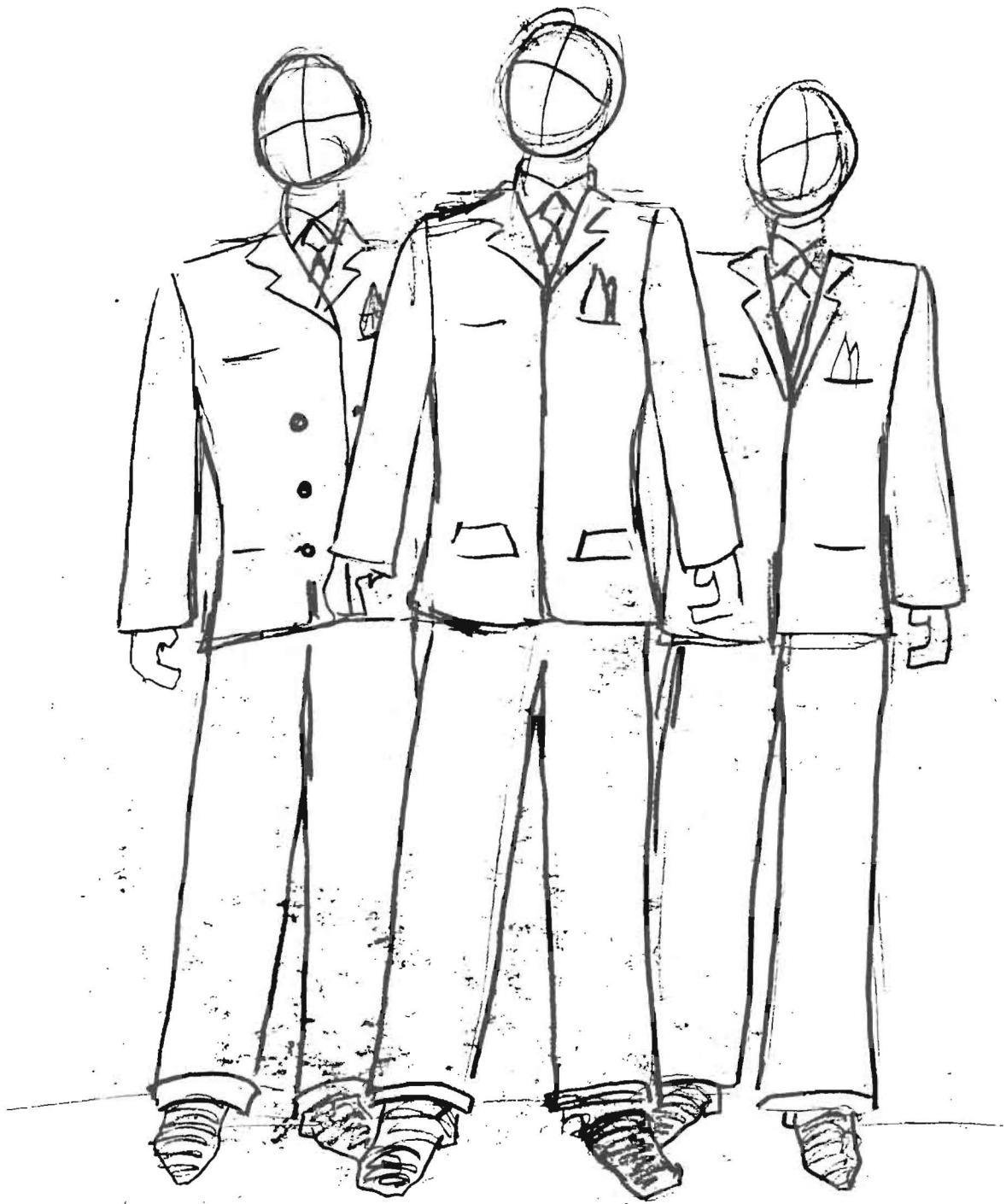
You Can't Take It With You

MR. HENDERSON



YOU CAN'T TAKE IT WITH YOU

G-MEN



XI. Hollywood's Influence

Many designers gained recognition in this era through what is considered the "most perfect visual medium for the exploitation of fashion and beauty that ever existed": the screen. (Milbank, p. 105.) People went to movies instead of studying fashion magazines. There they could see young starlets who always looked their best. They wore what was flattering, timeless, photogenic, simple but glamorous. Without designers like Edith Head, Walter Plunkett, Chanel, Schiaparelli, Adrian, not to mention countless others, movie stars would have been without their "Hollywood glamour."

The most stereotypical Hollywood look was the bias-cut white satin evening slip-dress, (a well-known Adrian classic) with a white ermine wrap, platinum blonde hair and matching pumps. Page 47 shows an example of the Adrian classic look. This glamorous image was another part of the fantasy side of fashion.

But most influential were the images of what stars wore off the screen, in photo shoots or working on the set. For example, Marlene Dietrich wore a trouser suit in 1933 as a working outfit on the set, and the look soon came into fashion. Hollywood was one of the most influential vehicles for designers of the period.



Page 47

(Milbank, p. 98.)

XII. Conclusion

The 1930s was an era of political and economical strife, and the world had to learn to adapt. The fashion industry was no exception. The obstacles that women and men had to overcome didn't leave them time to concern themselves with fashion. The fashion of the thirties was a simple and elegant, functional look that remains timeless.

The IWU production of You Can't Take it With You needed to reflect the previous pages of research, and the design objective of conveying the thematic statement: One should live life in a way that makes one happy...be yourself. By incorporating the simple and functional yet timelessly elegant styles of the 1930s with the personalities of each individual character, the finished product emerged. Thus, the design objectives were met.



XIII. Bibliography

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