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Letter from Los Angeles

Little Girl's Dream... Big Girl's Reality

Gayle Mellott is five feet nine and five eights inches... and every inch a beauty. When you meet Miss Mellott and see her collection of clothes you wonder how anyone can be so beautiful and so talented at the same time. And because of her two great gifts, Gayle Mellott is a woman with two lives. Her second life began two years ago when she opened a shop in exclusive Beverly Hills for those forgotten women of fashion, the tall and the long-waisted.

Miss Mellott's designing career actually began at the age of three when she pulled apart a little robe that had

been given her, cut big holes in its sides to put her arms through, then tied a string around herself in a manner that pleased her precociously developed sense of fashion. Ever since then she has been sewing... for herself, her friends, her sister, her mother, her neighbors or, in fact, anyone who would let her.

This early display of talent was never taken very seriously, however, as she was a beautiful child and soon told by friends and relatives that she was born for the stage. She remembers saying at the age of seven, "Yes, I'm going to be an actress, but not like



«Zurrer»
Plain Flisca fabric by
Weisbrod Zuerer Fils, Hausesen s.A.

Photo Los Angeles Times -
Fay Hammond



Dress of beige cotton Jacquard by
Edwin Naef S.A., Zurich.

Coat of bronze silk organza by
L. Abraham & Co. Silks Ltd Zurich.

But you see, I never really *wanted* to be in show business. I was always afraid, too timid, too shy. I didn't like being stared at and deep in the back of my mind I always expected somehow to get back to designing clothes, not showing them off."

She spent several years appearing in various shows, modelling for famous designers such as Hattie Carnegie and travelling. The serious illness of her mother brought her back to Los Angeles where she whiled away her time appearing on the earliest television shows. She says there was hardly a program, except for news or sports broadcasts, that she didn't appear on. After the death of her mother she turned to her sister, of whom she says: "Nancy is my strong right arm. I'm only half a person. She's my other half, and *she's* the one with the brains." Nancy, who is quite beautiful in her own right and almost as stately and tall, encouraged her sister to exploit her real talents to work at what she had really wanted her whole life... designing clothes.

The sisters then opened a retail shop to find out what the public wanted. They concluded after an extremely successful year in business that women, en masse, have little taste, but on the other hand, they know what they want and if given good clothes they will buy them. With the encouragement of a fine specialty shop buyer, they entered into the wholesale end of their business a year ago. They decorated their salon in a charming and feminine manner, they serve tea and coffee on the

Spun rayon coat dress.
«Zürrer» fabric by
Weisbrod Zuerer Fils, Hausen s.A.



the ones you see in pictures. I'm going to be a real, *live* actress so I can wear my *own* clothes." Only a few years later her prophecy was realized completely when she accepted a dare to enter a beauty contest. She designed a sophisticated black velvet gown, bought the highest heeled pumps she could find, assumed the most poised manner a seventeen-year old could muster and she won the contest easily. She then entered a state contest which she won, too, and went to New York as a result of her victory. While sitting at a nightclub with her sister and brother, she was seen by Billy Rose, the famous impresario, who sent a message to her table and asked her to take a part in his next production, a musical comedy that lasted on Broadway for years. This was the beginning of Gayle Mellott's first career!

Most young girls would have been thrilled and fired with ambition after such a propitious entry into the most glamorous of all worlds. Gayle says, thoughtfully: "Yes, it was rather exciting, it was a kind of fun.

slightest provocation, play their practical jokes and wear funny hats to greet all visitors. In other words, the Mellotts are a gay and enchantingly different variety of enterprise in the local design world. Perhaps they are just another of the unorthodox phenomena that make this "Hollywood". Or perhaps they are deeply practical people who feel there's no reason why you can't turn out the best in your field and enjoy doing it too.

There is no doubt that Gayle Mellott is one of the best designers in her field. She uses the finest of fabrics, many of them Swiss. She gets and maintains the finest workmanship obtainable, combining it with her own deep understanding of line as opposed to decoration. The firm's best and biggest customer is Saks Fifth Avenue, proof alone that her standards are high.

In order to insure perfect wearability, Gayle has muslins of all garments made on her personally. She then puts the dress through a strenuous test... driving around Los Angeles for several days at a time. It then gets worn for several social evenings. If the garment

feels completely comfortable during all these activities it stays in the collection. Gayle says: "If you feel uncomfortable in a dress, how good can you really look? This is the reason we make such extensive use of Swiss fabrics, especially the synthetics. They are easy to manage, easy to clean and easy to pack. Today's American woman is a travelling woman and she needs all of these qualities in her clothes."

The collection includes fine daytime dresses, spectator sports clothes, soft silk and wool suits and dresses for "little evenings" — cocktail and dancing. There are a few "at home" numbers and lovely afternoon gowns in magnificent imported prints. In other words, enough to give the woman who has difficulty finding clothes a complete wardrobe with no difficulty to it at all. This is what Gayle Mellott always wanted. This is what her customers get... and love.

HÉLÈNE-F. MILLER

All models are from
Gayle Mellott, Los Angeles

Silk linen dress with self bra.
Fabric by
L. Abraham & Co. Silks Ltd.,
Zurich.

Photo Los Angeles Times -
Fay Hammond



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