Where It’s From, What It Cost, and What She Liked About It

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Abstract

Princess Diana and Farrah Fawcett were two of many stars who inspired women all over America to change their style in the 1980s. Celebrities and popular culture influence how many people dress and present themselves in daily life. In this paper, I will examine how Anne Marie Schultheis, during her college years, defined her own personal style while still being a “follower of fashion.”

Introduction to Anne Marie Schultheis’s Life

In May of 1959, Anne Marie Schultheis was born in Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania. She grew up in a middle-class household, with a fully intact family that consisted of her two parents and four siblings Clare, Dave, Paul, and John. Her father was the Director of Plant Operations and Human Resources for the Kawneer Company (an aluminum manufacturing company) and her mother was an administrative assistant to a State Farm Agent. Schultheis was dressed mainly by her mother, Sally, in her early life. When she began high school, Schultheis started to be more independent with her clothing choices and started to create her own style. When I interviewed her, she remarked that her school style was: “tailored and a bit more dressed up than my peers’. Jeans and gauze tops were what I wore on weekends. I never wore sports gear, but I wore shorts and T-shirts in the summer.”

Schultheis was never what one would consider a “city girl” by any means. She never lived in an urban environment, so she was not constantly surrounded by high fashion. She attended University of Scranton, in an upper-middle class, family-oriented, rural-suburban town. While at University of Scranton, Schultheis’s family moved their home from Bloomsburg, Pennsylvania, to Elkhart, Indiana. Because Schultheis paid her own way through college, she was always saving money and working hard at odd jobs and schoolwork. Schultheis’s hard work paid off when she received an acceptance letter and full scholarship to a graduate program at Villanova University, located in a more lively suburban area of Pennsylvania (Schultheis).

It is not exactly easy to be a trendsetter in a rural suburban area, while also maintaining some sort of “normal” appearance compared to the rest of the community. Surroundings were definitely a huge factor in what Schultheis chose to wear to class in college:

My shoes in college were based on comfort since the hills in Scranton were tough to maneuver in heels! I always strove to look good, to be a bit more dressed and put together than my peers. I was never a sloppy or grungy college student. I would never wear sweatpants to class, always a dress or dress pants. By senior year I wore more jeans and sweaters. No one I went to school with
had tons of money, so high fashion was never out there as a goal. It was more about accentuating your positives, which for me meant tailored clothes. (Schultheis)

When asked if she thought she was stylish, Schultheis responded, “I was in a rural high school and a middle-class dominated university. I thought I had style—or should I say I had my own style.” Fashion certainly was not an afterthought for Schultheis. “I tried to keep up with the trends. I was really broke most of the time and so would save up for one killer outfit and make do with the rest. I always gravitated towards more tailored things. When I was in high school, college, and grad school I shopped a lot and so I focused on high quality items that I would purchase on sale.”

Most of Schultheis’s shopping in the late 1970s and early 1980s was done at small local boutiques in Scranton, Villanova, or Bloomsburg, but whenever she got the chance, she preferred department stores.

The 1980s and American Fashion: Dressing for Success

The 1980s was a lively decade. The economy was booming and everyone was spending money. Department stores became more prominent and everyone, including Schultheis, was sure to make note of where all their clothes came from. In their book 20th Century Dress in the United States, authors Jane Farrell-Beck and Jean Parsons note that “America, in effect, went shopping in the 1980s, perhaps as a relief from the economic woes of the previous 10 years; for whatever reason, consumption was on the rise” (214).

In the early 1980s the notorious preppy style returned into pop culture. “The media focused on young, upwardly mobile professionals—also known as yuppies.” This group between college age and forty, who were famous for a self-indulgent lifestyle, focused on status-consumer goods. More women were now in the work place, and “dress for success” suits became stylish (Farrell Beck and Parsons 214-221). Along with this “dress for success” notion came a more androgynous style. More women began wearing suits, ties, and cutting their hair short. Figure 1 shows Schultheis dressed more professionally, following the “dress for success” movement with both short hair and bow tie. When asked about her outfit, Schultheis remarked, “This was taken when I was out of graduate school and working. I loved the angora sweater at the time. Bow ties were very ‘de rigeur’ in the work world.” Women at this time were being rapidly introduced to the workplace, and their suits became necessary to give an impression of success. However, suits were not exactly what every woman wanted to be wearing. Schultheis explains, “I owned one suit in college—gray flannel skirt, slacks, and jacket with navy blue velvet collar, pocket piping and buttons. The next suit in my wardrobe came when I was in 1985—a navy jacket and skirt made of some industrial woven fabric. I saw suits as a necessary evil for work.”

Figure 1. Anne Marie Schultheis and her mother, Sally, in the basement of their home in Elkhart, Indiana, 1984.

Farrah Fawcett’s Reign of Influence
The enduring fashion and beauty icon Farrah Fawcett was, without a doubt, the most continually influential face in the 1980s. When discussing Fawcett, Schultheis remarked, “Every girl wanted to be her, and every guy wanted to date her.” Fawcett began her career as a minor television actress, but one single image changed her entire career. In 1976, the same year Fawcett played Jill Munroe on the television show Charlie's Angels, Pro Arts Inc. released a poster of Fawcett that went viral almost immediately. It sold a record twelve million copies, making it one of the most famous pin-ups ever (“Farrah Fawcett- Swimsuit Poster”). “The image, which catapulted Fawcett to superstardom, epitomized her perfect combination of girl-next-door innocence and blonde bombshell sexuality” (“Farrah Fawcett Biography”).

It was with this image—her sun-kissed skin, gorgeous smile, and sexy red bathing suit—that Fawcett became an incredibly famous star and style icon. “After the war the title was passed from various Hollywood bombshell to Hollywood bombshell but Fawcett ruled the 70’s” (“Farrah Fawcett- Swimsuit Poster”). While the curly ringlets in her photo were gorgeous, her feathered everyday hairstyle is what she is most famous for. The influence that Fawcett had on Schultheis can be seen in photographs from as early as 1981, as demonstrated in figure 2. When asked how she personally found out about Fawcett’s stardom, Schultheis said, “I heard about her through the TV and magazines. Farrah was on a TV show and was a pinup in every guy’s dorm room.”

Fawcett’s rolled-back front hair pieces were seen on almost every girl around the country within a few years. “The layered hairstyle that she sported became such an overwhelming trend with American women that a Farrah Fawcett shampoo was launched” (“Farrah Fawcett Biography”). When asked how Fawcett affected her own personal style, Schultheis explained, “As for Farrah, it was all about the hair and wearing blouses open at the neck. So the exact opposite of the buttoned up Di [Lady Diana] look!”

Figure 2. Schultheis with her sister Clare (left) in Elkhart, Indiana, before entering graduate school, Summer 1981.
As seen in figure 3, Schultheis adapted Fawcett’s style and made it her own, as she wears a blouse open at the neck. Figure 4 also clearly illustrates Fawcett’s influence on Schultheis’ personal styling, especially in the blouse she wears. “I was clearly under the influence of Farrah Fawcett with the hair,” she admits. “I remember that the linen suit was a deal that I snagged from a boutique in the local mall. It was a size too small but I bought it anyways.”

Figure 4. Schultheis (left) with her Grandmother Wetherbee, and sister Clare in front of her parents’ home in Elkhart, Indiana, 1983.

The Influence of Lady Di
Lady Diana was an incredibly influential woman in society during the 1980s. Lady Diana, known as Di, was engaged to the royal Prince of England in 1981 and her photos immediately pervaded the press. At this same time, Music Television (MTV) began broadcasting and influencing fashion via digital media. As the United States has recently experienced the fascination with Kate Middleton, we have learned that America loves to follow new royal princesses, and Di was no exception; she was the original infatuation. Schultheis said, “Every girl watched the royal wedding when it was aired. We all wanted to be her.”

When Lady Di hit the media, she brought back a glamorous style. She was always impeccably dressed in elegant silhouettes. Lady Di’s most famous look by far was her wedding dress. The statement piece had gigantic puffy three-quarter length sleeves and a train that took up a good majority of the aisle she walked down. “The Royal Wedding, which took place on 29 July 1981 in St Paul’s Cathedral, London, was attended by 3,500 guests, watched avidly by approximately one billion people on televisions around the world and marked as a national holiday in the UK. The fairytale Princess looked every bit the part, arriving at the church in a glass coach, wearing the family tiara and a massive silk wedding dress incorporating 10,000 pearls and sequins, with a 25-foot train, designed by David and Elizabeth Emmanuel” (“Princess Diana Biography”). This iconic wedding dress became the “must-have” of Schultheis’s generation, and this did not exclude Schultheis herself. Schultheis noted, “Lady Di influenced my wedding dress. I had an ivory satin dress, beaded bodice, and large puffy sleeves that ended at my elbow. Post college I wore a lot of blouses with bow ties, which was a Di thing as well.”

Not only was she known for her gorgeous gowns, but also for her short hair, something that clearly influenced Schultheis, as seen in figure 1 and figure 5. This androgynous hairstyle gave Lady Di and all of her fashion followers a more distinctive look.

**Denim and Dressing for a Woman’s Body**

One fashion staple that became increasingly popular in the 1980s was denim. Calvin Klein (CK) Jeans and Brooke Shields became iconic in the land of denim with their commercial in 1980. At the age of 15, Shields made CK Jeans “synonymous with youthful, edgy sex appeal.” The tagline “So, what comes between you and YOUR Calvin’s..?” became well known in a matter of weeks (Anderson).
Schultheis is seen in figure 5 sporting two main looks of the early eighties: a Lady Di haircut, and CK Jeans. Schultheis noted that one of the first things she saved up for was that pair of jeans. When asked to describe figure 5, Schultheis said, “The jeans I was wearing were Calvin Klein Jeans, and I still own the blouse. It took me a while to wear jeans with back pockets because I thought it made my backside look big, but I finally caved. Lady Di was such an influence at the time. I think I cut my hair because of her.”

While Schultheis was not someone who put a huge effort into following all the trends, she did value dressing for a woman’s body type. Schultheis said: “My figure really dictated the way I dressed. Believe it or not for most of my life I had a great figure—not a sexy bombshell—but a really well-proportioned figure that I worked hard at maintaining.” She knew how to dress herself and was always aware of what certain clothing did to her figure. Early on Schultheis realized something that would set her apart from many other women of her time. “I realized that everyone has a color palette that works best for them, and I gravitated towards single-color pieces, avoiding patterns. I also liked a lot of things that didn’t look like what everyone else was wearing, but not things that screamed ‘I am different!’”

Figure 5. Family Picnic, Summer 1982. Pictured (from left to right) is Anne Marie Schultheis’s mother, Sally; sister, Clare; her father, Don; her two brothers, Paul and Dave; and Anne Marie herself.
Conclusion

Schultheis’s fashion sense was clearly influenced by television and the media, but she always knew when it was best to go with her own personal style over the current trends. One of her greatest strengths was, and is, her ability to dress for her body shape and coloring, and that is something that will never go out of style. While Schultheis may have been considered a fashion follower as opposed to a leader, she knew how to make every new trend her own and never failed to emphasize her beauty.
Works Cited


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