

# Butcher's son suits the famous

By **CONNIE RAE**  
Frank Cosco, Mississauga fashion designer, began his career making butcher's aprons in his father's shop in Sioux Lookout.

Today he dresses well-heeled company presidents on both sides of the border, often working from his office in New York's Waldorf Astoria.

Cosco leans towards middle-of-the-road design and when a newly-appointed executive came to him last week ordering leather trim on a velvet suit with harsh color contrasts Cosco didn't hesitate telling the would-be customer he would look like a clam. The man left and didn't come back.

This successful man-of-fashion entered the priesthood as a young man but was called home to help take care of the large family.

He was a sergeant-major in the Second World War at age 19 and says it was something in the ill-fitting army issue uniforms that made him decide his future was in suiting the

needs of the tailoring business.

He graduated from the American Gentlemen School of Designing in New York, apprenticed to John Chalk of Saville Row in London, Ont. catering to a clientele that included Mackenzie King. Cosco also apprenticed to Koren Romp, a custom tailor in Holland, and finished his apprenticeship with John Bellon, of Los Angeles.

Cosco spent several years at Simpsons before teaming up with his wife Donna and now have both male and female clients.

Donna's mother had a small clothing house in Rome, Dominca Frocks. There was just one small problem. Donna didn't speak English and Cosco, although he is of Italian and German descent, did not speak Italian.

Nevertheless, they set up shop in Westdale Mall about five years ago and Cosco now flies to New York a couple of times a month to service his American clients.

The cost of an equivalent suit bought in

the U.S. is \$800 to \$1,000 but the same client could buy from Cosco for about half that amount, he says.

One of his most prominent New York customers is Myron Garfield of Garfinkle News of Canada and president of Ancorp National Services. The very eligible bachelor buys about \$5,000 or 14 suits a year from Cosco.

Herbert Caribon of C. K. Optical Co., Redondo Beach, California is also numbered among his clients.

Employees' dress is so important to companies that a study was once done by Malloy, author of Dress for Success. Malloy went into an insurance office and dressed half the salesmen according to his own dictates of good taste.

The other half were told to wear anything they chose. After a six-month period Cosco says sales of the conservatively-dressed salesmen (dressed by Malloy) shot up while sales of the others were drastically lower. Malloy was hired by the firm as a full-time consultant.

Lighter weight wools, wool blends, seersuckers, white linens and silks are fashionable for men's wear. Co-ordinating materials are being made up in slacks to complement the suits.

Pinstripes are still the authoritative choice and Bay Street lawyers and stock traders still prefer grey, he says.

Pinstripes, plains, double breasteds, subdued checks, houndstooth and checkered suits are popular this year, and tweed is still a good fall and winter choice, especially since the new Donegal tweeds are lighter weight.

Vests are not as important this year but vested suits should have a gold pocket watch with watch chain showing from the fob pocket. To wear such a suit without one is like wearing French cuffs without cuff links, Cosco says.

Women can co-ordinate color better than men, he says. The only problem is their choice of ties is too feminine. He thinks they don't want their mates to look masculine and a flashy tie is the first thing you see, he says.

Cosco himself was wearing plain red pants and a subtly-checked red and white jacket in raw silk with a dark tie. His wife has a co-ordinated outfit with red and white checkered pants, white vest and red jacket.

People use ties and shirts wrong, he says. A green suit with a green shirt and tie gives the jolly-green giant appearance. Similarly a man dressed in all shades of blue can look like little boy blue. Burgundy, grey or blue

can complement green and cream, pink or pale yellow can set off blue.

Cosco makes a few co-ordinated suits for men and women but finds most people like to choose materials to match their personalities and don't like to be carbon copies of someone else. A Bolton couple had camel and black outfits made. His was plain camel hair with a black turtle neck and hers was a black suit complemented by a camel-colored turtleneck.

Women are returning to the Joan Crawford look of the 30s, he says. Their clothing is minus the padding but inside construction is absolutely necessary for shape retention, he says. Soft, veiny calf is a favorite with women and can be made up in a suit for \$475, he says.

Cosco adds that he has sold more three-piece navy suits to teenage and young men in the past six months than in the past four years, indicating a trend towards a more dressy style for youth.

Europeans dress for the occasion but Canadians dress for style, Cosco added.

Any regrets about leaving the priesthood?

"Not with a lovely wife and three beautiful children," says Cosco.

