

How It All Began

The Evolution of the Era Fashion Committee

By Lynette Marcione
Era Fashion Committee Member



As a member of the Era Fashion Committee, one of my first assignments from Chairperson, Donna May Bewley was to document the history of the Committee. Thinking about how the MAFCA Era Fashion Committee got its start and actually knowing about it required the expert help of someone who was there at the beginning. My first and only thought on the history and evolution of the Era Fashion Committee began with Edie Jones. Edie, a living historian of Model A era fashions, was the woman to see on the subject. It is Edie who willingly shared her vast knowledge and vivid recollections of the development of the committee. This author acknowledges and appreciates all Edie Jones has done and continues to do to foster the presentation and preservation of Model A era fashions.

We must begin with the fashion articles that have appeared in *The Restorer* magazine. These articles were the inspiration for communicating information about Model A fashions and the changes that took place when fashion competition started in earnest. The following individuals contributed their time and knowledge to that effort as *The Restorer* magazine fashion editors;

Blanche Whisler	1956-1960
Jeanne Skutt	1960-1962
Lois Rather	1962-1974
Edie Jones	1974-1988
Fern Davis	1988- Present

Lois Rather said it best in her fashion article in 1964: "Not all the models are A's". Showing off your Model A fashions has always been an entertaining part of the hobby, lending interest and fun to parades, parties, and banquets. During this time, MAFCA Headquarters had received several inquires for assistance in planning fashion related events. In response, such notables as MAFCA members Edie Jones, Vivian Payton, Doy Seng, Betty Thomas, and Etta Francisco of MARC suggested fashion competition parallel to Model A car competition. They recommended a panel of

judges who would be used to score specific components on completeness, authenticity, and the overall effect of the fashion ensemble worn by the individual. In order to accomplish this task, a judging sheet was drawn up to serve as a scoring record and souvenir of the fashion entrant's experience in judging.

Additionally, basic procedures for the entire fashion judging process were developed and documented, from showing the fashions at a meet to the awards system used to acknowledge the entrant's accomplishment.

In mid-1964 after the published fashion judging procedures in *The Restorer* magazine, an announcement was in print. The notice advised the readership that official judging sheets for fashion contests, designed by the National Fashion Committee and adopted by the MAFCA Board of Directors, were available to chapters for a small charge to cover postage, printing, and handling. This declaration was the first mention of a national fashion committee.

As the year progressed, a committee worked on a new fashion manual. The manual was first shown at the annual banquet in December, 1964. The manual was the result of work done by club women who spent much time and energy researching fashions of the period. The manual was nine pages in length and would sell for \$1.00.

The publication was available for sale in May, 1965. The forward of the manual states; "For many of those who have an interest in the restoration of Model A Fords, a particular focus of attention is the appropriate garbing of human occupants".

Contained within these precious nine pages was information about garments and accessories for both men and women. There were also tips on how the fashions should be judged, the judging score sheet, and how to stage a fashion show. This first official fashion manual remained in use at local, regional, and national meets until 1975 when the fashion committee adopted the revised *Fashion Judging Standards*. The following contributors made the revision a reality;

Edie Jones – Coordinator; Committee Members: Pat Boef, Patty Clary, Diane Davis, Reyanne Freeman, Norene Griffin, Sharon Johnson, Pat Jones, Veta Lewis, Bobby Lippencott, Willeane Morgan, Pat Passey, Alta Peterson, Chris Phillips, Evelyn Rhoades, Mary Salazar, Penny Vaughn, Kathy Wilkerson, Meredith Morton, Lois Rather.

Edie Jones and Pat Jones are still active members of the fashion community today. The revised publication of more than 30 pages included illustrations and more in-depth details regarding the fashions of the period. As more and more people were participating in showing fashions, the need for more detailed instructions became necessary to assist the host chapter and the fashion judges.

An organized fashion committee became a reality in 1975. Although there were no meetings held, correspondence took place among this first group of members.

For the next several years, work began on a more comprehensive version of *the Fashion Judging Standards*. The efforts of many MARC and MAFCA members were required to assemble, correct,

ENTRY NO.		JUDGING SHEET	
CLASSIFICATION:		 Model A Fashion Contest	
1	2	3	4
5	6		
Categories to be Judged		Highest Possible Score	Score of This Contestant
A. MAJOR GARMENT Women: Dress, suit, etc. Men: Suit, sports outfit, etc.		30	
B. COORDINATED APPAREL Women: Coat, fur scarf, etc. Men: Shirt, tie, topcoat, etc.		15	
C. HEADGEAR or HAIRDO		10	
D. FOOTGEAR		10	
E. ACCESSORIES Women: Purse, gloves, jewelry, eyeglasses, etc. Men: Cone, gloves, glasses, watch, etc.		15	
F. OVERALL APPEARANCE Coordinating effect, colors, fit of garments, etc.		15	
G. HISTORICAL INTEREST History of the items in the outfit, with any authentication if available; interesting comments on acquisition, etc.		5	
TOTAL SCORE		100	

and authenticate a more precise and larger version of the **Standards**, which was published in 1986 and known as the **Fashion Guidelines**. This publication is still in use today.

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Many revisions and upgrades have been provided to this book as more information has become available from entrants and judges experiences, and actual period publications. For example, the points earned by an entrant have been changed over the years from the initial 100 possible points to 450, and then and finally 150 points. Additional illustrations have also been added.

Although the Era Fashion Committee was formed and practicing for years, in 1993-1994 a permanent MAFCA Era Fashion Committee was adopted and was included in the MAFCA policy manual. The description of duties was prepared by the Era Fashion Committee under the direction of Char Crawford. These recommendations were presented to the MAFCA Board of Directors and accepted, establishing rights and obligations for the Committee similar to that of the Judging Standards Committee for cars. The purpose of the Committee continues to be the following;

- ❖ Monitor and update, as needed, the MAFCA **Fashion Guidelines**
- ❖ Maintain, standardize and update an Era Fashion Judges Certification Program
- ❖ Establish, coordinate and monitor a testing program for Era Fashion Judges
- ❖ Develop, maintain and coordinate methods of judging era fashions at national conventions, and other MAFCA sanctioned fashion events.
- ❖ Develop, maintain and update a judging award system for era fashion competition at national conventions and other MAFCA sanctioned events.
- ❖ Establish, coordinate and maintain a classification system for judging era fashions.

These responsibilities evolved and were formalized from the initial efforts to standardize fashion competition in 1964. Today, the actions and responsibilities of the six person committee are overseen by the MAFCA Board of Directors. The complete outline of all areas of duties by the Era Fashion Committee is described in the MAFCA policy manual. They range from fashion judge certification to recommending appointments for chief judges at meets.

The Committee is headed by an Era Fashion Chairperson, who serves for a period of one year and can be nominated by the committee for an additional year. Committee members serve a term of two years and may serve one consecutive term. Membership on the committee is comprised of individuals from all over the United States. The following members have served in the capacity of Era Fashion Chairperson:

Edie Jones	Pat Watson	Judy Hamilton
Char Crawford	Lynette Marcione	Sandy Patterson
Trudy Vestal	Elaine DuPen	Donna May Bewley (present)

The good work the committee has performed includes many interesting and useful practices still in use.

During 1989-1993 while Pat Watson was chairperson, the *Fashion Guidelines* continued to be upgraded. Another big accomplishment took place when the Committee worked with Marshall Lewis to establish criteria for the Marshall and Veta Lewis Couple's Fashion Award. This prestigious award has been available for presentation at each national meet since its adoption. The award honors couples who compete together in fashions with outstanding ensembles.

During the term of Char Crawford, several significant efforts to further Model A era fashion judging took place. As we moved closer to aligning the fashion judging experience to that of car judging, it was determined that a means to certify fashion judges was needed. Six tests were developed for prospective members wishing to be a judge, and current judges wishing to advance in the judging ranks. Also, the first ***Fashion Judging Procedures Manual*** and the ***Fashion Entrant's Packet*** was prepared and distributed. These two documents have proven to be invaluable as a resource for host fashion coordinators, judges, and fashion entrants as they provide detailed instructions for all aspects of fashion events at a meet. Guidelines for era fashions sales at meets were also developed. In 1994 the second MARC/MAFCA World Meet was held in Tacoma, Washington. Char worked with the MARC representative to establish a team approach to judging fashions, which allowed for both groups to fit together comfortably. A significant legacy of Char and her committee was the idea of a book about era fashions.

As Lynette Marcione took the reigns of the committee, work began on the book effort. Writing this book proved to be a huge task, taking several years to complete. A lapel pin was also developed commemorating era fashions.

Sandy Patterson took over and continued working on the fashion book, ***A Book of Fashion Facts***. The use of the internet was becoming increasingly popular. Work began on the idea of a fashion page on the MAFCA website in January, 1999. Rick Black provided great support in getting that first effort up and running in the form of pictures of fashion entrants from a regional meet. The first fashion article was written by Pat Watson about reproduction fashions.



Other efforts were approached such as a training video for judges, and increasing the involvement of youth in fashion activities. The fashion pin became a reality and was available for sale by MAFCA. Elaine DuPen continued to provide continuity to the flow of managing the projects that were underway, including the issuance of many important *Fashion Guidelines* updates, and reformatted and updated fashion judges tests.

Under Trudy Vestal's direction, articles continued to appear on the website enhancing the opportunities for our members to get connected with valuable fashion information. More revisions and updates occurred for ***the Fashion Judging Procedures Manual*** and the ***Fashion Guidelines*** creating a fashion culture of clarity and fairness.

Work continued on ***A Book of Fashion Facts***, which was then transferred from the Era Fashion Committee to a separate book committee. The book committee was chaired by Trudy Vestal, with principle contributions made by Trudy, Lynette Marcione, Donna May Bewley, Virginia and Charlie Scott, Sandy Patterson, Les Andrews, Bill Lincoln, Pegge Blinco, and Maxine Dust. The book was completed, and published for sale by MAFCA in July, 2006.

Donna May Bewley, the current chairperson, has done much to foster consistency and organizational effectiveness. Since the foundation of the committee has been cemented by the former committee members, Donna May continues to refine, enhance, and advance those procedures developed previously. MAFCA website articles are consistently written by Era Fashion Committee members on a regular basis. The fashion related topics are interesting and reflect hours of research by their authors. Judges are kept informed and up to date on changes in policies and practices by means of a mentorship program. Work continues to keep all documentation supporting fashions current and accurate, and placing important fashion information online at the MAFCA website.

The Era Fashion Committee meets twice annually. Any person who would like to join the committee need only to apply for a vacant position. It is recommended the applicant have some experience with local, regional, or national fashion judging. The only requirement is membership in MAFCA.

The devotion and dedication of members of the Era Fashion Committee, both past and present, have served the MAFCA membership well. Direction and organization, accuracy, a sense of fair play and competition, and the benefit of increasing the knowledge of our members, are all hallmarks of the era fashion committee. Many members have participated in era fashions over the years. We are grateful for their support.

The Era Fashion Committee members continue to understand and appreciate the fragility of the historical garments and accessories of the Model A era. Their focus includes an awareness of the dwindling number of fashions of this period still in existence today, and the need to continue to invent new and innovative ways to preserve and re-create fashions from 1928-1931.

I would like to thank the following individuals for their recollections and contributions to this article: Edie Jones, Char Crawford, Sandy Patterson, Trudy Vestal, Pat Watson, and Donna May Bewley.



Salt Creek A's enjoying era fashions

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