

THE DUCHESS



*by Iles Brody)
(from a longer article*

WALLIS WEIGHS consistently around 100 pounds, and she is the envy of all ladies who cannot keep a slim silhouette. She keeps her figure by almost constant dieting and attention to the advice of her friend, Hauser, the nutrition faddist. Of course, the daily massage helps, too.

She has a perfect size 10 Tanagra figure, a little over five feet tall, with a 34" bust, 25" waist, 34" hips measurements. Nowadays the Duchess loves strapless evening dresses, and there is no longer evidence of a flat chest.

Early in 1952, her light brown hair was dyed a modified Titian red by her New York coiffeur, Mr. Roger Vergnes. This latter gentleman dresses the Duchess's hair (which she always wears parted in the middle) every evening at her

apartment.

Wallis favors big-flared short skirts for evening, for she likes to show her shapely ankles. These dresses are usually of tulle in two different tones, with one part of the dress superbly embroidered. In the evening she often wears pretty sandals made by Italian or Spanish shoemakers, the inevitable gloves, and a tiny purse for compact and rouge.

Wallis does not need brilliant color to make her the cynosure of all eyes. In the spring of 1951, Dior created for her a ball dress of dull white satin. With such a robe, elegance does not permit ostentation in accessories; so the Duchess wore, with this fairy garment—whose crystal broideries glittered like winter frost—only earrings and a stiff diamond choker. Its subtle simplicity of line could not disguise the value—about \$60,000.

Although she wears glasses at home for reading, she never carries these when going out. Now and then she sports a beautiful, tremendous fan of ostrich feathers, but this is something she reserves for special occasions.

As to her collection of furs, that too is awe-inspiring—she owns full-length sable, ermine, mink and Russian broadtail coats and capes; also short ermine, mink and broadtail jackets, countless neckpieces and other sundry pieces. She is very much attached to a unique suit of broadtail, made for her in 1950 by Maximilian, famous New York furrier. This suit is of an easy cut, with a collar copied from a Chinese coolie's jacket, and with two small slanting pockets. Wallis wears this fur suit under a mink coat.

In the season of 1951-52, she made only one purchase at Maximilian's, a blond otter coat, but she is said to have regretted her decision, because toward the end of the winter otter was no longer ex-

clusive or expensive.

One is puzzled to know why she should buy so many furs, for she is not often exposed to severe weather: when she ventures abroad in New York, the trip is usually short, and takes place in one of her special Cadillacs. She has two of these automobiles, one in New York and the other in Paris, both made for her by General Motors from designs that follow the graceful lines of a Rolls-Royce town car. She employs an English chauffeur.

Her hats are always off-the-face worn as incidental little things. "The less hat the better," says the Duchess. But this does not refer to numbers—she has been known to order 45 at a time from the New York milliner, Florell, and 34 from Mr. John's (at \$100 per hat).

Her shoes—she has rows of them—are the long-vamped type. She likes the handbags made by the American, Louis Coblentz. In 1951 she bought 15 Coblentz bags in Paris to bring back to the U. S. On being told that they also are on sale in every department store in America, she commented that copies are never as good as the French originals. Coblentz, the creator of the bags, was pained to see this in the columns, for Wallis's comments on fashion are very influential.

ALTHOUGH SHE MUCH PREFERS to patronize dressmakers in Paris, the Duchess does patronize a few American houses. Her principal designer in New York is Mainbocher. She also goes sometimes to a showing at Hattie Carnegie's. Not long ago, out of 50 Carnegie dresses paraded before her, she picked 13 in about as many minutes. These gowns started at \$450 and ranged upward.

She seldom goes to fashion shows, public or private; her appearance at the Carnegie showing was quite unusual. As a rule, the dressmakers send their new creations to the

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Duchess, and she selects at home. In Paris, she does go to the showings of the fashion giants; but neither in New York nor Paris does she go for the fittings. This important session always takes place at the Duchess's house, whether in Paris, New York or Palm Beach. Fortunately, most dressmakers have on hand a plaster torso of the Duchess's figure, and some of the fittings can be done in the workshop.

When some of the more important corrections must be attended to on the Duchess's person, the saleslady who assisted her in buying the clothes, accompanied by a fitter, brings them over. But Wallis and the two other ladies do not long remain alone—the Duke often joins them, giving advice as to the raising or lowering of a hemline, doing away with a frill here or a ruffle there.

After the representatives of the dressmaker have finished, the Duke, with great courtesy, helps with tying up their parcels. And when the girls throw away some string, he picks it up and puts it in his pockets. "I save strings," he says with a little smile. "One never knows when one may need them."

Obviously all the Duchess's lingerie is handmade, mostly in Paris. However, even in New York, she is always on the lookout for that little out-of-the-way shop which produces the ultimate in underthings. Once, she heard about such a unique place, on West 57th Street. She telephoned the proprietress, a recently arrived French woman, asking her to bring her collection to the Waldorf.

The French woman politely refused. A lady who was in the shop when this conversation took place was aghast. "I should think you would find it a great honor to serve the Duchess," she said. The proprietress replied that it was an honor she could not afford.

Some tradespeople behave in the

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same irritating way. For instance, a well-known New York furrier said that he would rather not sell to the Duchess because he is not prepared to give special prices. For Wallis, just like every woman, welcomes bargains.

Some time back, she went to Bronzini's, New York haberdashers, and admired a man's weekend case. She asked the clerk the price, and when she heard it, emitted a little "Oh!" Later the same day, her secretary rang the shop and asked for the name of the manufacturer of the case. She then phoned the manufacturer, mentioned her name, and ordered one of the cases sent to her—of course, at wholesale price.

