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June, 1999

GENERAL NEWS

Self-Study Inservice a Success

Charlotte Coffman

Textile Science for Consumers, a do-by-mail inservice, was a great success. Participants from twenty-seven counties received a copy of *Textile Science* by Kathryn Hatch and completed question packets during February-April. All should have received a set of official answers, an individual response to their questions, and a certificate. Many thanks to Nancy Breen for her work on the inservice and to Joyce Smith, Ohio State University, for sharing her idea and materials.

Resource Corner

Nancy Breen

Web Sites of Museums and Clothing History

Exploring historical clothing (often referred to as the history of costume) is fascinating and revealing. Adults and 4-Her's of all ages gain historical, cultural and economic concepts through the study of dress. Some intriguing web sites are listed below.

<<http://www.si.edu/nmah/youmus/ex12ladi.htm>>

Smithsonian Institution, Museum of American History, The First Ladies Collection. This site discusses one of the best known clothing collections, dresses worn by each first lady. The evolving political and social role of the wife of the US president is also emphasized.

<<http://www.metmuseum.org/htmlfile/gallery/ground/costume.html>>

The Costume Institute of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in NY City. This outstanding collection has more than 45,000 pieces of fashionable and regional costume from the 17th century to the present. Site includes exhibit and collection information.

<http://www.mcny.org/mcny/costume.htm>

Costume collection of the Museum of the City of New York. One of the earliest and strongest historically based collections of clothing that has preserved over 25,000 garments and accessories worn by New Yorkers dating from the mid-eighteenth century to the present. Wedding dresses worn by New York brides from 1754 to 1996, John Jay's velvet frockcoat and Al Smith's trademark derby are included. Visit the past exhibition "Uncommon Threads: 300 Years of New York Style" for an overview of the collection.

<http://www.costumesocietyamerica.com>

The home page of the professional organization that "advances the global understanding of all aspects of dress and appearance." A calendar lists exhibit and museum information for the US and abroad.

<http://members.aol.com/nebula5/costume.html> >

A costume history index maintained by an individual that has links to references, research, events and theatrical and Halloween costumes.

YOUTH PROGRAMMING

Summer TXA Youth Happenings

Charlotte Coffman

Dryden Elementary School Planting Day, June, 1999

This annual event focuses on gardening and planting but also includes other plant-related activities. TXA offers a close encounter for first graders with textile fibers from plants. Children scrape fibers from pineapple leaves and examine cotton, flax, ramie, and abaca fibers.

Clonlara School Conference, June, 1999

Workshops on the Fabric/Flight Connection and In-Touch Science: Foods & Fabrics will be offered at the Clonlara School Conference in Warren, Michigan. This conference provides a range of programs and activities aimed at home-schooling families.

Simple Gifts Returns to the NYS Fair, August, 1999

The Simple Gifts program will support the community service emphasis in the Youth Building, New York State Fair for the second year. 4-H youth and volunteers will lead fairgoers in making age-appropriate recreational items for persons with Alzheimer's Disease. The items will be donated to nursing homes in the counties of the participants. Handouts and a poster display will complete the exhibit. If your county would like to be involved, contact Charlotte Coffman.

TEXTILE TECHNOLOGY

Textile Tidbits

Charlotte Coffman

Anti-pesticide fabric

Gang Sun, a researcher at the University of California, Davis, has developed a chemical treatment for fabrics that breaks down pesticides and kills microorganisms. He grafts hydantoin, a chemical that holds chlorine molecules, onto cotton fabrics and immerses them in chlorine bleach. The chlorine is released when the cotton T-shirt or jeans comes in contact with certain pesticides, viruses or bacteria.

—<www.CNN.com>

Fade-resistant swimwear

DuPont's chlorine-resistant Lycra helps swimwear keep its shape, resist mildew and look better longer. It also helps prevent the fabric degradation and loss of strength associated with exposure to chlorinated pools. For more information, call 1-800-64-Lycra or check out <www.dupont.com>

—*DuPont Magazine*, 2:28, 1999

Improved Wickability

Consolidated Labs International states that a chemical system they call Hydrolon can be applied to polyester, nylon, and acrylic fabrics, enabling them to quickly wick moisture.

—*Bobbin*, September, 1998.

CONSUMER ISSUES

Textile Labeling for On-Line Shopping

Nancy Breen

A 1998 Federal Trade Commission (FTC) amendment requires the seller to provide textile fiber and care information when selling apparel on-line. However, when 200 Internet sites were searched for compliance after 6 months, many failed to provide this information. The FTC then charged on-line retailers with violating the Textile and Wool Acts. Many major companies were involved, including Wal-Mart, Burlington Coat Factory, and Woolrich. A settlement was reached and the information will be added to the sites.

The regulations for Internet sales are now the same as for an item in a store or in a mail-order catalog. The requirements are:

Apparel products

The label or description must give the generic name and percent of each fiber, name of garment manufacturer, country of garment manufacturer, and care instructions. On the actual item, care instructions must be permanently attached. The other information may be on a hangtag or on the packaging.

Textile products other than apparel, such as sheets, towels, upholstery, rugs, etc.:

Same information as apparel, except care instructions are not required. However, care instructions may be voluntarily provided.

Consumer Attitudes

Charlotte Coffman

For the last four years, Cotton Incorporated Lifestyle Monitor research has tracked consumer attitudes and behavior in areas of interest to the apparel industry. Survey participants are interviewed by telephone for about 25 minutes. They are asked 12 or more questions about their attitude towards such topics as denim, natural fibers, shopping, and comfort. Responses are compiled and reported as a Barometer score, ranging from 0 to 100 with 50 representing a neutral reading. Readings above 50 are considered positive; those below 50 are negative. These scores can be compared over time to detect trends.

Below are some examples of recent findings:

- Americans enjoy shopping

- Americans are enthusiastic about casual dressing
- Americans want clothing they can wear year-round
- Americans have a positive attitude toward buying and wearing denim
- Americans are willing to pay more for natural fibers
- American women are concerned about care requirements and cost
- Americans are not very concerned about their appearance
- American women are not very interested in fashion issues
- Americans are not willing to sacrifice comfort for fashion

Resources:

Women's Wear Daily, March 11, 1999

Women's Wear Daily, October 16, 1998

Women's Wear Daily, September 11, 1998

Consumers Want Care Label Changes

Charlotte Coffman

About a year ago, the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) proposed two amendments to the 1972 Care Label Rule. These changes and their effects on the apparel and cleaning industries are still under review. The proposals are:

- that washing instructions be given on care labels if such methods are appropriate
- that wetcleaning methods be added to care labels

The FTC had heard consumer complaints about growing dry-cleaning bills and limited information on care labels. Clorox was commissioned to research consumer preferences on this issue. Survey results showed that "9 in 10 consumers prefer care instructions that include washing." In addition, 52 percent of the consumers surveyed indicated that they now launder items labeled "Dry Clean." The current law requires that one appropriate cleaning method be given on the care label. The law does not favor home washing over dry cleaning and does not require that the stated method be the "best" cleaning method. If the proposal is approved, any garment that can be home washed will have to carry a label

that gives washing instructions.

Some consumers want professional cleaners to replace drycleaning with wetcleaning or, at least, offer it as an option. They believe that wetcleaning is better for the environment. This issue is more clouded than the home-washing issue. No established test procedures for wetcleaning exist making it difficult for manufacturers to assess whether wetcleaning is appropriate for a particular garment. Although some cleaning establishments do wetcleaning, their methods range from a washtub to computerized equipment. Before wetcleaning information can be required on labels, procedures and standards for wetcleaning processes must be defined.

Resource:

Clothes Care Gazette, International Fabricare Institute, Silver Spring, MD. April, 1999.

Dressing Casual

Nancy Breen

Casual clothing at work, a trend begun in Silicon Valley in the 80s, has swept the country in the 90s. Many workplaces now have "casual Fridays" or have changed to casual dressing at any time.

Clothing manufacturers and retailers have seized this trend to sell new lines of clothing. Casual stores such as the Gap, Eddie Bauer, and the Banana Republic have begun selling slightly more formal pieces that appeal to the office crowd. The AKA Eddie Bauer line was launched for the corporate casual market. At the other end, traditional manufacturers such as Brooks Brothers and Pendleton are producing less formal clothing. Companies that already market casual clothing, such as Levi's, Lee and Cotton Incorporated, are promoting their products.

In theory, less formal clothing should save employees money because it is less expensive to buy and easier to clean. However, the trend has caused confusion and expense. Exactly what is casual? Is it a sportscoat without a tie or is it jeans or could it be cutoffs? Instead of saving money, many employees feel that they must spend money to have a third wardrobe just for casual dress in addition to a traditional work wardrobe and a weekend wardrobe.

Extension educators may be able to help with these issues. Companies are looking for individuals to discuss clothing selection, textile properties and shopping techniques. A workplace dialogue about appropriate casual wear can establish standards to be followed by a discussion of how individuals can easily and inexpensively comply with company expectations. A news release may be a way to start. *Khakis* (below) provides information for consumers selecting one popular type of casual clothing.

TEXTILE PROPERTIES

Khakis

Nancy Breen

With the popularity of the casual look in the workplace, more people than ever are wearing khakis. Many types are available—one is probably just right for you.

Fiber Content of Fabric

- Cotton. All cotton pants are comfortable, but they wrinkle and shrink and often bag at the knees and seat during wear. Wrinkling is reduced when the fabric is treated with a wrinkle resistant finish, although the garment will still wrinkle when being worn and after washing. The wrinkle resistant finish may also decrease durability.
- Cotton/Polyester. This blend wrinkles less during wear than all cotton and does not require ironing (except for the very fussy). Polyester increases fabric strength and decreases shrinkage. However, because polyester is lighter in weight than cotton, these pants are not the heavy all-cotton khakis that people may prefer. The pants contain from 20-60 percent polyester.
- Cotton/Spandex. Spandex allows for a tighter fit with ease of movement and less bagging during wear. Spandex content is less than 5% and does not increase durability or decrease wrinkling after washing.

Ratings

The March 1999 *Consumer Reports* magazine tested 100 percent cotton khakis and cotton/Spandex khakis. Their top rated men's pants in cotton were "Banana Republic Smithfield" at \$48 and "Gap Relaxed" at \$38. Neither pair needed ironing if immediately removed from the dryer. The "Dockers Classic 40443" at \$38 did not need ironing even when left overnight in the dryer. CR rated the "JC Penny Authentic St. John's Bay" as a Best Buy at \$24 because they were wrinkle resistant but less durable than the more expensive slacks.

For women, "Eddie Bauer Two Pleat Classic Fit" at \$32 and "JC Penny Authentic St. John's Bay," again a best buy at \$24, were the highest rated khakis.

For both men and women, the Spandex helped with bagging during wear but had other problems. "L. L. Bean" pants for men showed decreased durability; "L.L. Bean" pants for women wrinkled after

washing. The women's J. Crew shrank 2 1/2" in length.

Remember, if you want to reduce wrinkling and shrinkage, a cotton/polyester blend may be the best choice.

Hammocks Swing

Melania Nice

After an afternoon mowing the lawn, working in the garden, or chasing after kids, there is little so rewarding as a relaxing nap or swing in a hammock. Hammocks have been used for centuries by our neighbors in Central and South America (Mayans are the reputed originators). North Americans are now discovering the benefits of this compact, inexpensive, comfortable alternative to the recliner or sofa.

Hammocks were traditionally woven from the bark of the Hamak tree; they were later made from sisal. Today, cotton fiber is the most commonly used material followed by polyester, hemp, nylon, and polypropylene. Cotton creates a comfortable, breathable, long-lasting hammock body. Hemp is usually an economical choice. Polyester, nylon, and polypropylene offer durability.

Consumers can choose from three types of hammocks: 1) rope, 2) cloth, or 3) string. 0.The classic hammock is made of interlaced or knotted ropes, usually supported by wooden spreader bars, or staves, at both ends. This construction is the heaviest of the three varieties and needs a sturdy support system. The comfort level is a debated issue. Some find this body-conforming style pure luxury; others feel that the pressure of the ropes is uncomfortable. The loose fabric construction provides ample ventilation. A weather-resistant finish, regular washing, or sheltering from the elements helps maintain a mildew-free, malleable hammock. A mid range classic hammock runs about \$60, but if you don't have two sturdy trees for mounting, a metal support stand adds another \$65-\$100.

The cloth, or Brazilian hammock, utilizes a tightly woven fabric body (often canvas) attached to spreader bars. This style tends to be more resilient but not as body conforming as the other two. The cloth weighs less than the rope variety and is quite easy to clean in a home washer. If treated with water & soil resistant finishes, the cloth will withstand the outdoor elements, although it is more inclined to mildew than the others. While the cloth gives firm support, its tight weave prevents air ventilation. The cloth hammock is usually slightly cheaper and more readily available.

The third variety is the Mayan string hammock. This hammock offers the ventilation of the rope hammock, but with a much softer feel. The hammock does not use staves for support and therefore is more easily transported in a backpack when hiking or camping. The interlaced strings are more lightweight than the heavy rope and canvas. This variety is often brightly colored but does fade from

sun exposure. The Mayan hammock, because of its attractive color and compact size is used indoors as well. The drawback of this style is that it does not stand up to wear. Buttons, zippers, and buckles may snag or break strings. Depending on the size, Mayan hammocks run from \$20 to \$80.

All hammocks should be laundered if used outdoors. The Mayan and the rope varieties may be hand washed with cold water and mild detergent while hanging or in a bucket (keeping the ends outside the bucket to prevent tangling). To machine wash, stretch the hammock and bind it with cord every six inches to prevent tangling. Place it in a pillowcase and machine wash in cold water with mild detergent. The cloth hammock should be machine-washed according to the manufacturer's instructions. To prevent mildew, thoroughly dry before storing.

Hammocks are very attractive to playful youngsters. To prevent injury, place all hammocks close to the ground and provide supervision for small children.

Discover what many other countries have known for centuries, a siesta in a hammock on a hot afternoon is the perfect summer pleasure.

Resources:

<http://www.cmerida.com/Rada/faq.htm>

<http://www.ecomall.com/greenshopping/hammock.htm>

<http://www.hammocks.ac/html/tips.htm>

<http://www.hammocks.ac/html/compare.htm>

EDITORS NOTE:

Congratulations to the participants of the Textile Science for Consumers inservice. If you

have an idea for a similar program on a different topic, please send it along.

Have a good summer,

Charlotte W. Coffman, Editor

Senior Extension Associate

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