New tailor dresses himself for $150

AFRO Photo by Mark Gail

— Ernest Blunt designed and made everything he has on in this picture.

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

When someone says that an entire outfit, consisting of a blazer, vest and tie, and a long double breasted trenchcoat, only cost them less than a hundred and fifth dollars, it's hard to believe.

Ernest Blunt, a 30-year-old native New Yorker, showed up at the offices of the AFRO last week, attired in the outfit described above. And when he made the claim that his outfit cost "about $150", several reporters expressed disbelief.

But Blunt, an apprentice tailor, has found the answer to today's rising clothes prices. He makes his own clothes.

"It's almost like a high," says Blunt of his craft. "It really gives you a good feeling, finishing something and saying, 'I made that!'"

But Blunt wasn't always a tailor. Born in the Bedford-Stuyvesant area of New York City, his family moved to Baltimore when he was three, and he's grown up here. After a few odd jobs, he became aide in a local nursing home, and began considering a job in the health professions.

But in 1978 he contracted a disease which forced the replacement of both his hip joints. While recovering from his illness, he was referred to the Maryland Rehabilitation Center, located in the 2300 block Argonne Drive. The center offered a wide range of technical training, and Blunt decided to enroll in the tailoring course.

"I always have liked clothes," he says, "and when I saw the tailoring class, I decided to take it."

Blunt received 543.5 hrs. of instruction, and received a certificate from the center upon his completion of the course in October of 1979. But he says it wasn't easy.

"We had an instructor . . . who had graduated from the Fashion Institute of Technology and worked in the garment district of New York City, so she was tough" he says. "She was a damn good instructor. She din't take any half-stepping, we had to produce!"

He described how the members of his class would drive the others to excell. "We used to dog each other," he laughs. "If you made a mistake we'd sure talk about you. I recall, when we were getting ready to make our final projects, Ms. Jackson told me not to work with pinstripes and plaids because they were too hard."

Blunt sat before this reporter clad in a well-fitting brown plaid jacket.

"Naturally, when she said that I had to make a plaid outfit!"

As he described how he made the jacket, one got the impression he was listening to a master tailor. Blunt folded a piece of paper to demonstrate a sewing technique, and a silver thimble on his right hand glistened as his fingers moved deftly. But he feels he has a lot more to learn befor he can assume the title of master tailor.

"I'd like to work beneath a master tailor for a while, because I feel I have a long way to go."

He pulled out a fashion magazine and pointed to the flared shoulders of an outfit a model wore. "A friend of mine wanted me to make an outfit with shoulders like that, but I don't feel I know the right method. I'd like to learn more techniques, more skills."

Judging from the degree of quality of the clothes Blunt was wearing, he may be a lot closer to his goal of opening his own tailor's shop than he thinks.

"My goal is to open a business of my own, so I wear my creations and make clothes for other people, so that my future customers can see what they'll be getting."

IN INAUGURATION SPEECH

Schaefer keeps same goals for third term in office

By James M. Abraham
AFRO Staff Writer

The city of Baltimore witnessed the third swearing-in of Mayor William Donald Schaefer Tuesday, Dec. 4 in ceremonies at the City Hall Plaza.

About 250 well-wishers turned out to cheer the mayor as he gave a inaugural address. His speech was reminiscent of his campaign speeches, as he did not describe in detail any of his plans or programs for the coming four years.

Although he identified housing, crime, commercial revitalization and rat eradication as the main problems in administration plans on combating, he was vague in describing exactly what he intended to do about the problems.

Speaking on commercial revitalization, Schaefer supported the efforts by a black firm in Northwest Baltimore to construct and operate a black-owned and operated shopping center.

"We will continue to foster small business opportunities by expanding our commercial revitalization activities in communities like Walbrook and Brooklyn," he stated.

Also sworn in was city comptroller Hyman Pressman, to an unprecedented fourth term in that office. Although both Schaefer and Pressman have been bitter enemies in the past, the two apparently buried the hatchet Tuesday, as Pressman lauded Schaefer for his work in reducing the level of city bonded indebtedness.

Most observers agree that the coming four years under Schaefer will be approximately the same as the last four years, with a heavy concentration on commercial revitalization and less emphasis on housing and public services.

According to several opponents of the mayor, most notably many who worked for the rent control bill, which was declared invalid two weeks ago, there is a rising undercurrent of opposition to the mayor which he will have to come to grips with during this new term of office.

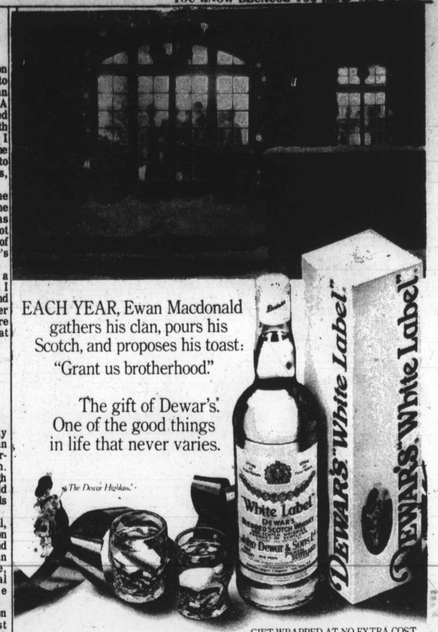
Another ominous sign that there may be trouble brewing for the Schaefer administration is the fact that few elected officials were present at the swearing-in ceremonies.

Anti-Klan rally set

A peaceful rally against the Ku Klux Klan is scheduled for Saturday, Dec. 8 at 3:30 p.m. in the Poly-Western High School auditorium, Cold Spring Lane and Falls Road.

Rep. Parren Mitchell, D-7th, the Rev. Vernon Dobson and Raymond Clark of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees are scheduled speakers.

For more information call the Northeast Community Organization at 433-7400



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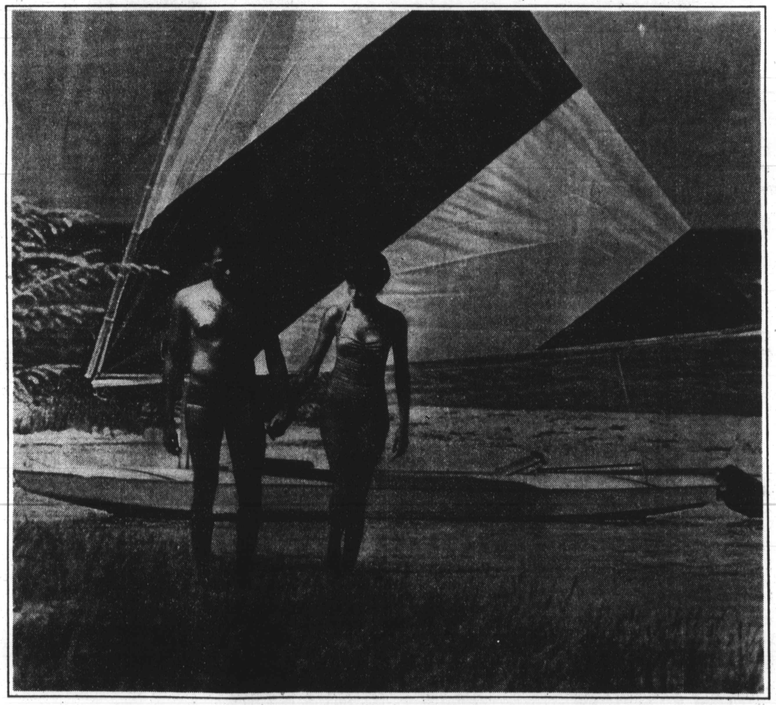

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