

Oleg Cassini, who for the next four years will reign as the exclusive designer for the First Lady, chats with the Kennedys at a social affair.

Marilyn Monroe, two of Jack Kennedy's sisters and his mother, and such women as Countess d'Ribes and Countess Crispi, who are considered among the best-dressed in international society.

The hardest assignment he ever had was dressing Gene Tierney. "She was a fundamental turning point in my life," he recalls. "I was deeply in love with her, and I was inspired to make her even more beautiful. Like every young girl, she had her own ideas about clothes and thought she knew her own style and wanted me to design ruffled, youthful dresses. Then, as now, I knew the secret of elegance is utter simplicity and underplaying. After a while, I dominated her viewpoint, but not without struggle."

The easiest client he has ever had was Marilyn Monroe. "She would accept everything I showed her. The idea here was not to take advantage of her obvious attributes and yet to display them adequately. Marilyn Monroe will never look like the Duchess of Windsor and she likes it that way. Yet it was interesting making her chic as well."

GRACE KELLY was another kind of problem. Fundamentally a serious actress, she thought of clothes only for performances, and in private life at that time tended to like flat heels, glasses, and comfortable old sweaters and skirts. "Old clothes are like old friends," was her favorite remark. Cassini's job was to interest her in clothes, to encourage her to take more than a passing interest in how she looked.

In 1938, when he was employed as a designer at Paramount Pictures, he was given a newcomer named Veronica Lake, who was appearing in her first starring picture, "I Wanted Wings." To make her into a vivid personality, he cut her hair in a long peek-a-boo bob which hid one eye, and put her into clinging dresses. The "Veronica Lake Look" was so widely copied that during the war the Government asked the studio to modify it, because women in war plants couldn't see to do their jobs well with only one eye.

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being "foreign or extravagant"

