

Gingy's Story (part 1)

GINGY: The spring after my mother died, my father took me to B. Altman's department store on Fifth Avenue to buy a dress for my thirteenth birthday. We were both so sad, but when we got to the teen department my father said, "This is my daughter Gingy, she needs something to wear for her thirteenth birthday, and we need help." Everyone rushed to help us because he was so handsome. He was six feet tall. (On screen: Two blue dresses.) I picked two navy blue dresses and couldn't decide between them; I was in agony, so he said, "You don't have to decide, because you know what? I'm buying them both." He made them gift wrap them. This was a long time ago, when you didn't have to pay extra to have things gift-wrapped. Each dress was very expensive, about forty-four dollars. I wore this one to my thirteenth birthday party. (Beat.) One day my grandmother came and got my sister and me. She'd decided we were going to live with her and Grandpa and my Aunt Babbie. I never saw my father again.

SIDE 7 Gingy's Story (part 3)

GINGY. Pink satin princess-style dress I bought in Filene's Basement in Boston for my marriage to Harry M. Johnson. I was twenty and Harry was thirty-seven. Harry was my sociology professor at Simmons. We were married at his best friend's house in Dobbs Ferry. There was no food, only champagne and wedding cake. My grandmother and Aunt Babbie came to the wedding. My grandfather wouldn't come because he thought Harry was too old for me and besides, he was Catholic. Here are the words my grandmother uttered on this occasion:

"You're killing me." (Beat.) One day I was coming down the front steps from our apartment and there was Walter Fenton. He had joined the navy. He looked handsomer than ever in his uniform. "Gingy," he said. "Why did you do it?" Then he kissed my cheek and then my hand and walked away. I would love to be able to tell you that nothing good ever happened to Walter Fenton, that he ended up being a used-car salesman, but the truth is, he won a Pulitzer Prize, the prick.

(Chinese dress on screen.) Iridescent-brocade Chinese style dinner dress I bought in Cambridge for a New Year's Eve party. Harry convinced me to buy this dress even though it was expensive. He said it showed off my arms. He thought my arms were pretty. The party was at the home of Harry's friends Penny and Ecky. They were married. I idolized Penny. She carried a diaphragm in her purse, which was very cool but strange, I wondered about it at the time, because isn't the whole point of getting married that you don't have to carry your diaphragm in your purse? Anyway, at midnight, I got very upset because I couldn't find Harry. Then I saw him. He was kissing Penny. "Harry!" I said. And you know what he said? Of course you know what he said. He said, "It's not what you think." But it was exactly what I thought. So that was that. I was twenty-one years old and I was going to be the youngest divorced person in America, except for Elizabeth Taylor.