

MANHATTAN[®]

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Interviews
Dina Merrill

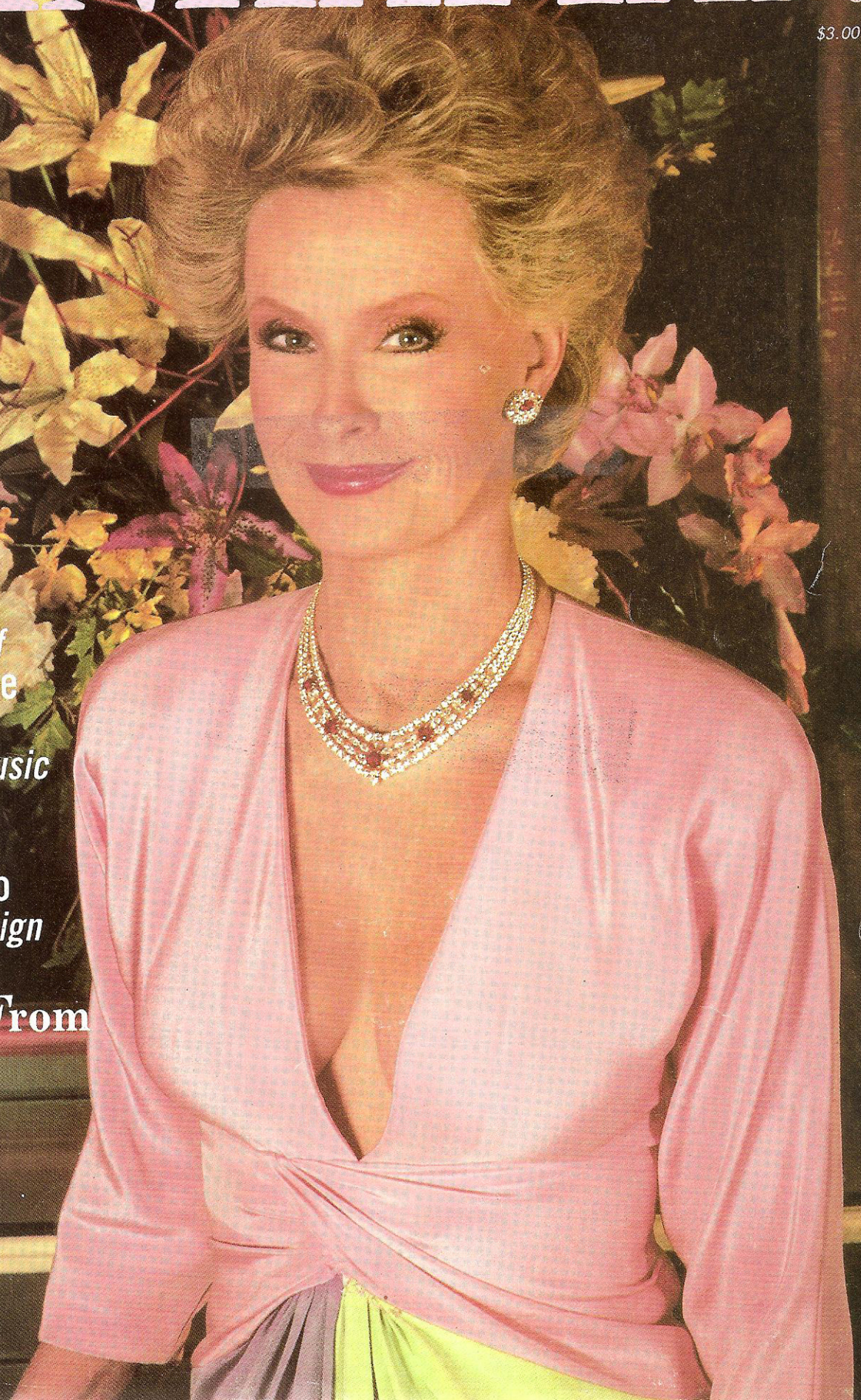
The Fashions Of
Pauline Trigere

High Society Music
Bobby Short

Samuel Botero
On Interior Design

Fashions From

Fabrice
Hanae Mori
Calvin Klein
Oleg Cassini
Bob Mackie
Oscar de la Renta
Vicky Tiel
& More



MANHATTAN



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Star of stage, screen, and TV, her sophisticated glamour is made all the more alluring by her tremendous social commitment—which includes 35 years of service with City Mission.

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THE COVER . . . Dina Merrill wears Oscar de la Renta's tri-colored gown, with jewels by Cartier. Styling is by Victoria Walter, hair by Mirga, and makeup by Rick Caldwell. Location: the upstairs dining room at Tino's Restaurant . . . Having just completed the interview, Dina and I are still talking about her charity work and a recent stage project as I pick up the camera and shoot to capture her elegance and enthusiasm.

—Rick

Alfredo Ortiz-Murias

“We are committed to expanding our programs and to improving the quality of life in the communities we serve.”

“MY GRANDFATHER

GAVE the land and the financial backing to establish the Inter-American University in Puerto Rico, and in addition to his example, our family’s Jesuit education encouraged us to do community work.”

While a student at Fordham, Alfredo was a volunteer tutor for underprivileged children at the Joseph P. Kennedy Center. The progress he saw with one particular child made a lasting impact.

“I wanted to get more involved. Then Olga Duke introduced me to Casita Maria. That was in 1971, and I have been active with them ever since.”

He became President of the 52 year old organization in June of 1985. The charity takes care of family needs, with special programs for children and senior citizens. Alfredo’s investment banking skills greatly help the charity.

“Each year we have a gala fund-raising Fiesta. In the past, we have honored UN Security General Javier Perez de Cuellar, Julio Iglesias, Placido Domingo, Adolfo, Oscar de la Renta, Dame Margot Fonteyn, the late Dolores del Rio, Anthony Quinn, Chita Rivera, Maria Felix, and the Honorable William Simon.

“This year’s dinner dance will be held in October at the Plaza Hotel. Among our guests of honor will be Mrs. Amalita Fortabat, probably the most influential and philanthropic woman in Latin America. Her personal budget for charities, I understand, is greater than that of her native Argentina. That night we also will honor Paloma Picasso and a leading American businessman.”

After his years at Fordham, Alfredo studied economics and Russian politics at L’Ecole de Science Politique in Paris. He returned to Manhattan, earning a Juris Doctor and an MBA at New York University. He followed that with seven years at Citibank, in the international investment area.

Then he drew on his deep Latin American ties—he is a 13th generation descendent from one of Puerto Rico’s earliest families—to become a consultant to Bear Stearns for Latin America. He also became an independent broker

handling real estate transactions, and, with his colleagues in The Private Asset Management Group, a consultant to various foreign clients.

“One of our current projects is Jacob-Freres, the Madison Avenue antique shop and gallery, which carries museum quality pieces. Another major project involves backing Miguel Cruz, the Cuban designer. The fashions are available through a number of locations including Saks and Barneys, and already have been featured in the windows at Bonwit Teller.

“One of our foreign clients is interested in acquiring a substantial pharmaceutical company. We have been looking in different regions, identifying companies for his consideration. We also have groups interested in real estate projects. One particular group was interested in buying 20 units in a condominium. So we went to a developer and arranged the transaction.”

Combining his interests, Alfredo will arrange a benefit fashion show for Casita Maria, featuring Miguel Cruz designs. The success of his investment banking efforts has increased both his resolve—and his ability—to strengthen Casita Maria.

“We have a very dedicated staff, Board of Directors, and Board of Advisors. Part of my effort is to continue bringing in new talent. I was motivated, aside from the moral obligation to help people, by the fact that Casita Maria was started by old Irish families to help the newly arrived Hispanic immigrants of the 30’s. I felt as a Puerto Rican, I should share in that responsibility.

“The most important objective of Casita Maria is taking care of children, in the context of a healthy family life, through education and the development of strong values and principles. One of my priorities is to expand the mental health services we provide.

“We have two centers. Carver Community Center, located in Spanish Harlem at 102nd Street and Madison Avenue, and one in the Hunts Point section of the South Bronx. We are committed to expand our programs and to help improve the quality of life in the communities we serve. Our annual

budget is about \$750,000, approximately two-thirds of which is raised from the private sector, and yet there is still so much more to be done.”

Investment banking and charitable activities are only part of Alfredo's interests. As do many New Yorkers, he has been working with a private trainer. “He guides me through a program of free weights, aerobics, and calisthenics four to five times a week. I also play tennis and take a course in self-defense at

the New York Athletic Club.

“But it’s not all work. I love to dance. It’s a way I can express myself artistically—with anything from ballroom dancing to salsa to American songs from the 30’s and 40’s. I also enjoy giving small sit down or buffet dinners at home, which I sometimes cook. And afterwards, we might watch a movie on the VCR. One week I did a whole series of Joseph Von Stenberg films with Marlene Dietrich. Occasionally, I also host small parties at

Alfredo Ortiz-Murias, photographed at Plaza España, which recently celebrated its 15th year serving the cuisine of Northern Spain.



La Grenouille or Plaza España, my two favorite restaurants in the city. I also enjoy reading, and I’m now finishing ‘Peggy, The Wayward Guggenheim,’ by Jacqueline Bograd Weld.

“I always have been intrigued by the theatre, as well as by films. I acted in high school, then studied with Stella Adler, and one day, if time permits, I hope to act in an Off-Broadway play.

“Once, I would accept most invitations that came my way. But now I’m very careful about how I spend my time. Some of my recreational activities are geared to meeting people who are socially and intellectually challenging. I also love collecting antiques—especially Columbian art, and I enjoy good red wine.”

The large number of projects require extensive travel.

“I’ll be seeing some friends in Kenya before the end of the year, as well as traveling to Spain and Switzerland. I am also interested in going to Ireland because I have always been intrigued by the country’s beauty and culture.”

What is the legacy of being a 13th generation descendent?

“One inherits a strong sense of belonging—which encourages family values and community service. You strive for a level of integrity, and a commitment to using your resources to capacity.”

Latin Americans have strong family ties.

“Yes, and that can be suffocating too. But it also gives support and warmth. In Latin America there are no homes for the elderly. They stay with their families.”

What are your political interests?

“I’m in between a liberal Republican and a conservative Democrat. As a minority, I imagine I would fit in with the traditions of the Democratic Party, but my economic philosophy makes me a Republican too. I would like to get involved in a political campaign, as a campaign manager, or perhaps in the future, be appointed to a government commission. . .so I could be of public service.”

Like what you are doing with Casita Maria.

“Exactly.” □