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No one ever objects to the style choices of this fashionista who is always on the top of the best dressed list.

Photography by Jay B. Saucedo

Life in Anson, Texas, was a hardscrabble existence for most nearly everyone. It was a county of dry land farmers and oil field workers and very few people had much money. We were a family of modest means. My grandmother was a tailor and made beautiful garments and sewed clothes for my friends. My mother was also a skilled seamstress and made almost all my clothes. We had cousins who were quite a bit wealthier and whose clothes came from Neiman's. I remember from a very early age my mother telling me that it didn't matter what you spent on clothes. If you weren't proud of what you were doing when you were wearing them, they would never look good.

My mother and father also taught me that cost didn't necessarily equate to quality. They always sought out things that were well-made and would last, and often showed me that the more expensive items in stores were less durable. My mother was a perfectionist, particularly when she sewed, and it would really bother her to see "store bought" clothes where the stripes didn't match at the seams and the hems were not blind stitched. There are folks in West Texas probably still wearing clothes my mother made for me as a child.

When I would ask my mother why we had to dress up for certain occasions (like church), she emphasized that your clothes should indicate to the people you were with that you thought they were important and that you respected them, and that whatever you were wearing should not embarrass or make them feel uncomfortable. I have attempted to take my mother's words to heart in the way I dress professionally and the image I attempt to project as a lawyer. (However, I had to modify that position somewhat when my twins were teenagers, when it became my parental duty to embarrass them with whatever I was wearing on every possible occasion.)

One piece of "style" advice my mother ingrained in me was "to stand up straight." I was the gangly brunette juxtaposed against my pretty, blonde and more petite sister. I was the girl on the back row of every class picture with the boys, a head taller than any of them, but standing rigidly straight. When my mother moved to Austin last summer, she was very proud when one of the first compliments she received at Westminster Manor was that she had excellent posture.

The strongest early outside fashion influences I had, of course, were the magazines I got at the drugstore in the 1960's. I wanted to look exactly like Jean Shrimpton, but it soon became clear that Twiggy

was my only realistic fashion role model, given that I was 5'10" and weighed 109 pounds. The first decade of my life was marked by one of the worst droughts in Texas history, and I remember the landscape being flat, generally treeless and dusty brown. The only vivid colors came at sunset, and those West Texas sunsets were some of the most beautiful I have ever encountered anywhere. I loved the vibrant colors of the 1960's clothes and the edgy designs. They contrasted dramatically with my surroundings on the West Texas rolling plain. I would pick out clothes from the magazines, and my mother would make them for me. I wanted to grow up to be a model and go into fashion merchandising. However, I was only four when my family first told me that I really had no choice but to become an attorney because they had all already tired of trying to win an argument with me. Their position on this never changed.

Anson did have a few bright spots. The stained glass windows in the Methodist Church were beautiful, and I spent hours staring at them in lieu of listening to the sermon. Anson had a beautiful opera house (although during my childhood it was being used as the Spot Cash grocery store), the Methodist church with the soaring sanctuary, and a stately old courthouse. My Daddy was a county official so I spent many days wandering the halls of the courthouse and reading in an upstairs garret there where my Daddy stored books of all sorts. The garret had windows looking down into the courtroom, which is also where I first got a glimpse of what being a lawyer really meant. Otherwise, Anson visually was pretty bleak and architecturally fairly uninteresting. Thus, I was astounded to learn that both the Chuy's sign and the original Baby Acapulco sign on Barton Springs Road had originally come from signs salvaged from businesses in Anson.

Both my parents read extensively, and my mother and father introduced me to books, which in turn introduced me to the world and enticed me to want to travel. Travel then introduced me to art and music and indigenous objects and wonderfully diverse cultures.

Once I started traveling, I realized two things: First, all style is fluid. What might play in Dallas is definitely not going to play in New York or San Francisco. What one wears in Ireland doesn't translate to Italy. And I also realized that my mother's advice was good: Stand up straight and be proud of who you are and where you came from. ■