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A 1930's ROMANCE WITH A SEARS & ROEBUCK CATALOG

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By [Guest Blogger](#)
July 14th, 2010

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by guest blogger [Jill Shure](#)

During my research for my novels *Night Jazz* and *Night Glitter*, I became fascinated by the 1920's and 1930's fashions. It was a research journey I adored. For example, the 1920s didn't begin with really short skirts. They rose gradually following The Great War also known as World War I. And the cloche hat was based on the helmet worn in that war.

As the 1920s progressed, waistlines and shapes became boyish, crushing down the breasts and keeping waists artificially wide by the use of garments that created this shape, along with the dress designs of that era. There were exceptions. Fashion designers such as Parisian designer Lanvin created lavish evening gowns with natural waistlines.

By 1927, skirts were so short that the dimpled knee was in. And the "it" girl Clara Bow with her round face, puckered lips, and wide dark eyes ruled the day. But by 1929 skirt lengths had dropped to just below the knee. And Clara didn't fare well in the new sound pictures called, "talkies."

Throughout the 1920s clothes found at the big New York shops could often be custom tailored. Before ready-to-wear dominated the scene, tailors and seamstresses still provided most of the clothing. And these habits hung on. You might see a dress in a fashionable store and have the retailer redo the garment in another fabric or alter the design to fit you better.

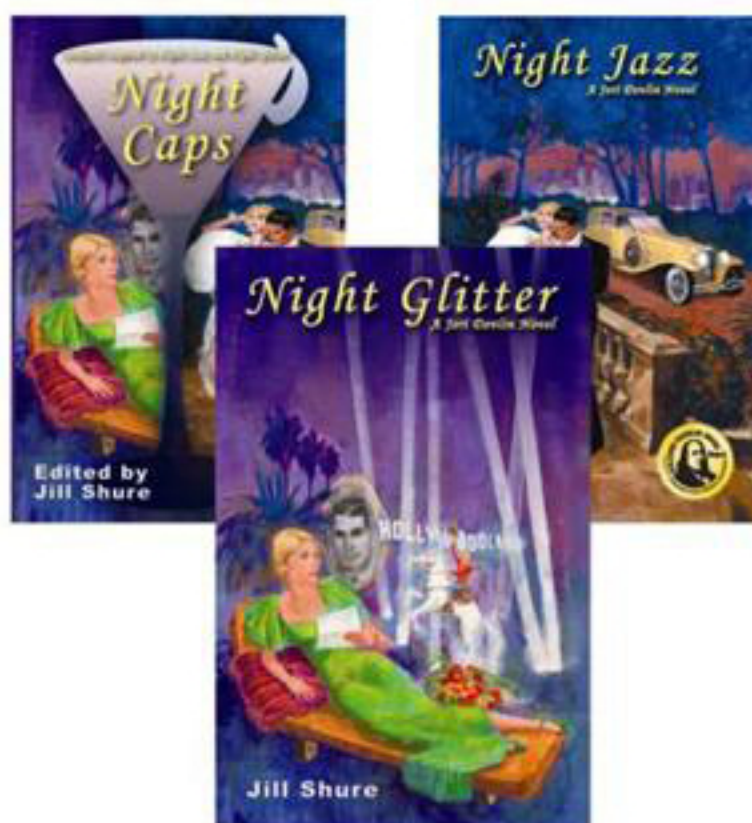
By the early 1930s, dresses began to accentuate the natural waistline again. The true American beauty was supposed to be tall and willowy with small breasts, broad shoulders and slim hips, like Katherine Hepburn. Although plenty of actresses defied this stereotype like Mae West, who had a rounder more voluptuous shape and used it to her advantage when she spouted such legendary phrases like, "Why don't you come up and see me sometime?"

The cost of fashion dropped considerably for woman in the early 1930s during the worst of the Great Depression. The Sears Catalog advertised skirts for as little as \$1.50. You could buy an entire new ensemble in the catalog for ten dollars including a dress, shoes, gloves, a purse, and a hat. Although they might fall apart in a month. But being fashionable was important whether you were a store clerk, a secretary, or a housewife. There was no such thing as dropping by the corner grocer in sweats.

Writing *Night Jazz* and *Night Glitter* and researching for the books gave me a chance to really submerge myself in another time. I looked at the material through the eyes of my heroine, Jeri Devlin, a modern-day woman who experiences the 1920s and early 1930s when she mysteriously travels back in time. I learned so much about day to day life for women back then so that I could make Jeri's journey realistic. Check out *Night Jazz* and *Night Glitter* for a chance to experience the world of the Great Depression, romance style!

Do you follow fashion trends? Or is your wardrobe more classic? What do you think is the next upcoming trend? And what trend are you just plain sick of seeing? Uggs, sweat pants with words on the booty, whatever it is...tell me about it in the comments!

To learn more about Jill Shure, *Night Jazz*, and *Night Glitter*, visit www.jillshure.com.



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