

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fashion Journalism: Barbara Cloud's Tenure Translating Pittsburgh Clothing

Kimberly Voss, Ph.D

Full Professor, University of Central Florida, USA.

Received: 29 September 2025 Accepted: 14 October 2025 Published: 05 December 2025

Corresponding Author: Kimberly Voss, Ph.D, Full Professor, University of Central Florida, USA.

Abstract

Barbara Cloud reported about fashion for her American readership for more than three decades. Her writing was truly for a local market, Pittsburgh – her sources were often those who visited her city, as well as Pittsburgh residents and the department stores who dominated the fashion market. Her job includes traveling to fashion shows across the country. She regularly covered the New York City fashion shows and well-known designers. She described the clothing of designer Oscar de la Renta, as well as who was in the audience – celebrities Estee Lauder, Nancy Kissinger and C.Z. Guest. In 1968, she traveled to Los Angeles and wrote about clothing from Hawaii. She described pant-shifts which looked like skirts but made it easier to bend over. There were also jumpsuits, bareback dresses and built-in bradresses. During her career, she reported on hundreds of fashion and cultural trends.

1. Introduction

White gloves, everyday hats and banned pants. For decades, fashion was formal – full of rules and protocol. What people wore was indication of age, region and social class n-among other things. For decades, newspaper fashion editor Barbara Cloud translated the fashions from high-fashion runways and the parlors of designers to the men and women of Pittsburgh. Too often, clothing is treated as a superficial part of journalism and of history. Yet, it should be taken seriously – clothing and appearance impact all people. Further the fashion industry dominates a large part of national and local economy. American cities outside of New York and Chicago also rarely received recognition for the contributions made to fashion journalism. Some evidence of the importance of fashion journalism was on the way as the first Pulitzer Prize was given for fashion commentary in 2006 to journalist Robin Givhan.¹ Fashion is a significant issue– whether the person embraces or rejects fashion. As fashion critic Teri Agins has written:

For all its glamour and frivolity, fashion happens to be a relevant and powerful force in our lives. At every level of society, people care greatly about the way they look, which affects both their self-esteem and the way other people interact with them. And it has been true since the beginning of time that people from all walks of life make the effort to dress in style.²

Cloud reported about fashion for her Pittsburgh readership for more than three decades. (Overall, she wrote for Pennsylvania newspapers for a total of 55 years.) Her writing was truly for a local market– her sources were often those who visited her city, as well as Pittsburgh residents and the department stores who dominated the market. Her job did include traveling to fashion shows across the country. She regularly covered the New York City fashion shows. She described the clothing of designer Oscar de la Renta, as well as who was in the audience – Estee Lauder, Nancy Kissinger and C.Z. Guest.³ In another example, in 1968, she traveled to Los Angeles and

Citation: Kimberly Voss. Fashion Journalism: Barbara Cloud's Tenure Translating Pittsburgh Clothing. Annals of Journalism and Mass Communication. 2025; 4(1): 16-21.

©The Author(s) 2025. This is an open access article distributed under the Creative Commons Attribution License, which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

wrote about clothing from Hawaii. She described pant-shifts which looked like skirts but made it easier to bend over. There were also jumpsuits, bareback dresses and built-in bra dresses. There were also carnival-themed looks. Cloud wrote: "Many of the dresses for the young girl who is just beginning to get her fashion legs stressed the gypsy look."⁴ She also covered many fashion shows abroad – visiting various European cities. Yet – it was not always as glamorous as some may have thought. In a 1991 column she wrote: "Fashion writers do not spend leisure hours on the Riviera or in fashion salons. I've never been to the Riviera. And it's a myth that fashion writers get their clothes for free. Newspaper's ethics policy forbids it."⁵ (Cloud was known for her ability to dress well on a reporter's salary – in 1961, she was cited as a best-dressed woman in her city.⁶) She was also known as a dedicated journalist. Her crisp writing matched her fashion sense, said *Post - Gazette* Publisher John Robinson Block. He said: "She was one of the most gifted newspaper writers that I think I've known over many years. She was of the older school of journalism, characterized by the clarity of how they wrote."⁷

Cloud's reporting was done during a changing time in fashion – as American fashion came into its own and by the 1960s, traditional clothing rules transitioned into a time of a more casual attitude. She recalled the clothing of her mother's generation – one of corsets, hats and hosiery when women of a certain age would never bare their arms. Cloud wrote about her mother: "She was following the rules of her day."⁸ These rules were ones that dictated the fashion of the time.

There was one clothing trend that later surprised Cloud. She wrote: "I would NEVER have guessed jeans would become a fashion must-have. Maybe that is really the trend I never saw coming and was surprised when it did."⁹ Ultimately, her reporting was about the heart of journalism: people. For all the talk of trends, hemlines and fabrics, it was, as she quoted designer Halston: "Fashion is made by fashionable people – not designers."¹⁰ (He, too was surprised by the significance of denim jeans.¹¹) By 1991, she was writing about increasing jeans trends – including distressed denim, stone-washed fabric and the "Metamorphobump jean – which is "anatomically correct for total rear mobility."¹²

Cloud developed her own fashion reporting style and influence. As she noted, it was not every reporter who could call and get through to Ralph Lauren as she could.¹³ (This was because she first met him when he was selling neckties at Kaufmann's Department

Store in Pittsburgh.¹⁴ After a more than 100-year reign in the city, the store became a Macy's in 2006.) She interviewed designer Calvin Klein in 1972 who predicted that women would wear pants for the next decade.¹⁵ She also interviewed numerous models, including Pittsburgh native Naomi Simms who was the first African American model to appear in a national television commercial and also the first to appear on the cover of a major women's magazine – the *Ladies Home Journal*.¹⁶

While traveling, Cloud took her readers behind the fashion scenes – such as a trip to a Dior custom shoe salon in Paris.¹⁷ In her story, she described the shop and her chat with a store clerk. Like many of the fashion editors, she attended the first White House fashion show with numerous other fashion editors and designers.¹⁸ A special runway was built in the State Dining Room for the event. Cloud wrote: "The excitement of the whole afternoon was mixed with patriotic fervor. Nobody knows exactly why a fashion show has never been held in the White House before, but everyone felt this one was worth waiting for."¹⁹ Cloud was at several of the top American fashion moments during her journalism career – which she then shared with her readers.

For the bulk of her career, Cloud reported on fashion. It was a significant role. Fashion helps define a time period – whether it was the end of regular glove wearing or the acceptance of women wearing pants as a symbolic victory about equality.²⁰ Cloud's career in fashion journalism demonstrates the changes in life for women in Pittsburgh from the heyday of department stores to gender roles reflected in women's clothing choices. Her story is also one that may truly be on of history as fewer newspapers employ their own fashion writers in this era of severe budget cuts. This is the story of Cloud's career and a description of the fashion community she covered from the 1950s through the 1970s.

Cloud took her readers with her into the world of fashion. Her stories help to understand a time and a city with significant department stores. She retired from the newspaper in 2008. Two years later, Cloud was inducted into the Pittsburgh Fashion Hall of Fame. Material about Cloud came from her numerous newspaper articles available online, and stories in her book, *By-line: Pittsburgh's Beloved Columnist Shares a Lifetime of Interviews and Observations* and several email interviews with Cloud prior to her death in 2012.

2. Background

Barbara Louise Cloud was born in 1930 in Uniontown, Pennsylvania, to Milton Harlon, a doctor, and Elizabeth Cloud, a homemaker. Her father was a small-town obstetrician and a general practitioner. He was well known in his community. This is how his daughter described his job in a column: "My father was a doctor who held hands well after midnight, practiced common sense psychology, and had a strong shoulder and a quality of patience not learned in medical school."²¹ She learned the value of communication. Cloud's fashion background was influenced by visits to clothing boutiques visited during her childhood. She said: "My mother introduced me to beautiful clothes. In my hometown, we had Ina's Dress Shoppe and she carried names like Claire McCardell, Vera Maxwell and Pauline Trigere. I would meet all but McCardell."²² During Cloud's career, she would interview many of the top designers of the time and introduce them to her readers.

Cloud graduated from Westminster College in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, in 1951. She majored in speech and drama – with the intent of becoming an actress. She earned her Actor's Equity union card by spending three summers at Jennerstown Mountain Playhouse. She had hoped it was preparation for a career on Broadway. It was not to be – as actress Mady Christians predicted in her statement to the five foot-ten-inch Cloud: "You are too tall! All leading men are short."²³ (Cloud would ultimately write a theater column for 25 years and appeared as an occasional actress in Pittsburgh-area theaters.)

Her first newspaper job was at the *Uniontown Evening Standard* newspaper in 1951 as a personals column writer where she spent five years. She arrived at the newspaper after several months in New York City as a showroom model on Seventh Avenue as she waited to be "discovered" by the acting world. Years later she returned to New York as a fashion journalist and she passed the glittering marquees of Broadway. Cloud wrote: "I often paused, sighed, and then scurried on to my fashion world assignment, which, I would learn, had their own theatrics. It, too, was show business."²⁴ Fashion could be as entertaining as any play with many dramatic personalities.

In her early years at the Uniontown newspaper, she asked "not to be trained" as a journalist because it was a temporary position; she was more interested in being on the stage. Yet, she would soon find her footing as a reporter. Her first feature story was about a visit to a Canadian gold mine during a 1954 vacation. Cloud

recalled that she was on a street car going through the Hilltop District's Centre Avenue in 1957 when she looked over someone's shoulder and being thrilled to see her byline. For Cloud, "The pride has never gone away."²⁵ She wrote about weddings and club notices under the title of society editor. It was a role that kept readers connected to their newspaper. As journalist Colleen "Koky" Dishon has noted of society writing: "As we wrote about weddings and births and debutante balls, we learned about the importance of rites and rituals in people's lives."²⁶ Recognizing traditions was important to readers and central of reporters' work.

Cloud arrived in her new city in April 1957 – wearing the typical hat and gloves of the time – to apply for a reporting job with the *Pittsburgh Press*. She spent more than three decades at the newspaper, with most of those years were spent covering the fashion industry. In July 1966, Cloud married William Guerriero, Jr., in a garden ceremony in Lock Haven, Pennsylvania. The marriage did not last long.²⁷ She soon found herself a pregnant divorcee which was somewhat scandalous for the time. Her son, Drew, was born on February 3, 1971, at which point she was a single mother at age forty-one. A pioneer for a working mother in the newsroom, she found a way to continue her career. As she later wrote: "There is a special feeling when you raise a child by yourself, and it was just Drew and me from the day he was born."²⁸ They were a powerful pair.

Eventually she spent 15 years at the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*. She retired in 2008 after 55 years as a journalist. When she left, readers were disappointed. In one letter to the editor, a fan wrote: "Every week or so Barbara Cloud will break your heart with a lovely observation about birds in flight or (her son) Drew's coming fatherhood – or she will tweak your memory by reminding you of an old perfume or the scent of a summer garden."²⁹ Cloud did write occasional features during her retirement, including memories from her earlier coverage of the fashion show at the White House in 1968.

3. Fashion in Pittsburgh

Part of Cloud's coverage of fashion, of course, took place outside of Pennsylvania – in New York City, Paris, France, as well as at the homes or workshops of the designers she covered. Her job was to translate those experiences to her local readers. In reflecting on these moments, Cloud wrote: "The fashion world constantly looks for influences and also for people whose personalities project and have impact on the little woman sitting in her suburban kitchen. It helps

to know that someone we admire is wearing textured stockings or has bought a rare breed of dog ... it's sometimes enough to make us do the same."³⁰ Fashion was a cultural conversation.

It is important to remember how different news about fashion was during Cloud's era. Rather than shows that critique what fashions movie stars wore or teach women how to "dress for less," or become overnight fashion designers on television networks like E!, Bravo or Lifetime. Fashion publications and women's magazines, too, explained national fashion trends to readers. It was newspapers that translated local fashion news for readers. Cloud recalled: "Women did want to know what was new and back then our stores were the first to tell them. Readers waited to hear about hem lengths, whether hats were in or out, what the colors were for spring. It's no longer a big surprise. Now it seems that seasonal news is out before editors ever see a show."³¹

Further emphasizing the local aspects of fashion, was the reporting on and advertising from department stores. These businesses played a large role in fashion—so much so that local boutiques were overshadowed. She noted in an interview: "For a while I was not allowed to feature small stores or boutiques because they didn't advertise! I was always fighting this because that's where fashion was moving forward."³² Cloud noted that Pittsburgh was home to the several of the traditional major department stores: Gimbels, Kaufmann's, Joseph Horne Co. and Saks Fifth Avenue.³³ Furthermore, each of these department store served its own customer base and catered to its own demographic, from high fashion to practical, discount clothing. She wrote about the stores throughout the years. For example, in one story, she wrote about a remodel and visual merchandising.³⁴ Later, Cloud said in an interview: "Of the three stores, I suppose Gimbels was the least 'fashion savvy' in most eyes."³⁵ In most cities, these department stores either no longer exist or are a shadow of their former influence.

As often happens to the story of fashion journalism, fashion journalism is not a part of the history of Pittsburgh journalism. Neither she – nor her work—appears in the book, *Front-Page Pittsburgh: Two Hundred Years of the Post-Gazette*, for example.³⁶ It is common for both women and their work in soft news to be excluded from national and regional histories of journalism. Yet, Cloud's work reached a large audience and impacted readers in one of the most personable manner possible: in the clothing they wore. As the former Mayor of Pittsburgh wrote:

"Whether she's writing about fashion consumerism or the human condition, Barbara Cloud is always one step ahead."³⁷ She took her topic seriously – even when others did not.

4. Cloud's Fashion Reporting

Cloud helped introduce designers to a public that was beginning to pay attention to those names. In 1964, she wrote of Bill Blass: "The pantsuit, for instance, designed by Mr. Blass, uses a beige block glen plaid fabric with gold metallic thread, and large glittering rhinestone buttons as a closing and on four pockets."³⁸ She wrote a reflection piece on men's fashion designer John Weitz and his business sense. She wrote that while he was never a household name like other designers, he did market his clothes overseas – "one of the first to realize the potential."³⁹ It was a time before designers were the kind of celebrities they are today. It began to change as department stores lost their exclusive consumer power and fashion became more democratic as a result.

In addition, designers were doing more fashion outreach – often led by publicist Eleanor Lambert, who created the International Best Dressed List and was an ally of newspaper fashion editors. Cloud wrote of the famed Lambert: "She made fashion newsworthy and gave editors access to designers like we never had before."⁴⁰ Often, it was personal local access that allowed for fashion expression. Cloud visited the homes of designers. "We got good stories and I guess we were courted but I never thought of it like that. I shared all of that with readers. I took them along with me as I covered the scene."⁴¹

Cloud crafted her message toward fashion and social change by emphasizing that Calvin Klein was one of the rising talents in the industry – soon to be known simply as the single word "Calvin." The designer advanced the idea of shorter skirts, a new step toward change, suggesting women were becoming bolder and ready for liberation. "Pants are here to stay for at least 10 years," she wrote. Cloud interviewed Klein and emphasized the role of pants as well: "I don't say they are going to dominate fashion or be the subject of conversation as each new season arrives. But they are so entrenched in women's wardrobes now, I don't think they'll give them up."⁴² She again quoted Klein that year: Women like "comfortable, easy clothes" and the industry was offering women what they have wished for by easing the formality of clothes.⁴³ For example, fashion changes rapidly along with the world and the pantsuit outfit worn to a wedding reception does not sound as disrespectful as it used to. Cloud promoted the emancipation of

women and need for understanding the new world: "Just because grandmother wore a traditional gown doesn't necessarily mean future generations must follow."⁴⁴

The influence of social change was about to transition significantly during Cloud's tenure. Designers were giving women what they wanted and rather than dictating what women were expected to wear. Cloud's articles called for social change and inspired women to go beyond their traditional clothing. Her voice united with that era's trend as major changes were taking place. Cloud, herself a career woman, was fighting for this cause by simply being a successful journalist. She considered fashion to be one of the factors to trigger the social change. Women wearing pants and designers creating them for women were an acknowledgement of women's liberation. Cloud's articles blended fashion with the reality of that time.

The wearing of pants could be a controversial topic—specially for middle-class women, symbolizing the concern over the changing role of gender roles in society. For some people, pants were another step toward equality for women. For others, wearing pants meant losing femininity – almost to the point of androgyny. After all, "the meaning of clothing is culturally defined."⁴⁵ On the other hand, some women were rejecting pants and shortening their hemlines instead. Growing out of the youth movement of the 1960s was the mini-skirt. Before long, mini-skirts made an appearance on the runway and thus having a way for the short skirt length to be acceptable. This is how Cloud described the fashion in a 1969 story: "It was just two years ago when the first peek at knees strutting down runways made fashion editors gasp and mutter, 'nobody will wear their skirts that short.'"⁴⁶

Cloud's coverage of men's fashions also reflected changes in society. She wrote about the increase of polyester in menswear and profiled the fashion director of the Men's Fashion Association.⁴⁷ She covered hats when they were commonly worn and then, their demise. Various sources have cited the early 1960s as the beginning of the end of men wearing hats, either criticizing or crediting President John F. Kennedy.⁴⁸ In 1970s, Cloud wrote about hats in Pittsburgh. "Can we safely say the millinery business will be brighter this fall as women once again reach for the new chapeau to brighten their own spirits? Well, we can safely say hats are certainly more so than they have been in recent seasons."⁴⁹ A time of fashion formality was ending for women and men. Cloud was there to tell the stories.

5. Conclusion

Newspaper fashion editors like Cloud helped define clothing trends for the communities they covered. They validated or rejected what designed put down runways and what buyers ordered for department stores. Soft news like fashion journalism deserves its place in journalism history. It was the beat held almost entirely by women for decades. Fashion, while fun, is also an important industry to cover. The beat allowed for localization, as well as national and international travel yet the fashion editors had to translate the latest style to a local readership. Recognizing fashion reporting as significant means adding women to the history of journalism, tells more about Pittsburgh and raises the value of soft news.

Newspaper fashion editors of the 1950s and 1960s were an adventurous group. While they lacked prestige at their publications, their readership was wide. For some, it was a national byline – Eugenia Sheppard and Virginia Pope were household names. For others, they were well-known in their towns from Dallas to Pittsburgh to Milwaukee. They discovered designers and defined trends. Their reporting covered politics, technology, and consumerism. In later years, their reporting included gender roles, race, and social norms. These women wrote about the end of hats and white gloves. They documented the debate over skirt length and the proper undergarments. The fashion editors traveled the country and the world to tell stories. Yet, at their newspapers, they were part of the women's pages and rarely allowed in the newsroom.

Fashion reporting recognizes the importance of local communities – after all the ability to locate clothes at area department stores was key to following a trend. This was especially true when department stores ruled runways. This research about Barbara Cloud builds on scholarship about Milwaukee fashion editor Aileen Ryan, Washington, D.C., fashion editor Eleni Epstein and other newspaper fashion editors across the country. These women helped shape fashion in their cities and contributed to regional journalism history. They were the women who thousands of readers looked to for advice about what they did every day – getting dressed.

6. References

1. Lily Rothman, "Robin Givhan," *Time*, April 2, 2012. http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/article/0,28804,2110513_2110630_2110663,00.html
2. Teri Agins, *The End of Fashion: How Marketing Changed the Clothing Business* (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1999), 7.

3. Barbara Cloud, "Password in Lavish in De La Renta Show," *Pittsburgh Press*, May 2, 1980.
4. Barbara Cloud, "Hawaii Sways Fashion Theme," *Pittsburgh Press*, November 19, 1968.
5. Barbara Cloud, *By-line: Pittsburgh's Beloved Columnist Shares a Lifetime of Interviews and Observations* (Tarentum, Penn: World Association Publishers, 2009), 188.
6. "Ten Pittsburgh Career Women Named Best-Dressed for 1961," *Pittsburgh Gazette*, March 3, 1961.
7. Ann Rodgers, "Barbara Cloud/Fashion Editor Exuded Beauty Inside, Out," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 16, 2012.
8. Barbara Cloud, "Becoming my mother: Who's that old woman in the mirror?" *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, May 8, 2010.
9. Stephen Knezovich, "Barbara Cloud," *Pittsburgh Magazine*, January 2010. <http://www.pittsburghmagazine.com/Pittsburgh-Magazine/January-2010/Barbara-Cloud/>
10. Cloud, *By-line*, 86.
11. Ryan Murphy, "Halston," Netflix, 2021.
12. Barbara Cloud, "Daring Denim," Scripps Howard News Service, March 20, 1991.
13. Cloud, *By-line*, 5.
14. Email interview with Barbara Cloud, February 11, 2011.
15. Barbara Cloud, "Pants Future is Solid in Designer's View of Next Decade," *Pittsburg Press*, September 17, 1992.
16. Cloud, *By-line*, 13.
17. Cloud, *By-line*, 154.
18. Cloud, *By-line*, 164.
19. Cloud, *By-line*, 165.
20. Kimberly Wilmot Voss, "Who's Wearing the Pants? How *The New York Times* Reported the Changing Dress of Women," *Media Report to Women*, Spring 2011.
21. Cloud, *By-line*, 88.
22. Email interview with Barbara Cloud, February 8, 2011.
23. Cloud, *By-line*, 5.
24. Cloud, *By-line*, 2.
25. Barbara Cloud, "Goodbye, and thanks for all the wonderful moments," *Post-Gazette*, January 6, 208.
26. Koky Dishon, "We've Come a Long Way—Maybe," *Media Studies Journal* (1997): 95.
27. "Barbara Cloud is Wed," *Pittsburgh Press*, July 11, 1966.
28. Cloud, *By-line*, 222.
29. Susan Smith, "The Class of Barbara Cloud," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, January 24, 2008.
30. Barbara Cloud, "Fashion Focus," *Pittsburgh Press*, February 8, 1968.
31. Email interview with Barbara Cloud, February 8, 2011.
32. Email interview with Barbara Cloud, April 2, 2012.
33. Teresa Lindeman, "30 Years: Department Store Era Comes to a Close, New Options Open," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, October 6, 2013.
34. Barbara Cloud, "Gimbels Remodeling Is People Orientated," *Pittsburgh Press*, September 21, 1979.
35. Michael J. Lisicky, *Gimbels Has It!* (Charleston, SC: The History Press, 2011), 73.
36. Clarke M. Thomas, *Front Page Pittsburgh: Two Hundred Years of the Post-Gazette* (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: University of Pittsburgh Press, 205)
37. Cloud, *By-line*, back cover.
38. Barbara Cloud, "Bill Blass Sports 'Infallible Eye,'" *Pittsburgh Press*, December 13, 1964.
39. Cloud, *By-line* 64.
40. Email interview with Barbara Cloud, February 8, 2011.
41. Ibid.
42. Barbara Cloud, "Pants Future Is Solid in Designer's View of Next Decade," *Pittsburgh Press*, November 30, 1972.
43. Ibid.
44. Barbara Cloud, "Weddings Are Changing," *Pittsburgh Press* January 29, 1969.
45. Valerie Steele, "Appearance and Identity," Claudia Brush Kidwell and Valerie Steele, eds., *Men and Women: Dressing the Part* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1989), 6.
46. Barbara Cloud, "Great Spring Ahead for Girl-Watchers," *Pittsburgh Press*, January 3, 1969.
47. Barbara Cloud, "Polyester Finally Gets Some Fashion Respect," *Pittsburgh Press*, April 21, 1985.
48. "Was JFK Responsible for American Disavow of the Hat," *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2011. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/03/18/was-jfk-responsible-for-a_n_503832.html
49. Barbara Cloud, "Hats in the Picture for Autumn Styles," *Pittsburgh Press*, August 11, 1970.