

**After a Fashion**  
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**Great Zacks!** I went to a luncheon last week to celebrate 30 years of **Zachary Scott Theatre's** children's educational program, **Project Interact**. Of course, there were dozens of the usual Zach Scott suspects that I adore ... but one in particular sent me spinning down memory lane: **Anne Page Dubois**. Zach Scott Theatre was only a couple of years old when I arrived on the scene in the fall of 1975, and Anne was managing director. I was 17; my father had died the year before, and I'd been kicked out of **Houston's High School for Performing & Visual Arts** for something they called "an inability to adjust," which really translated to meaning I was so gay and so out of the closet they didn't know quite what to do with me. Like so many of my generation in the mid-Seventies, I slipped into the free-fall of a drug-ridden, directionless existence. All I knew was that I wanted to be an actor – God knows I wasn't comfortable in my own skin and was *much* happier in someone else's. I moved to Austin and enrolled at **Austin Community College**, where an old friend of my parents, **Bob Swain**, was in charge of the theatre department there. Dr. Swain was also the artistic director of Zach Scott at that time, and the theatre workshops consisted of being assigned to various positions during the course of the shows that were being produced at Zach. I worked on sets, props, lights, etc., while waiting for my big acting break – a break that was never really to come. **The first show I worked on for Zach Scott was *The Man Who Came to Dinner*. I was assigned to sets and props and dove in head first. (In that same production was a 7-year-old child actor. His name was **Lance Avery Morgan**, and he grew up to be a co-ruler of our stylish little social scene here in Austin.)** The next show was a production of **Gilbert & Sullivan's *The Pirates of Penzance***, for which I wound up in the costume shop. Costuming wasn't really new to me. My mother sewed, and I'd been designing smart little costumes for myself all my life, and of course, my sister's **Barbies** were early victims ... I mean *clients* of **Stephen's House of Wayward Couture**. But I knew nothing of real sewing or fabrics until *The Pirates of Penzance* costume designer, a fiery red-headed pistol named **Libby Winters**, took an interest in me and showed me a thing or two about sewing and design. I instantly became hopelessly enamored with it. The next show was ***The Devil's Disciple***, an 18th-century costume drama; I begged to be on the costume crew again. This time I worked with **Noel Noblitt**, who was also charmed by my ardent desire to learn the craft and shared with me many tips to improve my work. She let me construct one of the gowns by myself (with her supervision, of course), and I thought I'd died and gone to heaven. Naturally, it took me way too long to make the dress, but it absorbed all my waking hours and all my nighttime dreams for many, many days. I practically lived at Zach Scott during this period. I loved the all-nighters and the multiple emergencies we encountered in designing the show. We endlessly played the soundtracks to ***A Chorus Line*** and ***Chicago*** while we worked. I also began to sew for myself on the side ... flimsy little shirts and loungewear that I had the audacity to wear to **Pearl Street Warehouse** and the fabulous **Friends and Lovers** disco. Later that season, Dr. Swain, after relentless entreaties from me, allowed me to be the costume designer for ***After the Fall*** (which also featured a very young, quiet drama student named **Joe York** in a walk-on part). I was able to fulfill my half-baked fantasies in designing the clothes for the character based on **Marilyn Monroe**, making life-sized Barbie clothes like fishtail gowns, voluminous cocktail dresses, and dazzling at-home wear. Never again would I turn back. I was now a costume designer, albeit a very young, fairly inexperienced one, but I could never have gotten that far without the support of the Zach Scott staff, Dr. Swain, and particularly Anne Dubois. Anne was the one who was always at the theatre day and night, working fervently to make sure that the theatre could stay afloat. She was generous and kind despite her weighty responsibilities – always supportive and even giving me \$75 to pay my rent one time ... back when you *could* rent a place for \$75. After a few seasons, I segued into fashion design and moved to Houston. From there I moved on to San Francisco, where I landed a job designing for **Divine** (no easy chore!). I traveled around quite a bit, working in Seattle and eventually in New York, where I had my own company and achieved some lovely successes in the cutthroat world of New York fashion. After a lengthy stint as a designer, I moved back to Austin in 1999 and began to write about fashion for this paper. I never could have followed that trail of dreams to so many places if it had not been for the things I learned at Zach Scott ... and so 30 years later, seeing the theatre celebrate such an auspicious occasion, *and* seeing Anne Dubois, I realize how deep the debt is that I owe Zach Scott Theatre. Congratulations to them for meaning so much to so many people. And special honors to Anne, for without her dedication, it's possible that Zach Scott Theatre would not be here today ... and what a tragedy that would be.